



EDITORIALS

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Climate change demands that we adapt

The Olympian Editorial Board

Global warming is indisputably underway, and South Sound communities have been looking for ways to slow the change and also to adapt.

Under most scenarios, Northwest winters are going to be warmer and soggy with less snowpack in the mountains over the remaining century. Summers are expected to be hotter and drier.

These factors have implications for drainage basins that become eroded in heavy storms, for streams with reduced summer flows and for plants that do poorly in drought-like conditions. Forests and grasslands also face increased threats of wildfire.

Parts of downtown Olympia also face the direct threat of sea levels that could rise by several feet. Portions of Interstate 5 and State Route 101 could even be underwater in places such as the Nisqually Delta and Mud Bay, according to Mike Burnham, a senior planner at Thurston Regional Planning Council.

The intergovernmental council is in the midst of a major project to get our community more prepared for the changes. The next big step in building public awareness and gathering ideas is an evening forum scheduled for April 17 in Lacey. The goal is to explain to residents what's happening locally and to hear the public's concerns or suggestions.

Renovations a few years ago at Olympia's waterfront Percival Landing were early testament to the coming reality. Some of the decaying boardwalk along Budd Inlet was rebuilt over solid ground. The elevation of the structure was raised, though it's not clear it was enough.

The city also adopted building code changes. New structures in the north downtown area must be about 1 foot higher than in the past. That is certainly a start, but it may not prepare our community for the reality of 2100.

Fortunately the Port of Olympia and city are co-funding a study of the local implications of sea level rise.

At the federal level, little action is likely under the Trump administration, whose key leaders still deny the human contributions to climate change. That makes state and local efforts all the more important.

Thurston Regional Planning Council director Marc Daily, planner Burnham and representatives of the Olympia and Lacey city councils recently met with The Olympian's Editorial Board to talk about the challenges and strategies. TRPC deserves credit for forcing the issue and hosting the forum.

We hope good ideas surface as residents start to think more clearly about their landscapes and neighborhoods.

Low-impact development that helps retain rainwater on site is likely one tactic, according to Burnham. Others may be simple such as revegetating and stabilizing stream banks and hillsides to curb erosion.

Also likely is the design of more energy-efficient buildings, use of more solar power on rooftops to guard against utility outages, and improved neighborhood responses to emergencies such as floods and landslides.

When it comes to climate change, we all will have some skin in the game. The key is to change our mind set.

The watchwords are: adapt, adapt, adapt.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION FORUM

WHAT: Thurston Regional Planning Council hosts a forum on adaptations to climate change

WHEN: 5:30-8:30 p.m. Monday, April 17

WHERE: Lacey branch campus of South Puget Sound Community College, Building 1, 4220 Sixth Ave. SE

DETAILS: Project manager Mike Burnham is at 360-741-2519 or burnhamm@trpc.org



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