

## **Earth Day, Climate Change and a Conservationist...**

Earth Day is actually an entire week of activities focused on environmental issues. The April 22, 1970 Earth Day marked the beginning of the modern day environmental movement. Today, the Earth Day Network ([www.earthday.org](http://www.earthday.org)) has grown into an established Washington, DC-based organization that promotes environmental education, local, national and global policies; public environmental campaigns and local Earth Day events to promote activism and environmental protection. This year, the 43rd anniversary of Earth Day, has focused on the Faces of Climate Change. The Earth Day Network tells us that the faces are:

"A man in the Maldives worried about relocating his family as sea levels rise, a farmer in Kansas struggling to make ends meet as prolonged drought ravages the crops, a fisherman on the Niger River whose nets often come up empty, a child in New Jersey who lost her home to a super-storm, a woman in Bangladesh who can't get fresh water due to more frequent flooding and cyclones... Climate change has very real effects on people, animals, and the ecosystems and natural resources on which we all depend. Every person who does his or her part to fix the problem is also a Face of Climate Change: the entrepreneurs who see opportunity in creating the new green economy, the activists who organize community action and awareness campaigns, the engineers who design the clean technology of the future, the public servants who fight for climate change laws and for mitigation efforts, the ordinary people who commit to living sustainably."

By burning fossil fuels we are releasing carbon dioxide into the earth's atmosphere. This heat trapping gas is warming the planet and de-stabilizing our climate. Cutting carbon emissions 80 percent by 2020 to prevent the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere from exceeding 400 parts per million, will take some work. First, investing in energy efficiency will allow us to keep global energy demand from increasing. Then we can cut carbon emissions one third by replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy sources for electricity and heat production. The opportunities evolve as the world's top climate scientists and engineers discover new solutions.

But we, at the grass roots level, are also doing the good work, when we practice energy efficiency . Projections from the International Energy Agency show global energy demand growing by close to 30 percent by 2020. Dramatically ramping up energy efficiency would allow the world to avoid growth in energy demand and actually reduce global demand to below 2006 levels by 2020. Preventing the waste of heat and electricity in buildings and switching to efficient lighting and appliances are actions that will pay for themselves and can be easily achieved. The good news is that everyone can make changes that add up to making a big difference in our atmosphere. A conservationist is a person who advocates or acts for the protection

and preservation of the environment and wildlife. A conservationist approach to reduce our carbon footprint on the earth will change the face of our future.

Kim Chansler