

Climate Action Now

A Guide for Individual and Collective Action¹



“Houston, we’ve had a problem.” With those chilling words, the astronauts of Apollo 13 signaled one of the most dramatic emergencies in the human endeavor. Their spacecraft had suffered a catastrophic failure of its life support systems as it hurtled through the void of space towards the moon.

Today, we also have a problem, but the spacecraft whose life support system is failing is that of planet Earth. The problem is that we live on a warming planet. It’s warming because of the way we live. This warming is wreaking havoc with the weather and all the other natural systems on which we depend for our existence.

We have to act.

This guide presents the five most effective actions that most of us can take to help slow the planet’s warming, along with the reasons and information needed to take those actions. If you take these and their associated actions, you’ll reduce your personal carbon footprint by 80%-90% and amplify your personal power to help put our spaceship Earth on an exciting and sustainable new course.

Action #1: Electrify everything.

WHY? The number one source of global greenhouse gases is electricity and heat production.² We can drive a stake in that with a bold two-step strategy: decarbonize the world’s grids, then electrify everything.

Right now, most of the world’s electric grids are powered primarily by coal and gas, with an assist from hydro and nuclear, and just a sliver from wind and solar. We urgently need to flip that and get all our electrical power from renewables and other non-carbon-based technologies.

In some parts of the world, you can help hasten that transition in a matter of minutes. Most people in the San Francisco Bay Area get 50% of their electricity from renewables, but for the price of a single latte per month, they can upgrade to 100% renewable energy. Depending on where you live, you may have a similar choice available to you from your electric utility.

¹ If you would to adapt this guide for your region, contact bwalter@greensweep.org

² Environmental Protection Agency: <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/global-greenhouse-gas-emissions-data>

Action: Upgrade to 100% renewable energy from your utility, if possible.

WHY? Utilities respond to consumer demand. When you express your desire for renewable energy, you give them one more reason to make the transition.

HERE'S HOW: Contact your utility to see if it offers a renewable energy plan. In the San Francisco Bay Area you have this option through these sources:

[East Bay](#)

[Marin & Napa Counties](#)

[Monterey Bay](#)

[San Francisco County](#)

[San Jose](#)

[San Mateo County](#)

[Silicon Valley](#)

[Sonoma County](#)

Do this NOW, before you read another word.

Action: Install solar.

WHY? Upgrading to 100% renewables through your utility ensures you are *paying* for 100% clean energy and helps hasten the transition by increasing demand for clean energy, but it doesn't ensure you are *getting* clean electrons to your home. That's because most grids, including the California grid, are still partly dirty. The only way you can get 100% clean energy to your home is to install solar.

HERE'S HOW: Ask your friends or neighbors for recommendations, or use Yelp to find a highly rated solar installer in your area. The installer will perform a free inspection and give you an estimate. It's a project, but one that will pay for itself in 5-10 years and increase the resale value of your home³. Once you are producing your own clean electrons and using only electric cars and appliances (the next action), you will truly be a Prince(ess) of the Planet!

Action: Switch to electric cars and appliances.

WHY? The good news is that there are now greatly superior electric alternatives for our ALL of our polluting gas appliances and machines:

Cars: If you have to buy a car and can afford a Tesla, buy it. You'll love it. If you want the most affordable (and virtuous) way to go, buy a used Nissan Leaf or Chevy Volt.

³ <https://newscenter.lbl.gov/2015/01/13/berkeley-lab-illuminates-price-premiums-u-s-solar-home-sales/>

Heating & Cooling: There's only two words you need to know: **heat pump**. A heat pump is the most efficient way to both heat and cool your house. Heat pump water heaters will efficiently heat your water. Google "heat pump" and geek out.

Cooking: There's only three words you need to know: **induction stove top**. Google that and geek out.

Most of us are not in a position to swap out these items until our existing ones have worn out. But eventually, you'll be buying a new car, perhaps, or getting AC, or replacing a water heater or an oven, and then it will be a no-brainer to make the switch. And, if you can afford to make the switch now, do it. If we use all our gas machines and appliances through their useful life, there is no chance we can keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

No matter what, never ever ever ever ever buy anything that's powered by gas again, from this day forward, OK?

Action: Limit flying, but if you must fly, buy carbon offsets.

WHY? One round-trip flight between New York and California generates about 20 percent of the greenhouse gases that a gas car emits over an entire year.⁴

Electric, hybrid, and net zero emission planes are coming, but until they get here, you should get creative about finding alternatives to reduce your travel such using video-conferencing and vacationing locally. If you must fly, then purchase carbon offsets to offset the emissions from your flight. You can offset that transcontinental round trip flight for as little as \$14.80.

