

GoNorth! Fennoscandia 2008

Module 4: Flora & Fauna: Climate Change - Chat #10

Thursday, April 17, 2008

Welcome to the FIRST chat on the topic of Climate Change!

Background: Carbon dioxide levels rise. Mercury climbs. Oceans warm. Coral reefs bleach. Glaciers melt. Sea levels rise. Sea ice thins. Permafrost thaws. Migration times vary. Lakes shrink. Snowpack declines. Ice shelves collapse. Wildfires increase. Droughts linger. Winter gets soft. Mountain streams run dry. Flowers get bigger. Trees turn green sooner. Exotic species invade. Cloud forests dry. Spring comes earlier. Fall leaves later.

Global warming or climate change? The National Academies explains that "The phrase climate change is growing in preferred use to global warming because it helps convey that there are changes in addition to rising temperatures." On the other hand, many prefer to continue using the term global warming, to convey a state of urgency. When GoNorth! team member Mille Porsild was asked to become a Climate Witness for the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in the United Kingdom, Matthew Davis, the climate change campaign director, explained that politicians and the people on the street in the UK are not relating to the term climate change, that they are not considering it a problem of their own! The name later chosen for the WWF campaign was Climate Chaos. This term acknowledges that the continuation of increased carbon dioxide levels at current rates will lead to dramatic environmental and climatic change on a global scale-and that we do not know exactly what this will mean, beyond that it will leave the global environmental balance in a state of chaos.

WWF's Climate Chaos campaign has been very successful so far, in large part because of an instrumental push from former Prime Minister Tony Blair to call for global action at the G8 meetings and in national government actions. As Blair has said, "I want to concentrate on what I believe to be the world's greatest environmental challenge: climate change."

Some questions to possibly open the chat with or discuss prior to the LIVE chat!

List at least three suggestions that might help reduce the emission of greenhouse gases.

Do you believe climate change is a serious environmental problem? Why, or why not?

What are the world's nations doing to prevent or reduce climate change? Is enough being done?

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About our Speaker: Katie Scheidt

Katie became involved with 'The Climate Project' in the Spring of 2006. After seeing the film "An Inconvenient Truth," she decided she had to do something about global warming. Katie educated herself about the issue and was selected to undergo intense training by Al Gore and his team of Scientists and Environmental Educators.

Katie has been presenting 'The Climate Project' slide show to various audiences of different ages, and engaging people in discussion about the problems of global warming and what we can do collectively to fix it. Katie is a student and staff member at The New School in New York City, NY.

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GoNorth! Education Basecamp: Good Afternoon Everyone! We are so glad that you could join us today.

GoNorth! Education Basecamp: This is our first chat on the topic of Climate Chaos. Katie is here and ready for your questions!

Ms Curran: Prospect Park Elem: Mpls, MN: 5th Grade: What do you think is the main cause of global warming?

GoNorth! Expert: The main cause of the rapid change in climate is mankind. The burning of fossil fuels and clearing of forests is causing a problem of increasing greenhouse gases to increase rapidly.

Mr Dimmer: 8th: Steffen: We watched An Inconvenient Truth this week and we are watching the 11th Hour next week. Have you seen the 11th Hour? If so, what did you think of it?

GoNorth! Expert: I have many different films, including Six Degrees by National Geographic and Life After People on the Discovery channel. I will have to see 11th Hour.

Team Fuji mkaila: Do you think enough change is happening around the world to stop global warming? If not what can we do more?

GoNorth! Expert: I am hopeful that we can do more in the very near future. There are many things you can do, the most important is to talk to the people in your life about this issue.

Team Freya: What can I do to help prevent global warming?

GoNorth! Expert: Besides talking to your friends and family about this issue, you can help your family make positive changes in your home to reduce your energy consumption and increase your recycling. There are many things.

Team Freya: My school is getting a solar panel. Will that make a very big difference?

GoNorth! Expert: That is excellent news. Everything makes a difference.

CRES-\$tone: What is better for the environment paper or plastic?

GoNorth! Expert: Neither is a good option. It is best to use reusable bags. You can find good ones in most grocery stores for very little money.

CRES-team goody: what do you think is destroying climate?

GoNorth! Expert: The word destroying is something I don't want to see happen. We can still make some very positive changes before the climate changes too much to fix it.

Cres/ Team Lightning: Have you gotten any good ideas how to save gas?

GoNorth! Expert: Walk or ride a bike. If you must use your car, accelerate less aggressively and keep your tire pressure at the right level. If you keep your car in good working order, it will be more efficient.

