



To: the Board of Supervisors, Pima County
Re: June 6, BOS meeting, Addendum 2, RESOLUTION NO. 2017 - 39

June 4, 2017

The Tucson Mountains Association regards global warming driven largely by human use of fossil fuels as a serious threat to the planet. Our local region, including the Tucson Mountains, is being hit by global warming, and the expected damage in the both the near and far future is a cost far too great to ignore. We applaud the resolution that the Board of Supervisors is to consider at its June 6 meeting, and urge all supervisors to sign on.

The decision by the President of the United States to withdraw from the Paris climate accords is extremely damaging and will go down in history as one of the great mistakes of the 21st Century. It is a decision that looks to the past without an appreciation of the costs of failure to take major action to curb global warming, and without an appreciation of the opportunities that taking action would provide in new technology development in which the USA excels. The decision is made without an appreciation of the new jobs and yes new wealth to accrue from policies that look to the future in curbing global warming.

Pima County is a place that has abundant opportunity to be at the forefront of new energy technology. It has much to lose from unabated climate change, but much to gain from being part of the solution. We urge Pima County to both sign the resolution and to go further by joining with other local governments, cities and states in the USA in coalitions pledged to take decisive action on climate change. The state of Arizona was an original member of the Western Climate Initiative, but has now withdrawn. We urge Pima County to join as soon as possible, take decisive action to limit greenhouse gas emissions in Pima County, and encourage other governments in this state and elsewhere to do likewise.

Please also see the attachment, which is the President's letter to our members February 2017.

Sincerely

Peter Chesson
President, Tucson Mountains Association

Attachment: TMA President's letter February 2017

President's letter, Tucson Mountains Association, Newsletter, February 2017

Two thousand and sixteen was an extraordinary year. A divisive political campaign led to an astonishing outcome and put a dark cloud over the future. It was also the year with the highest global average temperature from instrumental records. The overwhelming scientific consensus is that the planet is warming dangerously and that the primary cause is carbon dioxide (CO₂) released into the atmosphere from burning fossil fuels in power plants, in cars, by industry and so on. The basic facts of global warming are simple and not controversial. CO₂ traps heat. The more of it in the atmosphere, the hotter it gets. Fossil fuels (coal, oil and natural gas) were laid down over many millions of years from dead plants and animals, compressed and transformed in the Earth's sediments. Major coal deposits date back to huge forests over 300 million years ago. They sucked CO₂ out of the atmosphere, built wood with it, died and formed coal. Now we are burning the 300 million old carbon in that coal and releasing it into the atmosphere as CO₂ once again. We have not been doing this in a major way very long: only for the last 150 years. Just two human lifetimes. Yet, we have dramatically increased the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere and have produced temperature increases that we are all feeling. Severe weather around the globe has become more common, and much worse is predicted for the future if we do not act strongly now.

Our new president has said this is hoax. A few scientists on the fringe, who question the consensus of the vast majority, provide fuel for cynical politicians to sow doubt. There is uncertainty about the speed and severity of global warming due to the complexity of the Earth: how much heat the oceans can absorb, how their currents will change, how much CO₂ can be absorbed again by forests, and so on. Uncertainty about these details provides ammunition for climate deniers, but these details do not change the basic facts: the climate is warming, fossil fuels are the cause, and solutions exist. Vested interests make fortunes cooking the planet. We, the people, must oppose them, for ourselves, for future generations, and for life on the planet. Global warming is no longer a theory about something in the future. It is here now, it is costly and disruptive now, and it is accelerating. The Paris climate agreement between nearly every nation on Earth paved the way for the solution. To work, it needs a strong commitment from the United States. We have the authority, the expertise, and the technological capacity to save the planet and to profit from it by selling the solutions to the rest of the world. We do not have to choose between the economy and the environment.

Living in the Tucson Mountains, we all know about heat. How much hotter and longer do we want our summers to be? How much more severe our droughts and our storms? How much stress will we place on the animals and plants that make the Tucson Mountains their home? It is easy to forget how different human lives are now from just 150 years ago. Then there was no electricity, no cars, no planes, no air conditioning, no modern appliances. Lives were much harder lives. But our present comfort comes with unforeseen costs when we power our lives with fossil fuels. Now more than ever before, the politicians need to hear from the people. President Obama put rules in place to set the nation on the right course. We need to apply pressure to the Congress and the new administration to keep these rules and to go further. The coastal states of the US have been leaders in climate action. Arizona could be doing much more than it is. The more states take strong action, the more difficult it will be for the new administration to thwart them. We can start here at the local level with Pima County and the City of Tucson by charging our local governments to develop strong climate action plans. TMA is taking this on as a priority for the wellbeing of our beloved home.