HERE'S HOW: One reputable supplier of carbon offsets is Cool Effect: <https://www.cooleffect.org/>

Action #2: Switch to plant-based foods.

WHY? If somebody told you he would sell you a hamburger for cheap if you would let him flood the atmosphere with greenhouse gases⁵, destroy the world's rainforests⁶, extinguish half the world's species⁷, take over 26% of the Earth's terrestrial surface and third of all arable land⁸, pollute your air and water, increase your risk of cancer⁹ and heart disease¹⁰, endanger your supply of antibiotics¹¹, and slaughter

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/27/climate/airplane-pollution-global-warming.html>

⁵ <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/global-greenhouse-gas-emissions-data>

⁶ <https://globalforestatlas.yale.edu/amazon/land-use/cattle-ranching>

⁷ <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2015/08/meat-eaters-may-speed-worldwide-species-extinction-study-warns>

⁸ <https://news.stanford.edu/news/2007/february21/livestock-022107.html>

⁹ https://www.iarc.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/pr240_E.pdf

billions of innocent creatures, would you take that deal? That's the price the world is paying for our addiction to meat and dairy.

Fortunately, it's not necessary to deprive yourself of tasty burgers, cheeses, and beverages, because delicious, low-carbon, plant-based alternatives can now be found for all of them in abundance, and new ones are coming out almost daily. Check out the burgers from Impossible Foods¹² and Beyond Meat¹³, beverages from Ripple Foods¹⁴, and cheeses¹⁵ from a variety of producers.

Scientists tell us that we in the industrialized world must cut our beef consumption by 90%.¹⁶

Action: Pledge to eat mostly plants and delicious plant-based meat and dairy alternatives.

If that's too big a step for you, then pledge to eat at least one sumptuous, flavorful, delectable, aromatic plant-based meal per day, then move up to two when you are ready, and then go whole plant!

While you are at it, check out a powerful new documentary -- *Game Changers* -- on why a plant-based diet is becoming the standard diet of professional athletes everywhere the world, and why it was the standard diet of the Roman Gladiators. *Game Changers* is available on Netflix.

Action: Ask the owner or manager of your favorite restaurant to add more plant-based entrees to the top of their menu.

WHY? If your favorite restaurant puts delicious plant-based entrees at the top of their menu, you'll influence the eating behavior of hundreds of their other customers.

Action #3: Divest and invest.

WHY? The fossil fuel industry has known for decades that use of their product would warm the planet and wreak havoc, yet they chose to cover it up, mislead the public¹⁷, bribe our politicians to block action,

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<https://www.cardiosmart.org/News-and-Events/2019/06/Red-and-Processed-Meats-Increase-Risk-for-Heart-Disease>

¹¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4638249/>

¹² <https://impossiblefoods.com/locations/>

¹³ <https://www.beyondmeat.com/where-to-find/>

¹⁴ <https://www.ripplefoods.com/store-locator/>

¹⁵ Google "best plant-based cheese" or "best vegan cheese" and you'll find hundreds of articles by food critics raving about their latest plant-based cheese alternative.

¹⁶

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/10/huge-reduction-in-meat-eating-essential-to-avoid-climate-breakdown>

¹⁷ See the book and documentary of the same name: *Merchants of Doubt* (on Amazon Prime).

grab huge subsidies for themselves, destroy our shorelines, oceans, and wildernesses, and work with their enablers, the mega-banks, to use our deposits to finance it all.

So why do we keep investing in fossil fuel companies? And why do we allow the megabanks to invest our hard-earned deposits in fossil fuel financing?

ACTION: Divest from fossil fuels and invest in the green economy.

HERE'S HOW:

- Use the Fossil Free Funds website (<https://fossilfreefunds.org/>) to find out if your savings are invested in fossil free funds, and find ETFs and mutual funds that steer clear of fossil fuel investments.
- Use the DivestInvest website (<https://www.divestinvest.org/how-to-divestinvest/individuals/>) for a comprehensive guides to divesting and investing.

ACTION: Move your deposits from your irresponsible megabank to a responsible community bank.

WHY? The world's megabanks have been unapologetic enablers of the fossil fuel industry. In the three years after the Paris Agreement, 2016-2018, the world's biggest banks invested over a half trillion dollars in the fossil fuel industry¹⁸, and they are continue to finance fossil fuels. Where do they get the money that they lend? In large part, from our deposits in their banks. You can put a stop to that by moving your money to a sustainable bank.

HERE'S HOW: Green America as a great guide to breaking up with your megabank:<https://www.greenamerica.org/break-up-with-your-mega-bank>. It can help you find a better bank.

