

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR



JOHN BOHLINGER
LT. GOVERNOR

December 13, 2005

Mr. Richard Opper, Director
Department of Environmental Quality
P. O. Box 200901
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Richard:

Montana has been locked in the grip of a drought for most of the past two decades. During that time, we have seen some of the lowest precipitation levels in the state's recorded history, and Montana is not alone in this suffering. Most Western states find themselves in the same situation. Chronic drought has severely impacted our lake levels, our crop and livestock production, our forests, our fish and wildlife resources, and our tourism industry. I am very concerned about the connection these conditions have to global climate change, and ultimately the effect they will have on Montana's short and long-term future.

As you well know, I am also concerned about the impact of high energy prices and dwindling oil resources on the citizens of our state. Increases in the price of gasoline and natural gas have far outstripped inflation, and many of our citizens do not have any cushion in their family budgets to absorb these additional costs.

It is obvious to me that these two issues are related. The more oil we consume, the scarcer and more expensive the resource becomes. Subsidies have masked this basic principle of economics for decades, but the current approach is unsustainable. At the same time, the more oil we consume, the more greenhouse gas emissions we produce. That is why I have championed efforts to stimulate the production of biofuels and wind power in Montana, and it is why I have been discussing the potential of coal-to-liquid fuels with Montanans and industry representatives. I believe that right here in Montana we can perfect the technology to produce cleaner burning fuels while sequestering greenhouse gasses, and advance those innovations to the rest of the world.

Further, I am intrigued by the fact that every city, corporation, state, province, and country that has resolved to control its respective green house gas emissions has reaped substantial economic benefits from those efforts. Despite protests to the contrary, reduction of greenhouse gasses appears to be a stimulant rather than a drag on the economy. Montana is on the front line in terms of creativity and innovation when it comes to addressing serious issues, and I want us to apply that ingenuity to climate change and rising energy prices.

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I ask you to establish a Climate Change Advisory Group that will examine agriculture, forestry, energy, government and other sectors of our state. I want this broad-based group of Montana citizens to identify ways in which we can reduce our collective greenhouse gas emissions while saving money, conserving energy, and bolstering our economy. By July 2007, I would like the group to produce a Climate Change Action Plan that includes recommendations for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Montana and conserving energy in various sectors of our economy. Doing good things for our economy and the environment can become a growth industry for the state. It is time to tap into the creativity of our citizens to make this happen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Schweitzer', with a long horizontal line extending to the right and a series of vertical strokes at the end.

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
Governor