

Opinion

Another Voice / Climate change

Another Voice: Failure to reduce our use of oil is a selfish act

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By Dave Baker

There is a lot of talk about how low oil prices have become. The major reason is the oversupply. People are happy as they fill their tanks, but I sometimes wonder why I paid the extra dollars to buy an electric car.

If we act properly it will not be oversupply, it will be “underdemand,” something we Americans and all the nations at the recent Paris Convention on Climate Change have agreed should happen. All the world citizenry will be using less and less oil, natural gas, coal and other carbon-based fuels, resulting in even lower prices.

Companies and countries alike will fight for a piece of the action, even though profits will diminish.

We will always need some oil and gas, for lubricating oil, jet fuel, plastics and chemicals; but when our energy comes mostly from wind and solar and we drive hybrid and electric vehicles, the demand for oil and gas will be so low the cost of supply will exceed what the market would need for high production. There is even an effort today to engineer hybrid ships. Big trucks will go hybrid as solar panels are placed on trailers.

Most people making their living in the petrochemical industries will have to be retrained for other work. This effort could be easily handled by adding 50 cents, even a dollar, per gallon to the cost of fuel. We just lived with \$3 a gallon a few months ago.

But, if we continue to act selfishly and ignore the facts of climate change and produce oil-based fuels, our world will continue to warm and ice will continue to melt, resulting in rising oceans and unusually strong storms.

There is nothing in the laws of science that guarantees the continuation of life as we know it on this wonderful planet. Those who think some supernatural force will maintain our comfortable climate better get real.

We humans have the destiny of our home in our hands. Will we take the easy way, continuing to burn oil-based fuel and keep our fingers crossed that life as we know it will be manageable? Of course this may very well happen for ourselves, but our children and grandchildren will have dire, life-changing conditions to face.

Or do we have the unselfish long-sightedness to bring global warming under control? Can we use our intelligence to steer our future in a bright direction, maintaining life for future generations?

I'm 78 years old but would be very sad to think our species, which appreciates, records and shares the natural wonders of our existence as no other life form can, that has evolved over these billions of years, should end in chaos.

Dave Baker, of Buffalo, is a retired marine engineer with a master's degree in economics.

