



EASTERN OREGON CLIMATE CHANGE COALITION [EOC3]

APRIL 2026 NEWSLETTER

Editor's Note

Welcome to the 12th edition of the EOC3 newsletter.

We didn't have much of a winter, did we? Climate change science, and climate scientists, have told us for years our global appetite for fossil fuels means that we should expect warmer and wetter winters in the Pacific Northwest. While one winter, or one year, doesn't prove the case, there is no denying that we have just experienced one of the warmest winters on record. While there was plenty of precipitation in November and December to build a good snowpack, the unusually warm temperatures meant that the moisture fell as rain, or quickly melting snow, even in the mountains. Many ski areas failed to open at all this winter, and even the most reliable areas had drastically shortened seasons.

Statewide, Oregon's snowpack is alarmingly low, and we have reached the point where early spring snowstorms won't bail us out. Crater Lake, typically one of the most snow-bound areas of the Cascades, currently has less than 8 inches of snow water equivalent (SWE), about 28 inches below normal for April (and 3-4 inches below the previous low record for April). In the Blue Mountains, the SWE is about 30% of normal in northeast Oregon but about 2% of normal in the John Day and Malheur watersheds.

So, we didn't have to break out the snow shovels this winter, and our winter roads stayed remarkably clear. That's a bit of good news, I suppose, but it looks like our fish, farmers, and firefighters will be facing a tough summer. Low rivers and reservoirs mean less water available for irrigation and instream flow and the lack of a good snowpack means wildland fuels will be much drier, much earlier.

During my career in wildland fire, I was often asked in the spring what the upcoming fire season would be like. The best answer I ever heard to this question was "ask me in late June". By that time the trajectory was set; while late July and August are almost always hot and dry, a dry May and June meant a longer and more severe wildfire season.

We know that weather is not the same as climate. The warm winter we just experienced (weather) does not make a trend in local or global temperatures (climate) but at some point an accumulation of unusually warm and dry seasons should make it obvious to even the most hard core deniers that our earth's climate is changing.

Bill Aney, Editor

From the Chair

There is so much happening daily in our country that it is hard to keep up, let alone stay engaged. With that I want to share a few items we are tracking.

During our December Climate Conversation, Kelly Campbell of Columbia Riverkeeper presented a program entitled "The Dangers of Data Centers Overdevelopment" outlining the risks of data centers that are proliferating in our region. Kelly touched on the energy and water demands as well as the community impacts. Recently, Columbia Riverkeeper released a new report, [A Closer Look: Columbia River Data Centers](#), which investigates publicly-available information from 12 counties along the river where data centers are operational or planned. Their report also includes recommendations to address harms caused by data center overdevelopment.

We are also tracking the politics of the mid-term congressional elections. We are finding that with Trump's war in Iran, the Epstein files, affordability, and many other issues, dealing with climate change is slowly moving to the back burner. With the gains made with the previous administration it is disheartening to see the backslide. We must continue to advocate for sound climate science in visible and effective ways as our changing climate will impact all these other issues. Later in this newsletter, we share our EOC3 priorities for 2026. As always, we welcome your input. Please help us keep our mission visible and active.

Jeff Blackwood, EOC3 Board Chair

Climate Change Science Removed from Judiciary Reference Material

The Reference Manual on Scientific Information has a somewhat innocuous name but is a valuable science resource for federal judges. The manual is published by the Federal Judicial Center and is now in the fourth edition, with the first being published in 1994.

The December 2025 edition included for the first time a chapter on climate change science. However, following a request by 27 state Attorneys General (all Republican), the Federal Judicial Center director removed the chapter. The state AGs felt that the chapter was “inappropriate” and “advocacy based”. The decision to remove the chapter has been protested by respected science groups, including the American Geophysical Union, the National Academy of Science, and the American Meteorological Society.

