

#152 The Need to Focus

Several of the most respected polling organizations indicate that only 65% of the general population is significantly concerned about the threat of climate change and peak oil. That is down from just five years ago even though it should be clear that the United States, to make up for the decline in domestic oil since 1970, has been engaged in oil warfare in the Middle East for almost a decade with no energy benefit, trillions of expense and horrific mismanagement of our national security forces.

The most respected science about peak oil now indicates peak oil will hit the world economy much faster than thought just two years ago and may arrive by 2015. Experience from the world wide economic recession, which has so far saved 2 years of world oil consumption, shows how dramatic the rate of change is. The likelihood of world and US recession continuing for several additional years may provide some additional time to find alternatives but that is not certain because of the deep change in the distribution of energy costs. The big and the wealthy are the last to change because they have the power to sustain their treasonable increased consumption of oil resources while the increasing number of poor and relatively poor grow in number and degree of insufficiency for their daily life. Eventually this leads to system collapse because consumption drives the economy, not exotic, deceitful, phony financial products which are on the rise again.

We need to focus on what this economic system failure means to us locally. A 2 per cent drop in oil production could increase the cost of oil-based fuels and energy by 70%. Two years later, that means oil fuels and energy are 100% more expensive. Oil based consumer and industrial products such as fuel and plumbing pipes, food bags, almost every kind of fertilizer and herbicide, so much that we depend upon, would increase at rates of 300-500%. How many teachers, employees, snow plows, losses in revenue and increased taxes can we sustain?

Add the dynamic of cumulative effect. A shock for one year can be absorbed. That margin has been consumed. The great job done by our road crews in the recent snow storm shows the ability and commitment of the people. This is also to be seen in business and government where the work of those who have lost their jobs and providing higher levels of service is done by fewer and fewer people. There is, however a limit and there are terrible consequences already.

Here are a few suggestions for immediate action. They all follow from an understanding that from now on, local solutions and local accountability is number one.

1. Establish the EDC - the Economic Development Corporation immediately. Staff it with new skill sets, expertise and socio-economic-environmental perspective.
2. Charge the EDC to develop a major investment in assisting the current agricultural producers. Their contribution to tourism by being great stewards of the natural beauty of our area has never been sufficiently understood but it is worth millions every year. No industry is in greater difficulty than our farmers and none is more productive in revenue and community benefit.
3. Commit to a substantial, multi-million dollar investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy industry in the county. Use existing reserve funds that are earning practically no revenue to establish the revolving loan funds that

make a rapid and large greening of Sullivan County possible while paying back with interest the initial loans or bonds. No industry is richer in job creation at good wages. No industry will relieve the pressure so quickly to so many households and businesses and government budgets.

4. Assist the towns in passing anti-gas drilling ordinances and sufficient legal resources to resist the inevitable law suits from large corporations pursuing ruinous private agendas.
5. Stop facilitating casinos and get those properties back into production of Jobs and taxes. Support local companies that have been defrauded of millions.
6. Adopt a county wide commitment to reducing carbon based products 20% by 2020 and 40% by 2030 and commit the resources to exceed these goals.

We can achieve all of these and many additional goals if we start saying no to much that is being done. Let's focus locally. The resources are already here.