



CAPE COD TIMES

Climate action can help save our Cape

By David Mead-Fox

While the challenges were already significant, the recent presidential election may not bode well for actions to combat climate change at the federal level. Therefore, it is more important than ever to address climate change at the state and local levels. Massachusetts is a leader in clean energy, and this can continue with sufficient will and action.

There continues to be strong global support for climate action. At the recent U.N. summit on climate change, more than 360 U.S. businesses confirmed their support for the Paris climate agreement, including DuPont, Gap, General Mills, Nike, Mars and Kellogg. In addition, former Secretary of State John Kerry pointed out that investments in renewable energy in 2015 were about \$350 billion, a sixfold increase over 2014; according to a Nov. 16 article in the Christian Science Monitor, wind-powered electricity in the U.S. has tripled and solar power has grown by more than 30 times.

Global warming has led polar ice to melt, without refreezing, as it typically has. As a result, water levels around the world have risen an average of 5 inches in the past 100 years. Because of the slowing of the Gulf Stream and land subsidence, the rise has been approximately double that in Massachusetts. Therefore, sea level rise is an immediate danger to the Cape, as pointed out in a February 2016 piece in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The U.S. Geological Survey reports that climate change on the Cape is already leading to groundwater threat, wetland loss, coastal erosion and inundation.

What can we do to defend the Cape we all love? Many are already involved in a variety of ways, but through a foundation of education and engagement, more can become involved and more can be accomplished. Citizenship and, indeed, democracy itself entail taking a stand to defend our communities, our Cape and our planet.

Action steps for the Cape can include:

- Ongoing education and publicity about the specific climate change impacts on the Cape.
- Advocacy and action to maintain and enhance the Cape's natural infrastructure, such as marshes.
- Efforts to reduce the Cape's carbon footprint through energy conservation and increased reliance on renewable energy.

Democracy's guiding purpose is to ensure that our country continues to be "by and for the people." This imperfect but remarkable experiment must be continuously nurtured and maintained. It will take sustained civic engagement to defend our democracy and environment.

While many are discouraged by the election's outcome and also, perhaps, by a sense of inevitability about climate change, the words of Martin Luther King apply to what we do with our only planetary home: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice" - in this case, we can think of actions to respond to climate change as justice for the planet and, therefore, ourselves.

I believe we can find a way to fulfill the challenge and positive message of King, and of Abraham Lincoln: "We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory will yet swell when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

In the words of Barack Obama in his farewell speech, "The most important office in a democracy (is) citizen. So, you see, that's what our democracy demands. It needs you. Not just when there's an election, not just when your own narrow interest is at stake, but over the full span of a lifetime."

- David Mead-Fox of Wellfleet is a board member of the Massachusetts Climate Action Network.