The manual is a valuable resource for judges who often don’t have the science background to decide cases, determine the admissibility of evidence, or reach informed and reasoned assessments about expert evidence. The manual includes chapters covering a wide range of science, including statistics, epidemiology, toxicology, DNA evidence, and artificial intelligence, and importantly a chapter on scientific methods.

As Associate Justice Stephen Breyer wrote in the preface to the 3rd edition “In this age of science, science should expect to find a warm welcome, perhaps a permanent home, in our courtrooms...(O)ur decisions should reflect a proper scientific and technical understanding so that the law can respond to the needs of the public”.

It is difficult to see how this can happen when relevant scientific information is buried by political interference. Climate change litigation is becoming more common in our courts, and judges need to have the best information on hand.

Dean David Faigman of the University of California College of the Law in San Francisco succinctly clarifies the issue by saying “Denying climate change doesn’t change the fact that climate is changing. It may serve the immediate political moment, but it doesn’t serve American society or the judiciary very well to try to ignore the effects of climate”.

The current edition of the reference manual is available online at https://www.fjc.gov/sites/default/files/materials/15/Reference%20Manual_02052026.pdf. The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine published the entire 4th edition reference manual, including the climate change chapter, at <https://www.nationalacademies.org/read/26919/chapter/1>

EOC3 Mission Statement

Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition (EOC3) is an all-volunteer group of citizens of all ages, working together to support climate change education, adaptation and solutions.

- Promote education about climate change in Eastern Oregon.
- Promote responsible use of Earth’s ecosystems and services, as we learn, together, how to mitigate climate change effects.
- Promote action to combat climate change, as well as adaptation strategies for our community.

Oregon's Investor-Owned Utilities and the Case for Green Energy

Norm Cimon

A few years ago, I was standing in for [an organization](#) at a get-together sponsored by the [Sightline Institute](#), one that included representatives from Oregon's investor-owned utilities: PacifiCorp, and Portland General Electric (PGE). I had a chance to discuss renewable energy with the PGE representative, and he said the utility was developing a plan to re-invent itself. I was skeptical given how often such talk has little walk behind it.

I was wrong. The utility has tried put itself at the forefront of changes turning the grid upside down in Oregon. By that I mean a grid that will have [power flowing to and also from utility customers](#), residential, commercial and industrial. Much of that power production will come from solar arrays – large and small. It will be stored in a new generation of [home](#) and [commercial](#) batteries.

That power will be monitored by [chips embedded in smart meters](#) and connected to the grid, gradually learning the daily, weekly, and yearly trend of the energy demand of the grid-edge where they are placed. PGE is [a testbed for those chips](#).

That information will include the electric energy needed by the utility on that grid edge, and how it can be conditioned to integrate smoothly as it's metered and distributed. Utilities can then choose to store that emerging power using their own large battery arrays for distribution when needed. [PGE is a player](#) there as well.

Incorporating large amounts of renewable distributed energy resources (DERs) into the grid will lead to a significant reduction in carbon emissions and greatly benefit efforts to moderate our changing climate. One reason for that is that building out such a system can make the grid much more efficient with [a much higher rate of utilization](#).

All of that is a very different way of thinking about where, when, and how we get our electricity. As is often the case however, there's both good news and bad news for PGE.

On the plus side is the practical experience to be gained from learning how to incorporate those smart meter chips and how to make the best use of the intelligence they provide. A successful roll-out will reduce the need for long-distance transmission, smooth out the daily fluctuations in energy demand, make the grid more efficient, help moderate climate change, and [if done correctly](#), bring real economic benefits to PGE customers.

But that brings us to the biggest problem that PGE has and how to deal with it. While PGE has witnessed a 10% growth in residential demand over the last decade, there has been a 70% increase in data center demand for power during that period, the most of any Oregon private utility. That has led to a steady and rapid stream of [rate increase requests](#) to the [Oregon Public Utility Commission](#) – the gatekeeper for those increases. How those rate increases are passed on and the speed with which they've been approved – [for both investor owned utilities](#) – has [drawn criticism](#) from the [Oregon Citizens Utility Board](#), an advocate for ratepayers. Electric bills are less affordable. A crucial part of regulatory oversight will have to revolve around how data centers power requirements are paid for, and who is paying.

