



Climate Action Team picks HSU for forum

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When the California Climate Action Team was considering venues for gathering public input on the state's climate change policy, Humboldt State University stood out as an obvious choice, according to the team's chairperson and former secretary of the state Environmental Protection Agency, Dr. Alan Lloyd.

Humboldt County's abundant forest resources represent one of the key factors in mitigating global climate change, Lloyd told a crowd of about 90 people in HSU's Kate Buchanan Room Thursday morning.

"We're here today because of forestry and the role that forestry will play in this," affirmed California Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman.

The group of residents, students and government and university officials was gathered for the first in a series of six forums being held statewide to collect feedback on the Climate Action Team's recent report, which explores ways to achieve emission reduction targets established by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger last year.

Lloyd described those goals — including reducing emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050 — as "bold" and commensurate with the need.

The Climate Action Team's plan is also one that represents real actions, he emphasized, with 46 of its recommendations already under way in the state and a number of broader programs lined up for implementation in the next two years. The report also recognizes the voluntary actions of California businesses, organizations and local governments as an element of the broader strategy for achieving greenhouse gas reduction.

Private forests are facing a severe threat through regulatory costs, global competition and development pressures, observed Dr. Andrea Tuttle, a professor at the University of California, Berkeley. An estimated 4,000 acres of working landscape are lost every day in the U.S., she said, not only reducing carbon storage but also increasing carbon emissions as pavement, cars and buildings encroach into formerly forested areas.

She outlined scenarios related to a predicted 3-to-10-degree increase in global temperatures, painting a picture in which the state's snowpack, forest growth and biodiversity will decline, increasing the risk and intensity of wildfires even as flooding increases and sea levels rise.

"We have already seen this kind of impact occur," she said, referring to a bark beetle infestation in Lake Arrowhead in 2003, during which 400,000 acres of trees were killed. "Climate change will accelerate these kinds of issues."

Laurie Wayburn, co-founder and president of the Pacific Forest Trust, attributed the Lake

Arrowhead disaster, in hindsight, to what she called a “cultural disengagement across the board.”

“We need a more active engagement as a people with our forest landscape,” she said.

Green Diamond Timberlands Resource Manager Tharon O’Dell shared that opinion.

“It is not that people are bad; it’s just that people were uninformed,” he said, pointing out that in the wake of that event, people’s attitudes toward cutting trees and thinning forests changed dramatically.

“We have an obligation... to keep (forests) healthy through management,” he said.

He also reiterated the need for more regulatory options for landowners.

Chrisman spoke for a recalibration of the regulatory process and a recognition of the importance of private investment.

“We want to encourage strong public-private partnerships,” he said.

HSU Professor Arne Jacobson approved of the governor’s ambitious targets, though he noted that reaching those targets would require investments not in the tens of millions of dollars, but in the hundreds of millions.

“Eighty percent reductions by 2050 are no joke,” he said.

HSU Schatz Energy Research Center Director Dr. Peter Lehman warned that climate change cannot be addressed through policy alone, lobbying for a serious transformation in Californians’ “consumptive lifestyle.”

“It’s the elephant in the room when it comes to climate change,” he said. “Happiness doesn’t necessarily involve an internal combustion engine or a trip to the shopping mall.”

The Climate Action Team’s report can be read at www.climatechange.ca.gov.

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