CRES-5C: So often at a local level especially in the newspaper we see people saying Global Warming is a farce and some scientists don't support the theory of global warming. That it's fake etc. How do you respond to such beliefs, groups, or persons?

GoNorth! Expert: It is proven that most of the climate change "deniers" are paid by oil and coal companies to spread lies denying well known scientific facts regarding climate change.

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Mr Kroeger: 6th MPS: We've have been learning about making our footprint smaller. What are you doing to lessen your impact on the planet?

GoNorth! Expert: I recycle as much as possible. Drive hybrid car. Take the train to work everyday. Just to name a few things. I also write to congress and the senate and spend hours educating the public about climate change. Oh yeah, one more thing, NO PLASTIC BAGS.

Team Freya: If you are supposed to reuse one bag, wouldn't it make an even bigger carbon dioxide footprint then a plastic or paper bag?

GoNorth! Expert: No, using a bag several times. Even if you use the same plastic grocery bag several times definitely saves energy. The bags I use are made from recycled materials which is ideal.

CRES-Stone: How much impact does 1 degree have on the environment?

GoNorth! Expert: I would suggest watching Six Degrees, the film details what happens with each degree of climate change, for example one degree can cause sea level rise and droughts.

Cres/ Team Lightning: When did You Start recycling

GoNorth! Expert: Several years ago, but I have paid more attention and cut my garbage more than half.

CRES-5C: A huge factor in getting a solar panel for our school was the fact that we watched An Inconvenient Truth, did research, and used the study resources on Polar Husky.

GoNorth! Expert: I think it is excellent that you worked together to help. Good work!

Team Fuji mkaila: Some say that hybrids may not be the car of the future, what do you think?

GoNorth! Expert: I think that we will adapt to new technology. I will choose whichever solution is available that is the best solution for the environment.

Team Fuji mkaila: What area of the world do you think the most pollution emission comes from?

GoNorth! Expert: I know for a fact that the United States is the worst polluter.

GoNorth! Expert: The United States creates 30% of the world's greenhouse gases and creates 70% of the world's garbage, and we are only 5% of the world's population!

CRES-Stone: Is recycling the #1 way to help the environment?

GoNorth! Expert: Recycling is an excellent way to help climate change. There are many things that will help, but that is an essential one.

Cres/ Team Lightning: What do you think of trees being used for paper do you think there is a better resource?

GoNorth! Expert: Use as little paper as possible, or use recycled paper. It's not as expensive as it used to be and is readily available at most office supply stores.

Room 12: How are you studying global warming and what have you found out so far?

GoNorth! Expert: That we all need to participate with each other and our government to make some big changes in the way we live.

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Cres/ Team Lightning: what is a footprint?

GoNorth! Expert: Your carbon footprint is the level that you, as an individual, of carbon dioxide you are sending into the atmosphere because of your daily life and how you live it.

Team Freya 2: If the country (USA) had to use either solar power or wind power, which would be more effective?

GoNorth! Expert: Solar and wind power need to be chosen based on the amount of wind and/or sun you have in your area. Experts can measure these things and make suggestions. In my town we have both at the same location.

Team Fuji mkaila: What alternate fuel/energy do you think is best?

GoNorth! Expert: Wind and solar power have very little or no negative effect on the environment.

Team Freya 2: What do you think we could do to stop or slow down global warming?

GoNorth! Expert: There are many different things we can do. Electricity causes 40% of the CO2 in the U.S. so reducing the amount of electricity you use is key. At least 10% of electricity use is drawn from items in your house that are turned off, it's called a vampire load.

CRES-team goody: do climate changes effect wildlife?

GoNorth! Expert: Yes, of course, polar bears especially. We are losing our biodiversity, which means the amount of plant and animal species is getting less. Many animals can't handle even slight changes in the average temperature.

Cres/ Team Lightning: What resource do you think we use most of, do you think we could use it more efficiently?

GoNorth! Expert: We can use gasoline and electricity much more efficiently.

Room 12: Do you think global warming will ever stop? And if so, when?

GoNorth! Expert: I think we have all the tools and technology we need to stop climate change, everyone just needs to decide that they will make changes in their lives to help.

Room 12: Are there any countries who truly care about recycling and global warming? If so, which one(s)?

GoNorth! Expert: I think there are many people in the U.S. and all over the world who care about it, I do. I just think we need to work together better and get more people involved.

Room 12: Have any species become extinct due to global warming?

GoNorth! Expert: There has been a dramatic increase in species extinction in recent history but I don't have an exact number. It would be a good opportunity to research that question.