PGE's makeover highlights the need to compete in [a world rapidly adopting renewable energy](#). It brings to mind the old joke about the number of psychiatrists it takes to change a light bulb: just one, but it's going to take time and the light bulb has to really want to change.

As a nation, we really have to want to change. While it's lost some of its overwhelming support, that's something that the majority of U.S. citizens still agree on. But that sentiment seems to have escaped the political leaders who are holding up the transition. Given those attitudes, it should come as no surprise that there's a [long list of false claims](#) that have seeped into the public discourse.

I have no doubt that the changeover is going to happen, and – just as we turned rotary phones into decorative artifacts in favor of cell phones overnight – it will happen quickly. That's where we need to go. Above all we need leaders to get us there.

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Climate Tipping Points

Bill Aney

A few weeks ago, I heard a news piece on the radio that caused me to rethink my ideas about how climate change is progressing. The piece was about the Amazon rain forest and how our changing climate is bringing this ecosystem to a tipping point. This idea of an ecosystem tipping point was news to me, and more than a little disturbing.

Tipping points can be thought of as part of a positive feedback loop – a phenomenon whereby a change in conditions in and of itself causes an even greater change in conditions in the same direction. The simplest example of a positive feedback loop that I can think of is a furnace, controlled by a thermostat that is wired backwards by a careless electrician. In this case, the furnace is set to kick on at 70 degrees (Fahrenheit) but turn off at 65 degrees – exactly backwards of what was intended (on at 65, off at 70).

One summer morning, the sunlight streaming into the windows warms the room temperature to 70, and the furnace kicks on. The furnace warms the room even further, bringing the temperature even further away from the 65 degrees cutoff temperature. The furnace works harder and gets further away from the goal – that is a positive feedback loop and can only be broken by intervention (or system failure).

There is evidence from several of the earth's ecological and physical systems that we are reaching tipping points that will create these kinds of positive feedback loops. As an example, the news piece I heard about the Amazon rain forest pointed out that warming and drying of the atmosphere is reducing the amount of forest cover through tree mortality and fire. This simultaneously releases more carbon and reduces the ability of the rain forest to take up carbon – which of course causes *more* warming and drying, eventually replacing one huge carbon sink (the rain forest) with a savannah system.

Climate scientists and ecologists can point to other systems on our planet that are just as vulnerable to positive feedback loops and tipping points but at different time scales– tropical ocean reefs, large scale oceanic circulation patterns, boreal permafrost, continental and montane ice sheets, for example.

We have experienced significant increases in global temperatures during our lifetime, and it seems like the pace of warming is accelerating. Once these earth systems pass the tipping point, should we expect even *more* acceleration of climate change?

The take home message for me is that climate change is not a linear function – once a tipping point is surpassed and a positive feedback loop kicks in, dramatic changes ensue, and it may be incredibly difficult to turn it back.

EOC3 2026 Priorities

The EOC3 Board met in March of 2026 to set their priorities for the year, based on the updated strategic plan. These goals are intended to guide our EOC3 activities for the rest of 2026:

- Continue to provide high quality Climate Conversations. These programs continue to be our anchors. We will continue the schedule this year of not having formal Climate Conversations during June, July, and August, but instead, have at least one program, whether a pub talk or field event. We will continue to look for hybrid opportunities to offer both Zoom and in-person monthly programs.
- Begin implementing our Strategic Plan. Review our accomplishments/adjustments during our fall board retreat.
- Sponsor at least one youth activity. In addition, we will continue working with partners on youth and climate education.
- Continue membership drive. We continue to slowly build memberships but have only about 10% of our mailing list as paid members. Although we should look for opportunities throughout the year, this should be an emphasis this coming fall.
- Continue our periodic newsletter to our mailing list incorporating the latest updates and seeking out youth voices.
- Continue successional planning and support for officer positions and new board member recruitment.
- Continue to advocate for climate science and climate education groups.
- Seek out capacity building grants or other funding sources. As our budget continues to climb, we will need to seek new funding for operational costs. Look for grant opportunities for youth activities as well.
- Seek and respond to opportunities for public and elected official engagement.

Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition—Organizational History

March 2026

Summary:

Citizen efforts to understand the effects of climate change in Umatilla County began in 2006 with the formation of the Umatilla County Climate Change Focus Group, sponsored and supported by the County commissioners. The purpose was to advise and inform the commissioners and our local communities about the risks and opportunities of a changing climate. The group met informally for several years and facilitated several community forums and workshops designed to raise awareness regarding climate change.

In 2016, the Umatilla County Commissioners decided to no longer support the focus group and recommended that it go its own way. In 2017, a new group, the Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition (EOC3) incorporated as a 501c3 organization to continue the work of sharing evidence-based climate science information with our communities.

Since 2017, EOC3 has sponsored over eighty public programs addressing climate change, along with sponsoring youth activities and communicating with a mailing list of 375 individuals (plus social media, and other activities).

Mission:

Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition (EOC3) is a nonprofit public benefit organization (501c3) that seeks to inform and empower residents and industries of the inland Pacific Northwest around the issue of climate change. The primary function of EOC3 is to use education to make climate and environmental science relevant for the citizens of eastern Oregon, and to make local climate change impacts tangible for affected individuals and enterprises.

EOC3 supports youth activities that raise climate awareness and engage our youth in influencing their futures.

History:

In 2006, then Umatilla County Commissioner Dennis Doherty approached several individuals; he wanted to put together a focus group to assess how a changing climate might affect the communities and economies of the county. The original group included a botanist, financial planner, meteorologist, soil scientist, and forester. This group met periodically to share information and report to Commissioner Doherty. Umatilla County staff provided logistical support. The group was inactive during the Great Recession but re-convened in 2012, sponsoring several public workshops and forums to raise awareness and understanding of our changing climate.

After the 2016 federal elections, the county commissioners decided they could no longer support the focus group, and although some of them supported our work, the political landscape had changed.

With this change, several people decided to form a 501c3 non-profit to continue the work of seeking out evidence-based climate science and sharing information with our communities. In January of 2017, the Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition (EOC3) was incorporated with the State of Oregon. EOC3 is an all-volunteer organization with a board of directors from throughout the region.

Since 2017, EOC3 facilitated over eighty monthly “Climate Conversations” bringing in regional and national expertise covering the many aspects and impacts of climate change, both in-person and virtually through Zoom.

Current Activities:

- EOC3’s website has been updated, and Climate Conversation recordings are posted on the website each month as well as on social media sites.
- In 2025, EOC3 updated our Strategic Action Plan.
- The EOC3 mailing list has grown from 8 in 2017 to 375 in 2026.
- EOC3 has partnered twice with three regional art centers to sponsor youth poster contests.
- The Youth Voice and Climate Education Subcommittee meets monthly to engage with partner organizations across the State to coordinate and provide educational opportunities for youth.
- The EOC3 Advocacy Group meets periodically to assess local advocacy needs and opportunities in line with the EOC3 mission.
- EOC3 publishes a periodic newsletter to help inform people of current events, challenges, and opportunities.

First Freeze Patterns Are Changing

(submitted by Dave Powell, EOC3 member)

Across the country, first fall frost dates are shifting later into the season. [Climate Central](#) — a nonprofit research organization made up of scientists and science communicators who study and report on climate trends — recently analyzed weather records from 179 U.S. cities and all of the country's counties. This analysis used more than 50 years of data from 1970 to 2024. It is open-access data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), home of the National Weather Service.

The analysis found that the fall season has warmed in every county across the contiguous United States since 1970. On the surface, this trend sounds like good news for many gardeners: more time for tomatoes, squash, flowers, and fall harvest. But there are also drawbacks to consider.

