



## **Global Warming Won't Wait Why We Must Act Now**

### **Global warming is real and urgent**

Scientific evidence continues to accumulate on the reality of global warming and the urgency of curbing the emissions that are causing it. The failure to address emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> and other pollutants that cause global warming is out of sync with scientific and economic reality.

The National Academy of Sciences, in a 2001 report requested by the president, found that emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> and other pollutants have already raised average worldwide temperatures by about 1 degree Fahrenheit over the last century.<sup>1</sup> According to the administration's 2002 *Climate Action Report*, average U.S. temperatures could rise another 3 to 9 degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the century – with far-reaching effects:<sup>2</sup>

- Higher temperatures will worsen air pollution.
- Sea levels will rise, flooding coastal areas.
- Heat waves will be more frequent and intense.
- More droughts and wildfires will occur in some regions.
- More heavy rains and flooding will happen in some regions.
- Treasured species will disappear from historic ranges.

Many of these changes have already begun. Global warming pollution has more than doubled the likelihood of heat waves like the one that killed more than 15,000 people in Europe in 2003.<sup>3</sup> Twenty percent of the Arctic polar ice cap has melted since 1979 and at least half of the ice cap is projected to melt by the end of this century, along with a significant portion of the Greenland Ice Sheet, as the Arctic region warms an additional 7 to 13 degrees Fahrenheit by 2100.<sup>4</sup> Melting ice sheets and glaciers threaten low-lying coastal areas, including our most heavily-populated coastal cities, with rising sea levels, deadly storm surges, and salt water intrusion into drinking water supplies.

### **The longer we delay, the more painful the cuts**

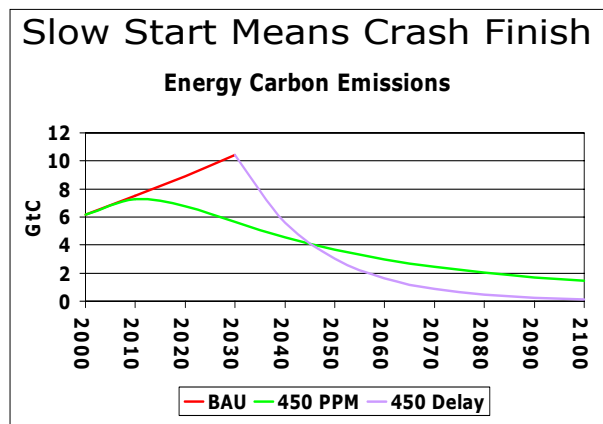
Unlike conventional pollution, global warming is a problem with enormous built-in inertia.

- Most conventional pollutants wash out of the air within a few days or weeks, meaning that pollution levels come down almost immediately after emissions are cut. But CO<sub>2</sub> and most other greenhouse gases stay in the atmosphere for hundreds of years. So once the atmospheric concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> has been raised, it *stays* raised, locking us

into decades, even centuries, of impacts. For all practical purposes, we cannot go backward.

- Coal plants being planned now will still be operating on the nation's 300<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2076. If not designed upfront to capture their CO<sub>2</sub>, these plants will emit billions of tons of heat-trapping carbon dioxide over their operating life. This "carbon lock-in" will cost us both in damage from global warming and economic disruption when we decide to act. The conventional coal plants projected to be built worldwide during the next 25 years would, over their lifetimes, emit 145 billion tons of carbon—an amount equal to total emissions from all sources during the last 25 years.
- Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> has already increased to 380 parts per million (ppm) – up from 280 ppm before the industrial revolution. How much higher will we commit ourselves to go: 450 ppm; 550 ppm; 650 ppm; higher still?

- If we don't want to reach levels that trigger irreversible damage, we must limit how much carbon emissions we put into the atmosphere over the next decades. So that gives us a choice: the more carbon pollution we put in the air now, the less we'll be able to put there later. Delaying action now will only force more rapid, and more expensive, reductions later. Unrestrained emissions growth is locking us into two bad choices – *either dangerously high CO<sub>2</sub> levels or crash reductions later.*



### Industry leaders get it

More and more industry leaders are recognizing that scientific consensus and rising public concern make action on global warming inevitable.

- American Electric Power, the nation's largest power company, says: "Enough is known about the science and environmental impacts of climate change for us to take actions to address its consequences."<sup>5</sup>
- "We accept that the science on global warming is overwhelming," says John Rowe, CEO of Exelon Corp., adding: "There should be mandatory carbon constraints."<sup>6</sup>
- Jim Rodgers, CEO of Cinergy Corp., says: "One day we will live in a carbon-constrained world."<sup>7</sup>
- And according to Wayne Brunetti, CEO of Xcel Energy: "Give us a date, tell us how much we need to cut, give us the flexibility to meet the goals, and we'll get it done."<sup>8</sup>

That is why legislation that begins to limit CO<sub>2</sub> and other global warming pollution now would begin to reduce the enormous risks of global warming while also reducing costs and giving industry the certainty it needs.

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<sup>1</sup> National Research Council/National Academy of Sciences (2001), *Climate Change Science: An Analysis of Some Key Questions*, pp. 3, 13, and 16, <http://books.nap.edu/html/climatechange/climatechange.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Climate Action Report – 2002* 84 (2002), available at [http://yosemite.epa.gov/oar/globalwarming.nsf/UniqueKeyLookup/SHSU5BWHU6/\\$File/uscar.pdf](http://yosemite.epa.gov/oar/globalwarming.nsf/UniqueKeyLookup/SHSU5BWHU6/$File/uscar.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Stott, *et al.*, “Human Contribution to the European Heatwave of 2003,” *Nature* (432:610), Dec. 2, 2004; Schär and Jendritsky, “Hot News from Summer 2003,” *Nature* (432:559), Dec. 2, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, *Impacts of a Warming Arctic* (Cambridge Univ. Press 2004), available at <http://amap.no/acia/>.

<sup>5</sup> American Electric Power, *Position Paper on Global Climate Change*,” p.1 [http://www.aep.com/environmental/climate/docs/Climate\\_Change\\_Position\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.aep.com/environmental/climate/docs/Climate_Change_Position_Paper.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> *Global Warming*, Businessweek, Aug. 16, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> “Cinergy: Awakening a Sustainability Giant,” GreenBiz, [http://www.greenbiz.com/news/reviews\\_third.cfm?NewsID=27409](http://www.greenbiz.com/news/reviews_third.cfm?NewsID=27409)

<sup>8</sup> *Global Warming*, Businessweek, Aug. 16, 2004.