

So where do I go from here?

(Alan Betts, April 2016)

Suggestions for many paths

Climate change is a personal issue, a community issue, a government issue and a global issue. These are all interconnected – but no one person can tackle the whole. But to the extent we understand the broad picture; we can each play a valuable part in the whole. Remember that it is the truth that sets us free - and this freedom brings with it an understanding of our responsibilities.

Where you go from here is your choice!

If you want to reduce your use of fossil energy,

assess your primary uses for:

Heating, electricity, transportation and consumption using one of the web-tools available, such as <http://10percentchallenge.org>. Reductions can result from lifestyle changes, which need awareness (and often family collaboration). Often significant reductions require conscious choices or investments (when you choose to buy a fuel efficient car; or get an efficiency audit and retrofit your house) – but if you reduce your consumption by 10% per year, your investment will bring a rich reward to you, your community and the Earth.

If you want to follow the climate news as it unfolds in all its fascinating complexity and beauty - and gets a sense of how we are dealing with the big picture, bookmark <http://www.climatecentral.org> and sign up for email updates from <http://thinkprogress.org/climate/issue/>

If you are full of detailed questions and want to read about all the controversial issues and how they were resolved (and you have a scientific bent), go to <http://www.realclimate.org> where real climate scientists answer questions.

If you want to unwrap the sea of deceptions that are published to confuse people, deny we are responsible for climate change and perpetuate business-as-usual, so that a few can profit at the expense of life on Earth, then visit [Skeptical Science](http://SkepticalScience.com) for excellent analyses.

If you realize that this is a community issue, and we must find community solutions, start by reading about the Transition Town network, a movement that started in the UK a few years ago, and download their primer from <http://www.transitionnetwork.org>, or from the US address: <http://transitionus.org/>. Then look for your local transition network, or start one.

If you are frustrated with your local planning commissions, state or federal politics – well you know what to do - and you know you will need a support group. Recognize upfront that our governance systems are often dysfunctional; and ineffective because they are rooted in historical conceptual models that are disconnected from the Earth and its ecosystem. For decades now they have proven inadequate to even begin to address the climate change issue – so you will need allies, a broad and fresh vision – in fact a systems approach - and perhaps a garden, so you have some roots.



Figure 1. Rainbow over my garden in Pittsford, Vermont

If you live in Vermont, connect with the Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network (<http://VECAN.net>), which coordinates about 100 local groups. Or check out this list of sites

- <http://350vermont.org/> Local web-site for a global movement that has Vermont roots
- <https://resilientvt.org/> Strengthening Vermont's economic, environmental and social resilience
- <http://www.energyindependentvt.org/> Strategic and tactical planning for the future
- <http://vtrural.org/programs/climate-economy/join-the-partnership> Vermont's 'climate economy' discussion
- http://anr.vermont.gov/contactus/stayintouch/newsletters/anrnewsletter_ripples Stay in touch with the state Agency of Natural Resources newsletter

Listen to this [30-min interview on PEG-TV](#) discussing what is happening to the weather and climate of Vermont as the global climate changes (April 2012).

Read the excellent 2011 Report from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

<http://www.anr.state.vt.us/anr/envrptsb/ANREnvReport2011.pdf>

and read the State's draft Adaptation plans

<http://www.anr.state.vt.us/anr/climatechange/Adaptation.html>

Elsewhere, start with national groups

- <http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/> for discussion of important issues
- <http://thinkprogress.org/climate/issue/> for daily environmental news
- <https://nextgenclimate.org/> Powering the future
- <http://www.climatestrategies.us/> Strategies for change
- <http://climatesolutions.org/> for a bright future
- <http://www.ucsusa.org/science-network> Union of Concerned Scientists: key issues

Then search for local initiatives in your area - or start one!

If your vision is global, as well as local, connect with www.350.org, inspired by Vermont writer Bill McKibben (www.billmckibben.com/). Its roots sprang in part from climate neutrality initiatives of the Sunday Night Group at Middlebury College over several years.

If you realize this is a moral and spiritual issue, turn to your faith institutions or the roots of your personal faith, ask for guidance and go from there.

There are umbrella organizations like Interfaith Power and Light: <http://interfaithpowerandlight.org> (Vermont branch: <http://www.vtipl.org>) and many initiatives in individual faith groups.

Read the [Pope Francis Encyclical on "Caring for our Common Home"](#). It may take you many weeks - but its breadth and depth and frank honesty will transform you. I have posted a [summary for discussion groups](#).

If you understand that the present consumer society, where we ship goods and food from all over the world – wherever we can exploit cheap labor, weak environmental regulation and maximize profit – is unwise and immoral, then explore your local food movements (for Rutland, Vermont: see <http://www.rutlandfarmandfood.org>), and look at the ideas of voluntary simplicity (<http://www.simpleliving.net>). Relocalization is a powerful tool to transform your life, enrich local

economies by supporting worthwhile local employment; and above all understand and once again become mutually responsible for the web of connections that bind a community together.

If you want ideas go to my **writings** – you can select a category – and read one daily to a friend or family member, or your teenagers. Discuss where you or your family might start. Listening to my **commentaries**, with someone or in groups, could also be useful for starting a dialog.

If you love to write, write and find avenues for publication in newspapers, blogs and social networks.

It took decades to reach the global predicament we now find ourselves in; and the transition, or the unraveling, will also take decades to unfold. It will take persistence, patience, compassion and a deep understanding and awareness of the Earth. We can only start from where we are, individually and as societies. We are rather late starting, but the Earth moves slowly. If we choose to align with her, rather than with our self-centered short term interests, everything becomes easier and full of hope.

I remember a talk by Frances Moore Lappé (<http://www.smallplanet.org>) to the Rutland Farm and Food group in the fall of 2006. She summed up her 35 years of work on global food issues with a motto of just two words:

“Bold Humility”,

- Bold because it takes courage to face change
- Humility because as we look back we are amazed by the possibilities that unfolded.

The future is not given: it is created out of our collective choices and actions.