

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

As talks go on, so do emissions

This week, representatives from 197 nations are meeting in Glasgow to set limits on greenhouse gas emissions.

These international confabs have been going on for 30 years now, starting with Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

Each time, nations pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but following the conferences, emissions continue to increase.

The 2015 Paris climate accord set a goal of cutting emissions to keep the rise in global temperatures from pre-industrial times to “well below” 2 degrees Celcius. But worldwide emissions are continuing to increase.

The concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is now higher than any time in the last 800,000 years. The last time concentrations were this high, the oceans were 30 to 60 feet higher than they are today. That would put cities from New York to London to Shanghai completely underwater.

The reason that hasn't happened is climate lag. The oceans, which cover 71 percent of the earth's surface, warm much more slowly than land, just as a pan of water on a hot stove takes several minutes to boil.

Even if emissions stopped increasing tomorrow, the earth would continue to warm because of the green-

house gases already in the atmosphere.

This year we've seen a taste of what's coming. Unprecedented heat waves in the Pacific Northwest and Canada. Millions of acres of wild-fires in California. A years-long drought dehydrating the West.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

A U.N. science panel says we must cut greenhouse gas emissions, now, or face irreversible catastrophe.

Is everything beyond us, or are there some small steps we can take in Pottstown?

Piers Sellers, a former U.S. astronaut working for NASA, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2016 and given a year to live. (The prognosis proved correct.)

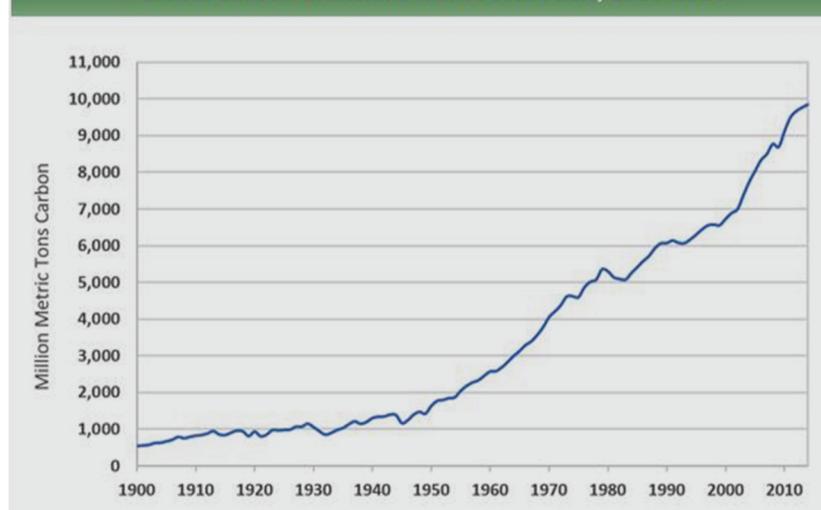
Rather than retire, Sellers decided to stick with his life's purpose and keep working with his colleagues to ameliorate climate change.



PIERS SELLERS

In Pottstown, we need to pick a few things we can do, now, to help protect the planet. (More Thursday.)

Global Carbon Emissions from Fossil Fuels, 1900-2014



THE CHART SAYS IT ALL — To avoid climate disaster, global greenhouse gas emissions must be cut 50 percent by the end of this decade. That's not happening. Moreover, they must be eliminated entirely by 2050. Yet for all the years of talk and pledges, emissions are still rising.