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There is no Planet B

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ENSC 230 – Energy and the Environment: Economics and Policy
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There is no Planet B

Most people have heard of the term Climate Change, it is not a new concept. The feelings that come up from hearing this term however are not all the same. Some agree that it is happening, and some strongly disagree with it. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, our Earth is warming, humans are largely responsible for recent climate change, climate change affects everyone, and climate change is happening right now. The majority of other organizations such as the United Nations, National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, and the National Climatic Data Center can all agree that climate change is real (97%-98% of the climate experts). The evidence is clear and there is no denying it, yet many people still do not accept it. Why is it that many do not believe in these scientific findings and evidence? Perhaps this is mainly based upon the insufficient exposure to scientific facts. One of the biggest counter arguments against climate change is that it is part of a natural cycle. The earth does naturally go into cycles of cooling and warming, but according to Climate Central, the pattern of the warming and the scientific fact of the negatives of green house gasses prove that humans are the driving force behind this change. In the past ten years alone, there have been numerous disasters and they seem to be appearing more often. Yes while it is true that we cannot point to any storm or natural disaster and directly link it to climate change, most scientists (97% - 98%) have agreed that with Earth's warming temperatures have caused a warming in the oceans temperature. With warmer ocean temperatures comes more severe weather. This has been proven, not an opinion. It is not just storms either that are occurring. The rise in temperature has been seen in the U.S. too. Since 2000, 7 of the 10 warmest summers were recorded and which in turn have had some of the worst droughts seen in decades (National Climatic Data Center, 2012). Another staggering fact from the National Climate Data Center came from April of 2011 until March of 2012. This

year period had the second hottest summer and the fourth warmest winter that has been recorded since 1880. This was the warmest period for the contiguous United States. With recent storms such as Hurricane Sandy and some of the hottest summers in recorded history, how many more storms or severe droughts will it take to help get the point across that climate change is real and that it's happening right now?

When I think of the term climate change and what we can do, the first thought that comes to mind is "I'm one person, what I do won't make a difference." Many people might agree with this and act according to that phrase, but so are thousands and thousands of other people. The fact is we can all make a difference. Yes it might be small changes (such as recycling, cutting our emissions, being more efficient with our lifestyle) and might seem insignificant in the big picture, but if we all collectively make those small changes as a society that is when we could really make a big difference. Code Green (as Thomas Friedman, a New York Times columnist and author, calls it) should be the next "big project" in humanity, or simply put a green movement. We must start to face this problem with a sense of urgency. The Secretary General of the United Nations had said that climate change is "the defining issue of our time". You can already see this green movement happening in some sense with more production in high mpg vehicles or new companies that have environmentally friendly buildings. There are policies that have been working on this as well such as by 2025 the minimum mpg on a new vehicle will have to be at least 54.5 mpg. With green house gasses and air pollution being a public bad, meaning that it affects everyone in a negative way, policy must be used to deal with this situation. The U.S. is on a great start, but this is still only the beginning of what we need to do in order to really make a difference on an individual or federal level.

By the end of this century alone, the sea level is predicted to rise approximately 2 feet. This might seem really insignificant, but according to the EPA, "This rise would eliminate approximately 10,000 square miles of land in the United States." This 10,000 square miles of land would be on the coast and that is where a very large percentage of the US population is located at. Would this have to be the step to help us get "all in" into this green movement? Thinking about the future is key here. What kind of world do we want to leave for our future generations? The future generations are already going to have to deal the enormous debt that we have which is a big enough problem alone, but with a world that is deteriorating as well? This threat that we are dealing with not only affects the U.S., but every single person in the world. This could very possibly be the biggest problem that we

have ever faced. It is time to look past ourselves and our self interests and looking towards the future, a future that is efficient and green. After all, we only have one Earth.

“We have exactly enough time- starting now” - Dana Meadows

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