

Now is time to stem global warming

By **Mary Christina Wood**

This time, the waiting really is over.

A United Nations summary report issued Feb. 2, with input from more than 2,500 scientific experts from 130 countries, confirms that human greenhouse gas emissions are causing accelerated global warming. Further debate will recklessly waste time and energy we need to avert global disaster.

Many Americans have responded to global warming by reducing their own carbon footprints. Such efforts, while important, conceal our national chaos. We cannot curb greenhouse gas emissions without government leadership. Citizens across the Pacific Northwest should demand action from local, state and federal officials today. The president, Congress, state legislatures and governors across the country

should confront global warming as a supreme national priority.

The UN's top climate official has called upon governments to cut greenhouse gas emissions 60 percent to 80 percent by 2050. To reach this goal, we must completely overhaul our carbon infrastructure, moving toward energy efficiency, clean industry, public transportation and waste reduction. Our governmental agencies hold the resources and authority to accomplish this. Every agency should immediately create a strategic plan calibrated to a reduction goal. Because the carbon problem transcends all societal sectors, no agency should be exempt from this massive undertaking.

The good news is that, if agencies act now, they can retool our sectors in a way that meets our individual, family and business needs. The bad news is that agencies still act as if global warming didn't exist. They still permit the same pollution that brought us this crisis. Why? Because there is no strong leadership from elected officials.

Inaction has unspeakable consequences for humanity. The UN report follows an "Urgent Call to

tures. Existing carbon dioxide levels are higher than any over the past 650,000 years, and what we emit today will be around for generations. Food shortages, rising seas, heat waves, flooding, drought and intense storms like Hurricane Katrina mark the future for ourselves and our children. But if we act now, the UN report makes clear, we can still avoid the most catastrophic climate shock.

With few exceptions, our political leaders sit idle. Some still dismiss climate predictions as exaggerated. But equally dangerous are those politicians who acknowledge the problem but propose inadequate solutions like biofuel subsidies alone. Such measures mislead the public into believing the problem is under control.

Political will grows overnight when ordinary citizens demand action. If your bank statement showed that bankers were permitting your personal account to drain away, you would interrupt your daily routine to demand an immediate accounting, and a change in the bank's practices. We can afford to do no less when it comes to natural assets essential to our survival.

Did you know?

Among the findings of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued Feb. 2 were:

- Global warming is "very likely" caused by man, meaning more than 90 percent certain.
- If nothing is done to change current emissions patterns of greenhouse gases, global temperature could increase as much as 11 degrees Fahrenheit by 2100. But if the world does get greenhouse gas emissions under control, the best estimate is about 3 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Sea levels are projected to rise 7 to 23 inches by the end of the century. Add another 4 to 8 inches if recent, surprising melting of polar ice sheets continues.

Action" issued by America's leading scientists telling President Bush that Earth is "seriously imperiled" by global warming.

Government's passivity has already locked us into rising tempera-

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