Action #4: Get out the vote.

WHY? The next few elections in the free world will be the most consequential elections in our lifetimes. That's because the fossil fuel industry has successfully delayed effective policy action for decades with their misinformation campaigns and donations to sympathetic politicians. You cannot afford to sit out these elections. It's absolutely critical that we get climate leaders into positions of power everywhere around the world.

That means exercising your right to vote, of course, but you can do much more...

¹⁸ Rainforest Action Network Banking on Climate Change 2019 report, <https://www.ran.org/bankingonclimatechange2019/>

ACTION: Donate to the campaigns of politicians in your country who support climate action.

HERE'S HOW: Sign up for the Climate Action Now newsletter (email bwalter@greensweep.org to join the list) and we'll let you know when we learn about high impact political campaigns you can help.

ACTION: Volunteer with the Environmental Voter Project or other groups to help get out the vote.

WHY? Did you know 10 million Americans who give climate change or the environment as one of their top two issues did not vote in the 2016 presidential election? The Environmental Voter Project works to identify inactive environmentalists and turn them into consistent activists and voters. You can help determine the outcome of the next election from the comfort of your home just by making phone calls and sending emails.

HERE'S HOW: Sign up to help at their website: <https://www.environmentalvoter.org/get-involved>

Action #5: Unite, and **STRIKE!**

WHY? Did you know that we only need 3.5% of our fellow citizens to engage in active and sustained action to bring about national climate action?¹⁹ Individual action is necessary but not sufficient to tame our climate monster. We need collective action as well, now more so than at any other time in our history.

ACTION: Join the local chapter of a climate action group.

WHY?

- **News you can use:** You are going to real time up-to-date information about what's going on in our community and region.
- **Support:** You are going to have questions about things.
- **Companionship:** Do you want to go to the next climate strike alone, or do you want to go with a bunch of people you know and like?

HERE'S HOW: Check out the websites of the following fine climate action groups, most of which have both national organizations and local chapters.

¹⁹ "Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict", Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan

- **The Climate Reality Project** will give you comprehensive information about the climate crisis and train you to go out into your community to educate the public and stimulate action.
National Organization: <https://www.climaterealityproject.org/>
Bay Area Chapter: <https://www.climaterealitybayarea.org/>
- **Elders Climate Action** is dedicated to helping concerned elders take action on the local, regional and state level to address the threat of climate change.
National Organization: <https://www.eldersclimateaction.org>
NorCal Chapter: <https://www.eldersclimateaction.org/norcal-chapter/>
- **The Sunrise Movement** is building an army of young people to stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process.
National Organization: <https://www.sunrisemovement.org/>
Palo Alto Hub: sunrisemvmtpalto@gmail.com
- **350.org** is standing up to the fossil fuel industry to stop all new coal, oil and gas projects and build clean energy for all.
National Organization: <https://350.org/>
Bay Area: <https://350bayarea.org/>
- **The Sierra Club** works for clean air, safe water, land protection, and a vibrant natural world.
National Organization: <https://www.sierraclub.org/>
Loma Prieta Chapter: <https://www.sierraclub.org/loma-prieta>
- **Extinction Rebellion** uses nonviolent civil disobedience to compel government action to avoid tipping points in the climate system, biodiversity loss, and the risk of social and ecological collapse.
International Organization: <https://rebellion.earth/>
Bay Area: <https://extinctionrebellionsfbay.org/>

ACTION: Join a student climate strike or support those who do.

WHY? Millions of young people around the world are taking to the streets to protest climate inaction and demand a sustainable planet for their future. Greta Thunberg and these other brave young people have become the conscience of the world. They deserve our support, either in the streets or with financial support to organizations supporting them, such as the Sunrise Movement and the Extinction Rebellion.

HOW: Find a strike on the “Fridays for the Future” website: <https://www.fridaysforfuture.org/join> or at <https://strikewithus.org/>. Visit the Sunrise Movement (<https://www.sunrisemovement.org/>) and Extinction Rebellion (<https://rebellion.earth/>) websites to learn how you can help.

Ask yourself, what are YOU best able to do about the climate crisis?

Some of the most important contributions to the climate crisis have come from individuals who have asked themselves this question. Most of us are not in a position to create a company or invent a game-changing technology, but all of us have talents and connections and resources.

If you are a lawyer, then litigate! If you are an engineer, then engineer! If you are an investor, invest in solutions that can tip the scales in our favor. We are an amazing species, and if all of us do what we are best able to do, we absolutely can reverse the damage we've done and our spaceship Earth on a new, exciting, and sustainable course.

Thanks!

The GreenSweep Foundation

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