

## ► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Roy Kroeger, REHS

## It's Time to Get Involved in Climate Change

Environmental health is a topic that is near and dear to my heart. It is something that I have been doing for nearly three decades. We have more than one dozen different environmental health programs in my office, from food safety to water quality and vector control to land use. These programs are all essential and matter to our public. An area of environmental health that I believe is just as important yet seldomly addressed is climate change.

Yes, I know many people will ask how a local health department in a community of one hundred thousand people can make a difference in climate change? It won't even make a blip on the screen in the short term. Consider that food regulations started locally in European communities and at the state level in the U.S. Small wastewater regulations were also created locally in Egypt hundreds of years ago. We need more local and state jurisdictions to start looking proactively at climate change to make a difference. Policies at local levels will evolve and become more common on the national stage. No policy maker wants to rock the boat, but community advocacy and authentic leadership can start making a difference. I feel environmental health can and should be part of that change.

So, what can local environmental health departments do to improve climate change? First and foremost, we need to engage in the conversation. Environmental health professionals know their communities and should be aware of the community issues. Take, for example, land use ordinances: when these rules are revised, we should be at the table encouraging building officials and elected officials to adopt code sections

*Like it or not, climate change has become the issue of our lifetime.*

that can help reduce climate change. These sections may include parts of the energy code or green building codes. Solar panels and private windmills are used in my part of the country to reduce heating costs, but they also help reduce carbon dioxide. These codes are being used to reduce the types of heating sources that emit greenhouse gases. The codes are also being used to encourage developers to create more mixed-use developments, which minimizes the need of residents to drive across town for their most basic needs. Land-use planning can also increase nonmotorized transportation routes and encourage improved parking spots for alternative fuel vehicles. There are hundreds of ideas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions locally and environmental health should be a leading advocate for these changes.

I could write pages and pages of stories on how extreme weather events have damaged the economy from flooding, fires, droughts, disease, and air quality issues. Extreme weather events have caused taxpayers to spend trillions of dollars on recovery from adverse events. The recent fires in Boulder County, Colorado, are the latest events where over 1,000 homes were destroyed and nearly

200 homes and businesses were damaged. Many residents will be out of jobs, many have lost their transportation to get to those jobs that remain, and the residents have become dependent on the community to care for them until they recover.

Extreme weather events are a huge detriment to many environmental health programs because our environmental health resources turn from doing our routine work to being a significant participant in recovery efforts. Regardless of the disaster—flood, fire, disease, etc.—we have to drop many of our routine inspections that generate revenue for our programs and start mitigating problems in restaurants, schools, homes, or other places. Most often, these efforts do not support our budgets.

Rather than focusing on the negatives that climate change has on the economy, I prefer to look at the economic opportunities created with investment into climate change initiatives. A recent study conducted at the request of the G20 Finance Ministers by the Carbon Disclosure Project was reported in *Forbes* (Ellsmoor, 2019). The report states that there are at least 2.1 trillion dollars of business opportunities in climate change according to nearly one half of the top 500 global companies mentioned in the report. The potential considers the losses that could be in the hundreds of billions due to shifting technologies and the migration of employees from one sector to another (Ellsmoor, 2019).

Climate change is a divisive political issue in the U.S. and worldwide, but so much common ground can build the foundation of change. I am not supportive of the extreme gloom and doom projections that the earth

will come to an end or that entire nations will be wiped off the face of the planet by a certain date. These projections are scare tactics that often do more harm than good. Regardless of your political affiliation, no one wants to continue having extreme weather events, nor do they want to have to spend money and use resources to recover from them. People are losing their lives and no one wants to lose a loved one to a disaster.

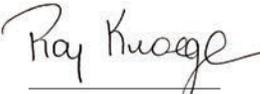
There are many who disagree that humans are responsible for climate change. Whether that is true or not, the facts are that the climate is changing. Some people may argue that climate change is only a cycle, and again I say if that is true or not, we are only on this planet for a minimal amount of time and we need to do what we can to improve the world

for younger generations. Regardless of who or what the cause is, the responsible solution is to try and improve the situation.

We, as environmental health professionals, have the knowledge and influence of policy makers and our communities to make a difference. We have friends and professional peers that are experts or know of experts we can turn to for more information. As public health professionals, we are responsible for participating in the conversation and representing our communities with all environmental health issues, including climate change. Like it or not, **climate change has become the issue of our lifetime.**

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) is committed to making a difference in the climate change debate.

For more information on that commitment, please look at the climate change information on the NEHA website at [www.neha.org/climate-change](http://www.neha.org/climate-change).

