

Roth: Let it snow

By [Jim Roth](#), Director and Chair of the Firm's Clean Energy Practice Group. This column was [originally published in The Journal Record](#) on January 9, 2016.



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Let it snow

Snow: (noun) a precipitation in the form of small white ice crystals formed directly from the water vapor of the air at a temperature of less than 32 degrees Fahrenheit/0 degrees Celsius. (Merriam-Webster)

Snow seems to be something that people either love or hate. I love it. In fact, snowfall seems to trigger some inner kid in me, forever long as I can remember, that allows me to enjoy the beauty of it and even admire the way it can slow the hectic world around us even if just for a day. As a kid in the 1970s, I enjoyed making igloos that would last for days and weeks around Kansas City, where I grew up and sledding was

also a fun experiment with gravity and speed.

And I recognize that some people really aren't fans of snow and winter weather. To some it's just dangerous and an interruption to school, work and life. But there are reasons that all people should welcome snow and what it means for our world. Here's what I mean.

If you eat you should welcome snow, as it's a vital part of agriculture production in many parts of America and beyond. Our farmers need snow to provide critical moisture to fields ahead of the planting in the spring. Once it melts it's providing irrigation across all parts of a farmer's field, even those areas beyond the reach of irrigation systems.

And it's even more necessary to help blanket winter crops like Oklahoma's winter wheat, providing a snow blanket of protection from those extremely cold days impacting the fall plantings. Agricultural shortages, as we've seen from drought conditions across parts of our country, are a direct hurt on those producers and an indirect hurt to your family's budget.

If you enjoy nature you should welcome snow, as its thermal insulation helps many species dig snow caves for hibernating through the winter. Fresh snows, which have a high percentage of trapped air, help to reduce heat transfer and provide great insulation for many animals to survive their cold winters.

If you like a little quiet around you then you certainly must enjoy how fresh snow can lessen sound waves as the snow absorbs sound at the surface. You can probably remember how quiet life feels when you walk outside into a fresh snow. It's a rare chance to turn down the volume around us.

And beyond these more immediate, obvious positives of snow and snowfall impacting our daily lives, even more significant benefits of snow are how it serves as Earth's sunblock and water source for our entire planet's sake.

If you've ever looked down at snow on a sunny day you too know that it really reflects the sunlight back off the ground. This may be a nuisance to anyone without sunglasses on, but this reality is critical to helping cool the planet, something that must happen in these winter months or Earth's climate risks accelerate even faster. And as daylight hours increase toward the spring, late winter and spring snowfalls are even more important as a sunblock, albeit they are becoming rarer over the last 50 years.

Finally, snowmelt from layers of packed snow that have accumulated in mountain regions are one of the primary sources of fresh water on Earth and here in America. It is estimated that our Western states may get as much as 75 percent of their water supply from these snowmelts and even the East Coast areas benefit from the same life-sustaining annual thaw.

So whether you may fear that next snowfall because of traffic worries or you bounce out of bed happy to enjoy a day of play, please know that those tiny frozen water molecules blanketing the Earth are critical to our very survival. Plus, they can be a lot of fun for a kids of all ages.

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