

A Few Actions to Mitigate Effects of Climate Change (10/2023)

Two main tasks confront us: reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions into the atmosphere, e.g., carbon dioxide, and drawing down carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere. Drawdown has received less attention in the U.S., but it holds great potential. One mechanism is called regenerative farming, a term that includes several practices, one of which involves planting crops (called cover crops) on farmland following a harvest. Though cover crops are not cash crops, their growth adds carbon and other nutrients to the soil. This is one part of regenerative farming: others include diminishing our reliance on artificial fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides, and herbicides, and relying far more on fertilizing by animals and composting.

The following are some actions (1) to help reduce emissions of GHG into the atmosphere and (2) to help drawdown CO₂ from the atmosphere.

1--Reduce emissions into the atmosphere

- When purchasing an HVAC system, refrigerator, dishwasher, clothes washer, clothes dryer, or water heater purchase the most energy efficient model that you can; this will usually have the lowest cost (first cost + operating cost) over the lifetime of the product.
 - A natural gas clothes dryer and water heater will send less carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere than an electric unit.
 - For a clothes washer, select a front-loading model labeled Energy Star®.
 - Avoid the drying cycle with dishwashers, for that uses considerable energy. Wash dishes at night.
- When purchasing a car or truck, select a conventional hybrid or an electric vehicle (EV).
- Turn off energy-using equipment that is not in use; e.g., lights, TVs, computers and monitors (and activate sleep mode), and printers.
- Minimize use of outdoor decorative lighting and ensure the light does not project into the night sky.
- Use LED lighting and be aware of the color temperature you select: the lower the temperature—2700 deg. K, 3000 deg. K—the “warmer” the light will feel.
- If a water heater is installed in a house of worship, business, or school, consider if the set point could drop to a lower value overnight. If so, use a timer to accomplish that.
- Similarly, use a thermostat with night set-back capability to adjust the space temperature during the day and night.

2—Drawdown CO₂ from the atmosphere

- Save food waste and contribute to composting.
 - Wake County, NC is operating a pilot program that collects food waste at the Midtown Farmers Market on Saturdays, 8-noon. (Before you go, check that the program is still operating.)
 - Compost Now is a company that collects food waste from homeowners and pays a composting company to take it. They turn it into compost and sell it to farmers. (It takes 1-1 ½ years to go from food waste to compost.)
- Plant deep-rooted grasses at homes, houses of worship, and other spaces. Such grasses store and transmit to the soil impressive amounts of carbon in roots that go several feet deep. Avoid the use of conventional shallow grasses.
- Do not cut down trees unless absolutely necessary.
- Use no toxins on lawns, plants, bushes, etc.
- Watch the documentary “Kiss the Ground” (available on Netflix) that provides a clear and comprehensive explanation of the multiple benefits of regenerative agriculture.
- Review the book *Drawdown*, edited by Paul Hawken, which identifies multiple highly-effective ways to pull down CO₂ from the atmosphere.
- Urge your representatives in Congress to push for a robust regenerative agriculture program within the Farm Bill. Do the same at the state level.

Additional Information

--The fastest way to push federal and state governments to enact measures that mitigate the effects of climate change is to elect only candidates who pledge to act on this issue. Hoping the government will help reduce rapidly increasing coastal insurance rates or prevent more farmland from going out of production due to its salt content (both effects tied to climate change), and then voting for candidates who even deny there's a problem is voting against your self interest. We must vote based on the issues and our self interest, not based on political party. That will help secure the changes we badly need.

--If you are a Duke Energy customer in NC, send a comment to the NC Utility Commission on Docket No. E-100 Sub 179, urging that Duke Energy reduce CO₂ emissions by 70% (relative to its 2005 level) by 2030, as required by NC law (HB 951). [Access www.ncuc.gov; click on “Consumer Information” and then “Submit a Statement of Position”; enter requested information and then type in your comment and submit it.]

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