

Time to step up our game

There is a [touching story](#) about a dying astronaut who plans to spend his remaining time on earth fighting global warming for his only grandchild. Piers Sellers visited the International Space Station three times and took twice as many spacewalks. His extraterrestrial perspective coupled with his science background helped him recognize how “climate change is the world’s biggest problem.” It got me to thinking what I would do if I had just eighteen months to rescue the planet for my six-year old granddaughter.

In February, famed activist Ken Ward sent an open letter to climate activists around the Pacific Northwest. Ward is one of the heroes of the May 2013 [Lobster Boat Blockade](#) where two men blockaded 40,000 tons of coal.

“These are increasingly desperate times,” he wrote, “and the easy graces of protocol must be weighed against the seriousness of the climate crisis and lateness of the hour.”

He was reacting to support for the Healthy Climate Bill and the Clean Electricity and Coal Transition Plan, two state bills Ward regards as inadequate.

“I have no doubt that you are advancing the strongest possible measures winnable in present political conditions, and doing so meets organizational needs to offer a hopeful public face and demonstrate concrete accomplishments. But haven’t we reached the point where short term winnability should not be our top priority?”

Noting that “we’re in a terrible crisis, about to crash global systems that make civilization possible and we’re going to have to make monumental changes in energy generation, forestry, agriculture, transportation, consumer habits.” Ward scolded the recipients,” Isn’t the implicit promise of these bills, that they are significant steps towards addressing climate change, fraudulent? And, because of this, are we not further demoralizing our strongest supporters?” (Read the full letter here [Climate_letter](#))

In the forty years since the formation of the EPA and enacting NEPA our environment has gotten steadily worse. We have already surpassed the 350 ppm CO₂ recommended by 350.org. The regulatory agencies and conventional activism are failing the planet.

Ward heads the [Climate Disobedience Center](#) and recommends stepping up the game with direct action and, near and dear to my heart, initiative campaigns to ban fossil-fuel infrastructure. He recommends withdrawing from standard mainstream efforts.

Earlier I wrote [an op-ed in which I likened environmental regulatory agencies](#) to a Department of Human Trafficking. The way we “protect” the environment today is illegitimate and is the same as if, instead of abolishing slavery, we regulated how many lashes to give a slave. Participating in and validating the regulatory process is the same as wielding the whip and delivering the lashes. We are complicit in the plunder and exploitation of our planet.

Let me confess, I didn’t reach this conclusion overnight.

Recently, I was admonished by someone who sees returning the Port of Coos Bay commission to an elected board as a way to prevent future boondoggles like Jordan Cove LNG. When I suggested this was little more than a BandAid he retorted, "...you ought to have a bit more confidence in what could be achieved by electing a different crowd to the Port."

Admittedly, I don't have confidence in this approach and not just because it is really hard to elect good people to anything. Unless and until we change the current structure of law that makes sustainability illegal, no matter who is in office they will be unable to say NO to projects like Jordan Cove.

FERC is funded by the very industry it regulates and the industry helps write the rules. Thinking we don't need systemic change is just naïve.

FERC denied the Pacific Connector Gas Pipeline based solely on the fact the company had yet to acquire any contracts. FERC did not rule on Jordan Cove, denying it only because it cannot function without a pipe, so any arguments about Veresen having to restart the EIS process are false. Today, Veresen announced it has a preliminary agreement to sell LNG with JERA, a joint venture established on April 30, 2015 by Tokyo Electric Power Company, Incorporated ("TEPCO") and Chubu Electric Power Co., Inc. to sell 1.5 million tons per annum of LNG. As I wrote recently, Jordan Cove LNG is "undead." (See my [OP-ED in The World.](#))

No one wants to admit they have wasted ten years of their life and the lives and resources of those that followed. No one wants to discover that rather than helping they are holding the whip and contributing to the demise of the planet. Personally, I don't care if people want to take credit for the Jordan Cove denial order. But hearing some local anti-gas activists not only take credit for the recent FERC denial but encourage other citizens fighting pipelines to continue doing the same is fraudulent, bound to leave these same people demoralized and considering the state of the planet, essentially criminal.

So how would I most effectively spend my last eighteen months on the planet? Doing everything I can to pass initiatives like the [Coos County Right to a Sustainable Energy Future Ordinance](#) and the [statewide initiative to halt state preemption](#) of local rights based ordinances and engaging in direct action against harmful projects.

In a [recent interview](#) Thomas Linzey, co-founder of the [Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund](#) said:

“While we believe that there may be some judges and courts out there ready to embrace a right of local, community self-government, our communities aren't betting on it. Eventually, they understand that for this type of change to happen, they'll have to drive that change into their constitutions and override the courts. After all, it's the courts that have created many of these doctrines over the past hundred years or so; to turn back to them to undo them would be pretty naive. So, we pursue two tracks—vigorously defending these communities in the courts when they get sued by corporations or their own state; and second, assisting communities to come together to drive local self-government guarantees into

constitutional structures.