

October 21, 2020
To The Editor
Wallowa County Chieftain
Enterprise, Oregon

It is January 2100, a new century in Wallowa County. Still no snow pack in the Wallowa's again, pretty much like the last decade. Action to reduce fossil fuel emissions since the Great Pandemic of 2020 has been meager. Unforeseen feedback loops pushed the buildup of CO2 in the atmosphere resulting in a 4 degree increase in average winter temperatures and 6 degree increase in summer temperatures east of the Cascades. Unexpected periods of torrential rains followed by long months of drought has made farming in the valley precarious with many bankruptcies. Predictable sun and rain patterns are gone.

The High Lakes have mostly dried up in the late summer and the Wallowa, Hurricane, Lostine, and Minam Rivers careen between flooding washouts and being almost dry by late summer.

The natural springs in the canyon country peter out early and the cattle ponds are bone dry by mid summer. Snow fed Downey Lake on The Divide, once spring time home to 250 species of nesting birds is cracked hardpan by mid-summer. The snow does not stick to the high breaks of the Joseph, Imnaha, and Big Sheep anymore, canyon rivers are just a trickle by late summer. Hay crops are smaller and ranchers are leaving their cattle on the range late into winter. Overgrazing is now a serious problem resulting in stunted spring bunch grass in the canyons. More frequent wildfires sweep through the bone-dry forested ravines taking out the large Ponderosa Pine.

Water fights now erupt in serious legal battles between the farmers in the South and North ends of the Valley. There is talk of stopping the ditch companies from diverting water from Wallowa Lake. Water allocations have now been rationed for several decades, well below the old water right levels. Farmers only get one hay crop and water thirsty crops like alfalfa are not sustainable. No one irrigates after the first crop anymore. Property owners around The Lake also want less water diverted for irrigation.

If you want to see science-based projections for this warming scenario of the future, see the University of Washington climate research at <https://cig.uw.edu/resources/analysis-tools/projections/> And, or read *Our Final Warning: Six Degrees of Climate Emergency* by Mark Lynas.

In the last four years CO2 emissions have increased. For the presidential debates climate change was the lowest priority for voters. Time is running out to act seriously on climate change.

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