  
President@neha.org

## Reference

Ellsmoor, J. (2019, June 21). Businesses would gain \$2.1 trillion by embracing low-carbon tech. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesellsmoor/2019/06/21/businesses-would-gain-us2-1-trillion-by-embracing-low-carbon-tech/>

# SUPPORT THE NEHA ENDOWMENT FOUNDATION

The NEHA Endowment Foundation was established to enable NEHA to do more for the environmental health profession than its annual budget might allow. Special projects and programs supported by the foundation will be carried out for the sole purpose of advancing the profession and its practitioners.

Individuals who have contributed to the foundation are listed below by club category. These listings are based on what people have actually donated to the foundation—not what they have pledged. Names will be published under the appropriate category for 1 year; additional contributions will move individuals to a different category in the following year(s). For each of the categories, there are a number of ways NEHA recognizes and thanks contributors to the foundation. If you are interested in contributing to the Endowment Foundation, please call NEHA at (303) 756-9090. You can also donate online at [www.neha.org/donate](http://www.neha.org/donate).

*Thank you.*

## DELEGATE CLUB

(\$1–\$99)

*Name in the Journal for 1 year.*

Tunde M. Akinmoladun  
Steven K. Ault  
Michael E. Bish  
Logan Blank  
Marnie Boardman  
Glenn W. Bryant  
Kimberley Carlton  
Deborah Carpenter  
James G. Cortelyou  
Lawrence Cyran  
Kristen Day  
Thomas P. Devlin  
Samantha Donahue  
Wendy L. Fanassel  
Shelby Foerg  
Christopher J. Foster  
Mary K. Franks  
Debra Freeman  
Abdelrahim Gador  
Dolores Gough  
Eric S. Hall  
Catherine Hefferin  
Scott E. Holmes  
Jamison S. Honeycutt  
Douglas J. Irving  
Lamin Jadama

Leila Judd  
Bonnie Koenig  
Richard Lavin  
Allan R. Levesque  
Chanelle Lopez  
Ann M. Loree  
Stephanie Mach  
James C. Mack  
Patricia Mahoney  
Patrick J. Maloney  
Alan Masters  
Kaiser Milo  
Peter J. Mitchell  
Derek Monthei  
Naing Myint  
John A. Nakashima  
Brion A. Ockenfels  
Daniel B. Oerther  
Christopher B. Olson  
Joe Otterbein  
Munira Peermohamed  
Kathryn Pink  
Frank Powell  
Jeffrey A. Priebe  
Mike K. Pyle  
Jeremiah Ramos  
Roger T. Reid  
Catherine Rockwell  
Luis O. Rodriguez  
Anthony Sawyer

Philip H. Scharenbrock  
Marilou O. Scroggs  
Frank Semeraro  
Karla Shoup  
Christopher J. Smith  
Robert A. Stauffer  
Dillion Streuber  
M.L. Tanner  
Tamika Thompson  
Ralph Utter  
Kendra Vieira  
James M. White  
Dawn Whiting

## HONORARY MEMBERS CLUB

(\$100–\$499)  
*Letter from the NEHA president and name in the Journal for 1 year.*

Freda W. Bredy  
Kenneth C. Danielson  
Michele DiMaggio  
Annette Eshelby  
Darryl J. Flaspahler  
Michael G. Halko  
Donna K. Heran  
Gwendolyn R. Johnson  
T. Stephen Jones  
Ayaka Kubo Lau

Philip Leger  
Sandra M. Long  
Robert A. Maglievaz  
John A. Marcello  
Victoria A. Murray  
Priscilla Oliver  
Susan V. Parris  
James E. Pierce  
Lary A. Ramdin  
Jonathan P. Rubingh  
Joseph W. Russell  
Michèle Samarya-Timm  
Vickie Schleuning  
Mario Seminara  
John H. Shrader  
Joshua R. Skeggs  
Jacqueline Taylor  
Linda Van Houten  
Tom A. Vyles  
Sandra Whitehead  
Lisa Whitlock

## 21st CENTURY CLUB

(\$500–\$999)  
*Name submitted in drawing for a free 1-year NEHA membership and name in the Journal for 1 year.*

Thomas J. Butts  
Ned Therien

## SUSTAINING MEMBERS CLUB

(\$1,000–\$2,499)

*Name submitted in drawing for a free 2-year NEHA membership and name in the Journal for 1 year.*

James J. Balsamo, Jr.  
Brian K. Collins  
George A. Morris  
Peter H. Sansone  
Peter M. Schmitt  
James M. Speckhart

## AFFILIATES CLUB

(\$2,500–\$4,999)

*Name submitted in drawing for a free AEC registration and name in the Journal for 1 year.*

Timothy N. Hatch  
Welford C. Roberts

## EXECUTIVE CLUB AND ABOVE

(>\$5,000)

*Special invitation to the AEC President's Reception and name in the Journal for 1 year.*

Vincent J. Radke