MOSCOW-PULLMAN DAILY NEWS

Letter: Climate change solution

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The prospect of addressing climate change can be daunting, and when some climate trends suggest cooling rather than warming, it's natural to wonder if global warming is really happening. Larry Kirkland (Nov. 12, letter to the editor) raises this issue in regard to increasing sea ice adjacent to part of Antarctica. If climate is warming, why is sea ice increasing? A reasonable question.

The story is not straightforward, and another human-caused climate disruption is involved in the process: ozone depletion. Ozone depletion hasn't been in the news much, as many consider the problem "solved" since we are no longer releasing many harmful chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants and aerosol propellants. Unfortunately, these compounds stay in the atmosphere for many years, and the ozone depletion - commonly called the "ozone hole" - over the southern polar regions remains. A frequently ignored result of this ozone depletion is a disruption of wind patterns in the Southern Hemisphere, resulting in several climate shifts. One of these brings colder temperatures to eastern Antarctica, resulting in increasing sea ice. In other parts of Antarctica, however, warming is progressing at some of the most rapid rates on the planet. It isn't common to give references in letters, but Kirkland specifically asked, so: "Global Change Biology" (2015) 21:515-527.

Scientists are convinced climate change is real and a response is needed. Citizens' Climate Lobby has proposed a straightforward solution: a gradual increase in the price of fossil fuels as a driver of innovation. It is known as carbon fee and dividend, where the fee is rebated directly to households rather than vanishing into the federal treasury. Kirkland worries that any attempt to address climate change would harm the poor, but carbon fee and dividend would be more beneficial to people with low incomes. See this proposal at citizensclimatelobby.org/carbon-fee-and-dividend/.

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