A warmer fall season means that risky heat, demand for air conditioning, wildfire smoke, and allergies linger later into the year — affecting public health and energy bills. Fall warming can also delay the first freeze of the season and disrupt important ecological cues in forests, farms, and gardens — with potential effects on fall foliage as well as hibernation, bird migration, tree health, and fruit ripening.

A local example of how fall warming can affect ecological cues is provided by a significant freeze event affecting northeastern Oregon in November of 2014. By early November, much of the city of Pendleton had not yet experienced a fall freeze (Pendleton's first fall freeze usually happens in late September), and daytime high temperatures were still reaching the low to mid 60s. Around November 10th or so, the temperature plummeted from the high 50s or low 60s to 10 degrees or the single digits.

This event caused widespread damage to Pendleton's urban forest. Due to the unusually warm conditions, the trees had not been receiving their normal cues to enter dormancy — many of them were still actively growing when the freeze happened. In a 'normal' fall, they would have already shut down and been dormant by early November (or well into their dormancy process), so their growing tissues (cambium) would not have been susceptible to damage from a sudden temperature drop.

Climate science tells us to expect more events like this in the future. How would a homeowner or urban forester adjust to this new reality? Many home landscapes consist mostly of annual plants — many of the vegetables and flowers we grow each year are annuals. Some of the fall changes identified in the Climate Central analysis may not affect how we use annuals in the future.

But for perennial plants, those plants who overwinter and carry over from one year to the next, the fall trends could be important, especially for trees. Trees are a special case because they are very long-lived — a tree you plant this spring could still be alive and growing 60 years from now, even though the climate will be quite different then.

Let's look at an example. Those who care for Pendleton's urban forest use variation in first fall freeze date in this way: when selecting a new shade tree to plant in a Pendleton park, a tree is selected for plant hardiness zone 4, not for zone 7a (which is Pendleton's current zone). Why is this done? A plant hardiness zone reflects long-term average conditions. But with the year-to-year unpredictability we're now seeing, we need to select long-lived trees that will be adapted to extreme conditions, not the average. A tree could grow just fine for several decades, but if it isn't capable of surviving an unusual weather event, then it will be killed by something like the November 2014 fall freeze episode (and many Pendleton trees were killed by that freeze).

What the Climate Central analysis really emphasizes is that gardeners are facing a new reality — increased unpredictability in year-to-year weather patterns. This theme of unstable seasons is something that OSU Extension is hearing from gardeners throughout Oregon through their Garden Future program (<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/garden-future>). Many gardeners are describing challenges like heat spikes, drought stress, and planting schedules that no longer line up with past patterns. As our climate continues to evolve, what we now consider as extreme will unfortunately become common, and we need to plan for that future now, especially when working with long-lived plants like trees and shrubs.

Here's a link to the Climate Central article discussing their fall freeze analysis: https://www.climatecentral.org/climate-matters/later-first-freeze-in-179-US-cities?utm_campaign=Gardening_Newsletter&utm_source=SF&utm_medium=Email&utm_term=Later+freezes+impact+HEADLINE&utm_content=Email

Board Member Dave Powell has agreed to provide summaries of some climate change-related articles that have come to his attention. Many of them are new – published within the last year or two – while others are a little older. Our intent is to make these kinds of short summaries a regular feature of the EOC3 newsletter.

Weblinks are provided for all items. If an item is shown as Open Access, then Dave has noted that after the link. Open access items can be downloaded for your personal use without payment or subscription to the journal or publishing organization. If you'd like to read an item that is not Open Access, and the link won't allow you to download it without payment, then please contact Dave at info@eoc3.org and he'll help you obtain a copy.

