

Being more vegetarian clearly sounds like a sensible choice. Thank you to those who have already committed to a vegetarian or vegan diet. How much are we all willing to change for the sake of the planet? Recycling, buying a more earth friendly vehicle, and consuming less are not enough.

*Christopher and Deb Michaels
Eugene*

ENTROPY NOW

In 1990, I took my first class about solar electricity. The first lesson was to reduce consumption, which is important on the societal level, too.

350Eugene's Deb McGee and Jim Neu wrote letters (Nov. 21) claiming that the obstacle to ending fossil fuel use is political corruption and we just need a positive attitude. I wish I agreed, but using solar panels and studying how concentrated energy runs industrial civilization taught me the obstacle is physics.

McGee and Neu quote Peter DeFazio as saying fossil fuel use will not end in the next decade. I oppose DeFazio's promotion of highway expansions, clearcuts on federal forests, burning trees for electricity and the NuScale nuclear power startup in Corvallis. But here, DeFazio is correct.

The reason we use fossil energy: It is more concentrated than living on our solar budget, especially this time of year.

Finite concentrated fossil carbon fueled our population increase from under a billion (before fossil) to approaching 8 billion today. Using remaining fossils to re-localize food production might ensure social cohesion on the energy downslope. Logistics matter more than protests, Eugene's law to buy "carbon credits" or lawsuits seeking governmental plans.

Post Carbon Institute in Corvallis (in DeFazio's district) is the leading group in the country integrating concerns about ecology and climate with the facts of peak everything and the limits to exponential growth on a round, abundant, finite planet. Their sites include postcarbon.org and resilience.org.

Entropy is not a good idea; it's the law!
*Mark Robinowitz
Eugene*

AMERICA CRASHING

Some years ago I took a class on complex systems from a man named Alder Fuller. I learned about positive feedback loops, which push a system further from equilibrium, and negative loops, which stabilize a system.

Our society has a strong positive feedback alienation loop going. As class warfare increases, the U.S. gets more and more abrasive. People prone to depression and anxiety pull back into their shells to avoid being triggered, refusing to learn anything about social problems or politics.

Widespread ignorance and refusal to act make our problems worse, which increases the friction, etc., etc.

This is the same positive feedback process that increases climate change in the Arctic: highly reflective ice melts, exposing the sea beneath, which is darker and absorbs more of the sun's heat, melting more ice, etc.

Positive feedback loops crash systems. The U.S. is crashing.

*Lynn Porter
Eugene*

THE ELECTION NEXT TIME

Now that we have the November elections over, we can evaluate the "next time." The media frequently comments that our president was elected. This was not so. He did not receive the majority vote of an election. He was "selected" by a group of electors — people who were chosen by someone else. They followed the "rules" of the various states in casting their vote.

If the rules had been that the winner had to be a deceased canine — the dead dog would have won the presidency.

A change in our state law would help to elect a president by popular vote. We have one Democrat Senator who holds up that change. Neither we, nor the Republican or Democratic Party, are able to do anything about this. This state led the way 100 years ago in electing our state senators instead of having them appointed by others.

Now we don't seem to be able to manage the "popular vote" issue for president.

One man holds it up — even the discussion in the legislature of the issue.

So how can we make "Oregon great again?"

*Bob Cassidy
Eugene*

MIRACLE OF LIFE

A planet that can host life like ours is extremely rare. Gazing at the night sky, we can only speculate where else life appears. It is safe to assume that other stars surely have planets revolving in their gravitational field.

For life, some necessities are liquid water, distance from a star that warms but doesn't burn, a planet with a gravitational pull neither too small nor too large and possibly lightning.

The presence of the element carbon can also not be overstated. This building block has a valence of four that allows long and complex chains with tetrahedral backbones. Life on this planet also needs nitrogen, hydrogen and oxygen to start with. Our air, comprised of 78 percent nitrogen and 21 percent oxygen, allows us to "burn" carbohydrates and, in unusual circumstances, proteins for energy.

The one percent left in air is water vapor, halogens, noble gases, pollen, dust and (ideally) under 350 ppm carbon dioxide, which plants use to grow and we in turn eat.

First to develop from primordial ooze is the blueprint for life: deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). The messenger molecule that carries instructions back and forth from DNA to other parts of cells is ribonucleic acid (RNA).

Silicon is closest to carbon chemically. Divine evolution may allow computers to reach self-awareness with a quantum leap in technology. This new life form may compete or collaborate with us. Its hardware and software in the non-space matrix would require energy, but very little space (if any).

*David Ivan Piccioni
Eugene*

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