

PLANNING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

“We know beyond a shadow of a doubt humans have affected the composition of the atmosphere and almost beyond a shadow of a doubt that global warming is related to that,” says Philip Mote, director of the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute (OCCRI). In this election season, climate change didn’t come up until after the presidential debates, but superstorm Hurricane Sandy and its aftermath meant the topic hit the headlines before the election was over. Whether New York is doomed to become the next Atlantis or whether Florence, Ore., will sink beneath the sea is a little more complicated than just one storm.

“The bottom line,” Mote says, is that scientists know it’s human caused, know the Earth is warming, know that humans are linked to the warming, “but people lose sight of the solidity of those conclusions because there are fringes still hotly debated by scientists.”

Though Hurricane Sandy brought climate change back

into public debate this year, Mote says 2011 actually was the near-record hurricane season, but that didn’t get attention because the storms churned out in the ocean. “We only care about the ones that hit the U.S.,” he says, “and sadly are not bothered by deaths in the Caribbean, Mexico and South America.” Also he says hurricanes out over the ocean are very important in global heat transport and carry a lot of moisture and heat from tropical areas.

Mote, who shared the Nobel Peace Prize with other co-authors and researchers for their work on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2007, points out that scientists don’t have a laboratory where there is a control planet Earth and an experimental planet Earth so scientists use modeling instead. On the West Coast, he says the models say storm tracks should be shifting northward, related to accelerated Arctic warming. Arctic sea ice hit a record low this summer.

The results so far are pretty ambiguous when it comes to the question of whether climate change means Oregon is due for bigger storms, Mote says. “Studies indicated that there’s been some increase in the intensity of storms out over the Pacific Ocean in the last 50 years and hints that extreme waves have gotten higher,” but he says the results depend on methods and approach you use.

OCCRI was established in 2007 to help Oregon better respond to climate change. Mote says in basins like the McKenzie, scientists have noted a decline in spring snow pack that can be statistically linked to warming. He says that the snowline has moved upward a little bit and snow is melting earlier with a higher runoff in early spring and late spring and summer.

Meanwhile on the Oregon Coast, sea levels are estimated to rise about 2 feet, and Mote says planning for waterfront developments such as ports should account for risk tolerance as well as for the capacity to update and change if the science changes. Some state and municipal management plans, he says, often account only for past conditions, and don’t use the best available science to plan for future conditions. — *Camilla Mortensen*

WHO ARE THE OREGON ELECTORS?

Every four years around presidential election time, the Electoral College gets attention for a few weeks, then fades into the fog of obscurity for four more years. But who are Oregon’s seven electors, how did they become electors and what do they do?

President Obama’s victory this week does not automatically make him president for four years, but it kicks off a long and formal process that leads up to his inauguration at noon Jan. 20, 2013. Seven electors will (ideally) represent us and cast their votes for Obama and Biden in Salem Dec. 17.

Oregon’s electors are all stalwart and loyal Democratic leaders in the state: Meredith Wood Smith, chair of the Democratic Party of Oregon; Frank Dixon, first vice-chair of the DPO; Mike Bohan, chair of the 1st Congressional District Committee; Michael Miles, chair of the 2nd District; Joe Smith, chair of the 3rd District; Shirley Cairns, chair of the 4th District; and Sam Sappington, chair of the 5th District.

These electors have pledged to follow the party line, but are legally free to vote for anyone they want. Their long-time loyalty to the Democratic Party makes “going rogue” unlikely, says Scott Bartlett of Eugene, who was on the slate of electors in 1988 and 1992 representing the 4th District.

“It was fascinating to participate in this formal ritual of our nation’s self-government from the ground level,” says Bartlett. “As a perk of this, I was invited to the inauguration and had a pair of fantastic front section seats, right below the inauguration stand, enabling me to watch Bill Clinton take the swearing-in oath.”

How did Bartlett earn his status as an elector? Bartlett says he got involved in political campaigns as a student back in 1966 for Charlie Porter’s congressional race, worked on Wayne Morse’s Senate campaign full-time for 13 months in the 1970s and has been involved in dozens of national, state and local campaigns since, including City Councilor Betty Taylor’s re-election campaign.

“You have to pay your dues,” he says, and becoming an elector is an honor for years of service.

So what’s next? Once election results are certified, Gov. Kitzhaber has until Dec. 17 to prepare and submit seven Certificates of Ascertainment confirming the electors. The electors meet in Salem Dec. 17 to sign, seal and record their votes for both president and vice-president, which are then paired with the certificates and sent to the president of the Senate (Joe Biden) by Dec. 26. Congress meets Jan. 6 to count the votes, and barring complications, inauguration day is Jan. 20. No problem this time, but one complication would be no candidate getting 270 votes, in which case the House of Representatives would decide the election, picking from the top three electoral vote-getters.

The Electoral College dates to our nation’s founding and attempts have been made to update it, fix the quirks or even abolish it, and complicating the process are the different rules states have for selecting and dealing with electors. In Oregon, for example, all seven electoral votes go to the winning candidate. — *Ted Taylor*

GRAND JURY RESISTORS

\$3 if you wear all black and \$6 if you don’t will get you admission to the benefit show for grand jury resisters at the Lorax on Alder Street on Nov. 9. Grand juries are used in federal court cases to determine whether there is “probable cause” to believe that an individual has committed a crime and should be put on trial. Grand jury proceedings are not open to the public, and civil rights proponents such as Lauren Regan of Eugene’s Civil Liberties Defense Center (CLDC) say grand jury secrecy is what makes them a disturbing and effective tactic against dissidents.

This summer, the FBI raided residences in Seattle, Olympia and Portland. Federal court records have indicated that the feds were looking for an “organized ‘black block’ of anarchists” linked to May Day protests, but Regan says the nature of grand juries means that the focus of the investigation could change at any time. She says a warrant served at a Seattle home listed black clothing, sign-making materials and anarchist literature as among the items to be seized. Regan points out owning such items is protected by the First Amendment.

After the raids, grand jury subpoenas went out to Portland residents Dennison Williams, Leah-Lynn Plante, Matt Duran and Katherine Olejnik. More recently Matthew “Maddy” Pfeiffer of Olympia was subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury in Seattle Nov. 7. Regan says Pfeiffer has indicated a lack of intent to cooperate with the grand jury. Plante has since been released, but Olejnik and Duran remain in prison for refusing to cooperate with the grand jury.

Regan says the CLDC is part of the legal team involved with the grand jury issue, and the group has worked on grand jury resistance before and spoken out against grand jury secrecy. “Because of the secrecy and lack of public disclosure and public judicial process the government traditionally has been able to abuse that secrecy by engaging in actions intended to harass or hinder political movements,” Regan says. She says because there is no judge, just a prosecutor, the jurors and a court reporter, the presentation of evidence used to indict is “slanted in favor of the government.” Grand juries have been compared to witch hunts, she says.

At this time no one’s been indicted or charged with a crime, Regan says, but she said one of the things that the feds are investigating is conspiracy to commit interstate riot. She says this means that if someone has crossed the state line to protest he or she could be charged with a federal crime. In this day of global protest movements, Regan says, this is “a clear indication that they are intending to chill the right to protest and that is concerning to civil rights groups like ours.”

Benefit for grand jury resisters 9 pm Friday, Nov. 8, The Lorax, 1648 Alder St., with Low Tide Drifters, Alder St. All Stars, Dirty Commies, \$3 wearing all black clothing, \$6 without. — *Camilla Mortensen*



ALDER ST. ALL STARS