➔ **Godde, C.M.; Boone, R.B.; Ash, A.J.; Waha, K.; Sloat, L.L.; Thornton, P.K.; Herrero, M. 2020.** Global rangeland production systems and livelihoods at threat under climate change and variability. *Environmental Research Letters*. 15(4): 044021. doi:10.1088/1748-9326/ab7395 <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/ab7395> (Likely not available as Open Access)

Abstract: Rangelands are one of the Earth's major ice-free land cover types. They provide food and support livelihoods for millions of people in addition to delivering important ecosystem services. However, rangelands are at threat from climate change, although the extent and magnitude of the potential impacts are poorly understood. Any declines in vegetation biomass and fluctuations in grazing availability would be of concern for food production and ecosystem integrity and functionality. In this study, we use a global rangeland model in combination with livestock and socio-economic datasets to identify where and to what extent rangeland systems may be at climatic risk. Half of global rangeland areas are projected to experience simultaneously a decrease in mean biomass and an increase in inter-annual variability—vegetation trends both potentially harmful for livestock production. These regions include notably the Sahel, Australia, Mongolia, China, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and support 376 million people and 174 million ruminant Tropical Livestock Units. Additionally, the rangeland communities currently the most vulnerable (here, with the lowest livestock productivities and economic development levels and with the highest projected increases in human population densities) are projected to also experience the most damaging vegetation trends for livestock production.

➔ **Stokes, C.R.; Bamber, J.L.; Dutton, A.; DeConto, R.M. 2025.** Warming of +1.5 °C is too high for polar ice sheets. *Communications Earth & Environment*. 6(1): 351. doi:10.1038/s43247-025-02299-w <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43247-025-02299-w#citeas> (Open Access)

Abstract: Mass loss from ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica has quadrupled since the 1990s and now represents the dominant source of global mean sea-level rise from the cryosphere. This has raised concerns about their future stability and focused attention on the global mean temperature thresholds that might trigger more rapid retreat or even collapse, with renewed calls to meet the more ambitious target of the Paris Climate Agreement and limit warming to +1.5 °C above pre-industrial. Here we synthesize multiple lines of evidence to show that +1.5 °C is too high and that even current climate forcing (+1.2 °C), if sustained, is likely to generate several meters of sea-level rise over the coming centuries, causing extensive loss and damage to coastal populations and challenging the implementation of adaptation measures. To avoid this requires a global mean temperature that is cooler than present and which we hypothesize to be closer to +1 °C above pre-industrial, possibly even lower, but further work is urgently required to more precisely determine a 'safe limit' for ice sheets.

➔ **Andre, P.; Boneva, T.; Chopra, F.; Falk, A. 2024.** Globally representative evidence on the actual and perceived support for climate action. *Nature Climate Change*. 14(3): 253–259. doi:10.1038/s41558-024-01925-3 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-024-01925-3> (Open Access)

Abstract: Mitigating climate change necessitates global cooperation, yet global data on individuals' willingness to act remain scarce. In this study, we conducted a representative survey across 125 countries, interviewing nearly 130,000 individuals. Our findings reveal widespread support for climate action. Notably, 69% of the global population expresses a willingness to contribute 1% of their personal income, 86% endorse pro-climate social norms and 89% demand intensified political action. Countries facing heightened vulnerability to climate change show a particularly high willingness to contribute. Despite these encouraging statistics, we document that the world is in a state of pluralistic ignorance, wherein individuals around the globe systematically underestimate the willingness of their fellow citizens to act. This perception gap, combined with individuals showing conditionally cooperative behavior, poses challenges to further climate action. Therefore, raising awareness about the broad global support for climate action becomes critically important in promoting a unified response to climate change.

Making Your Voice Heard

We live in a representative democracy, where elected officials appoint judges and make law and policy that affect us all. These officials need to hear from us to know what is important.

You can make yourself heard. Write a letter, send an email, make a phone call – individual citizen voices do count!

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This newsletter is a periodic publication of the Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition, intended to help members who are interested in advocacy work around climate change issues. Editor Bill Aney (aneykblj@yahoo.com) welcomes your comments, articles, corrections, ideas, and suggestions.