CRES Team Lighyning My family recycles do you think that is a good thing for the environment?

GoNorth! Expert: Absolutely, keep it up. Remember, you can recycle not just newspapers and magazines, but also cereal and food boxes and junk mail. You can ask companies sending you mail, to cut down on it or send emails instead of paper.

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Team Fuji Mkalia Do you think that we someday can make an Ecopolis? An eco-friendly city/town.

GoNorth! Expert: There are already towns and developments that are like that. There are several different types of eco-friendly dwellings and buildings that have been designed and built. Look up the Hearst Building in New York City. They have a website.

CRES team Ginger How much will it help the environment just by turning off the sink when brushing your teeth?

GoNorth! Expert: That is something very basic. The world is running out of fresh water. Especially in Asia and Africa. We need to conserve water, and taking shorter showers saves a lot of energy. The hot water heater in your house is usually the number one user of energy.

CRES Stone Do you think that there will be only 5% forest in 5 years?

GoNorth! Expert: I hope not, there are a lot of initiative like Rainforest Alliance that are trying to replenish the world's tree population. You can also look at the National Arbor Day foundation and look at information about trees.

GoNorth! Education Basecamp: These are fabulous questions! We have about 10 minutes left....enough time for a few more questions.

CRES Team Lightning Do you think more schools should recycle?

GoNorth! Expert: Every single school, business and household in the entire world should recycle, so yes.

mnva: What else can people do to promote energy conservation at home.

GoNorth! Expert: Air dry washed clothing and wash them in cold water, only run the dishwasher when it is full. Turn off lights when you aren't using them. Don't leave electricity powered devices plugged in when you don't need them. Take shorter showers, and set your thermostat a little warmer in the summer and a little cooler in the winter, and of course, turn the water off when you brush your teeth.

Cres Lightning 2 How do you think most people would respond to finding a way to slow down global warming dramatically?

GoNorth! Expert: I think, and hope that people will become more involved in the future of the planet. If not for themselves, than for the children like you. You will have to deal with the consequences of climate change more than adults will.

guest: Do you think global warming will get so bad if people don't help it, we will be forced to live on a different planet?

GoNorth! Expert: The earth is our only home, so we need to take care of it. Colonizing Mars is not a practical solution. I hope it would never get so bad that we have to leave.

Guest: Do you think since global warming has improved since it had a huge melt on the polar icecap?

GoNorth! Expert: No, Arctic ice melt is an indication that things are not very good at all. The next few years are very important.

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Guest: What object do you think has the worst carbon footprint?

GoNorth! Expert: For an individual, I'm not sure. As a country, the United States is definitely number 1 worst.

Room 12 If global warming continues at the same rate, what will be the average temperature of say, Los Angeles in the year 2020?

GoNorth! Expert: I would have to look that up, I'm not sure. You could probably find the answer on the internet.

Mr Kroeger: 6th MPS: What is the best thing we can do to help protect the earth and our climate? Is there a #1 thing?

GoNorth! Expert: Pay attention to what you are doing to make climate change worse and change it immediately. Start with something simple and inexpensive like using reusable bags, conserving electricity, or stop buying bottled water and drink tap water out of a reusable water bottle. It will make you feel so good that you will want to do more.

GoNorth! Education Basecamp: While Katie is answering her last question, we want to thank you for joining us today. We had so much fun and we hope that you not only enjoyed yourself, but learned a lot too-

GoNorth! Education Basecamp: Lets Thank Katie for sharing her time with us

Ms Curran: Prospect Park Elem: Mpls, MN: 5th Grade: If there were one thing you want us to take away from our talk today, what would that be?

GoNorth! Expert: Educate your family and friends, do whatever you can within your power to make changes and teach others to do the same. We need to take care of each other, we are all in this together.

Room 12: Thank you very much for your answers. We will do research on line.

CRES Team Fuji: Thank you so much for answering my questions. They really helped. Team Fuji signing out.

Mr Kroeger: 6th MPS: Thanks Katie!!! We enjoyed being able to ask you questions and have you answer them too!!!

Mr Dimmer: 8th: Steffen: Thanks so much for taking the time to talk to us and answer our questions!!

Ms Curran: Prospect Park Elem: Mpls, MN: 5th Grade: Thank You Thank You Thank You!!!

GoNorth! Expert: Thank you! You all inspire me.

Thank You

From all of us at Team GoNorth!, Thank You for joining us today! Join us again next week on Tuesday, April 22 for the Second Chat on the topic of Climate Chaos with Terry Callaghan in Abisko, Sweden!