

Tuesday Topics November 2, 2021

Summary

President Carole Jordan opened the meeting with announcements and recognition of election day, which saw Topeka break records for early voting. Carole then introduced our speaker and environmental champion, Zack Pistora who is the Kansas lobbyist for the Sierra Club, Interim Executive Director for the Kansas Rural Center that concentrates on rural life, sustainable food and farm systems. Zack asked, "We all count on our environment, can it count on us?"

In answering the question, "What is the Kansas Legislature doing?" Zack believes they are starting to get it. We need a water plan. There has been more talk about water in recent years. Coordination and regulations are needed. Both parties have constituents who are making profits and have a vested interest in keeping things the same. Ownership and responsibility are necessary for both agriculture and industry. We need sustainable agriculture. What crops will survive climate change? A lot is happening at the federal level. We need to do more at the state level. Think about the collective good.

Zack reminded us that the environment connects us all. We need to work on remedying environmental injustices. For example, the people of Haiti are not part of the problem but are suffering the effects of the climate crisis. Haitian people are dying for lack of food. It is an environmental catastrophe.

WATER is most important for life. We are made of water. We use water to drink, for recreation, for energy and agriculture, and for inspiration. Zack described societal system flaws:

- Pollution,
- Resource Depletion,
- Individualism/Collective good,
- Inequity and Injustice, and
- Violence.

Solutions include:

- Let's be Ecological/ Natural Intelligence,
- Peace and Harmony,
- Let Fossils be Fossils,
- Back to Basics, and
- Behavioral and Technological Evolution.

We are depleting our water supply and contaminating its quality. We are losing soil. We do things that work against nature. Leave fossil fuels in the ground!

We are trashing our planet. Plastics and industrial pollution are getting worse. A picture of a river on fire demonstrated industrial pollution of our water. Only 10% of plastics are recycled. The Clean Air Act helped reduce carbon dioxide and the hole in the ozone layer. Air pollution cost \$3 trillion a year. The Clean Water Act can help our water supply. Both the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts should be bipartisan issues. Political division is based on mistruths.

Weather and climate disasters such as wild fires, severe storms, hurricanes, droughts, floods and temperature swings cost billions of dollars in 2020. Forty-two climate issues in Kansas cost \$20 billion.

Greenhouse gas emissions in 2017 can be shown by economies:

- 12% Commercial and Residential,
- 9% Agriculture,
- 29% Transportation,
- 28% Electricity, and
- 22% Industry.

Agriculture with the industrial farming model has damaged the environment and is a major issue in Kansas. Irrigation accounts for 85% of water consumption used by 15% of Kansas farmers, more than all cities and town and industries in Kansas. We have lost streams in Kansas. The Ogallala Aquifer is down as much as the size of Lake Erie! Most of our water is used by private enterprise. We need to invest in waterless clean energy and energy efficiency, renewable energy (solar and wind), grid modernization and energy storage. Coal is harmful to health and the environment. Natural gas is not a solution. It leads to fracking and earthquakes as well as methane. Kansas ranks 47th in energy efficiency. But we are number one in no-till agriculture and in wind energy.

A recording of this fact-filled presentation is available on the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library website.