

Roth: Our own efforts to reduce carbon

By [Jim Roth](#), Director and Chair of the Firm's Clean Energy Practice Group. This column was [originally published in The Journal Record](#) on October 10, 2016.



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Last week we discussed the historic nature of recent carbon levels and the Earth's atmosphere. Scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration measured late September levels to remain in excess of 400 ppm (parts per million) at their monitoring station in Mauna Loa, Hawaii. The lowest carbon levels of an entire year typically occur in the later part of September, yet this September carbon dioxide levels remaining above 400 ppm for the first time in recorded

history.

The surge in carbon dioxide levels has occurred in large part because manmade emissions have increased 25 percent in the last 20 years, as more and more industrialization occurs across the globe. And according to researchers around the world, the historic increase over 400 ppm for an entire year may not change the ultimate fundamentals around climate change, but it has certainly represented a hastening of the coming dangers.

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says that carbon dioxide concentrations need to be stabilized at 450 ppm if we are to have a decent chance of avoiding the 2 degree Celsius increase in global warming. And as we have now known for years, the 2C increase projection is expected to carry catastrophic consequences.

At this point in time, to avoid the 2C increase in global temperature, would require a 40 percent to 70 percent emissions cut compared to 2010 levels and zero, yes zero, emissions by the end of this current century in 84 years. There are some signs of progress and hope but much remains to be done.

For example, the large global boost in renewable energies, having replaced dirtier emitting power plants (like coal and other resources), have at least slowed the growth in global emissions. Our own state is now ranked fourth in America in terms of installed wind capacity and is on track to become third by the end of 2016, surpassing the larger state of California.

So what can we do in our own lives to help make a difference?

There are a number of great online resources, with many great ideas for how you can customize efforts in your own life, such as:

- www.carbonfund.org – whose Motto is: Reduce what you can, Offset what you can't.
- www.cotap.org – which stands for Carbon Offsets to Alleviate Poverty.
- www.ecowatch.org – which offers ideas for drastically reducing America's carbon emissions and grow the economy.

These sites and many others suggest solid ideas for simple things in each of our own lives, such as shortening our work commute by car-pooling, moving closer to work and working longer days but fewer of them.

And most scientists and observers suggest that Americans could make the most immediate and dramatic reduction to our own carbon footprint by simply changing some food and eating habits. It's true that we as a people often buy more food than we eat, causing massive amounts of agricultural production that is unnecessary. We also consume large amounts of meats and milk, which cause animal farming to create excessive amounts of methane and other gases.

According to research, the average American is consuming 83 grams of animal-based protein a day, well above the daily-recommended amount of 51 grams. So it appears that some things we can do to benefit our own planet, might actually start with more immediate benefits to our own bodies and lives.

Please consider ways to help Mother Earth too.

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