



# Changing Seasons Changing Lives

New Realities, New Opportunities



## LEADERSHIP SUMMIT REPORT

November 2012



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*start with people*

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A special thank you to Tracy Russ, our fantastic moderator.

## Overview



As the impacts of climate change are accelerating – warm seasonal weather, droughts, floods, wildfires, extreme weather – Americans are noticing. A majority now embrace that climate change is real, yet their concern is broad, and remains very shallow. These visible manifestations of climate change are opening doors to social consciousness; Americans' are seeing reality unfiltered with bias. We have new pathways for engaging Americans to build support for action on climate.

*What can we do to harness the new climate realities to increase awareness and shift it to urgency? How can we work together to expand climate solutions advocacy? What are the best paths to policy, and what are the principles on which we can all agree?*

**Changing Seasons, Changing Lives** brought the brightest and most innovative leaders together for a structured day of learning, sharing, and collaboration to seek and plan ways to inspire Americans to prepare for and prevent further risks brought about by climate change. Attendance was by invitation only, and included nearly 100 of America's leading CEOs, CMOs, academics and cultural celebrities -- climate and sustainability leaders, innovative social science and communication experts, and leaders from a diverse array of other sectors.

The agenda consisted of three sessions.

- **Session I was about New Realities** – in context of the changes in climate, energy, politics, and economics, the leaders determined the most promising new macro message frames with which to connect with Americans and reignite public support for effective climate solutions.
- **Session II focused on Strategies for Solutions** – recognizing climate solutions can be addressed on many levels, and given the magnitude and urgency of the challenge, leaders collaborated to draft principles for a common platform on which they could all agree and that could determine a framework for go-forward national climate policy solutions.
- **Session III emphasized Collaboration for Success** – acknowledging that collaboration is currently more an exception than a practice, leaders prioritized major constituencies with whom we should authentically collaborate and how, including those within and new to the climate movement.

The net result was a powerful day of new ideas, hope, relationships, and progress that left leaders energized and motivated to move forward. *Changing Seasons* inspired strategic direction and a renewed interest to collaborate and engage Americans for effective solutions on climate change.



Bob Perkowitz  
President  
ecoAmerica



Meighen Speiser  
Chief Engagement Officer  
ecoAmerica



**Changing Seasons**  
**Changing Lives**

New Realities, New Opportunities

## A Guide For Now

The biggest take away from *Changing Seasons, Changing Lives* was that the situation has changed, but we have not. The palpable sense of urgency for action on climate change was matched by concern about our past ineffectiveness. At a time when America needs leadership, strategy and solutions on climate change, the movement is in a state of relative disarray. The old ideas have not worked, but we have no path forward that begins to match the challenge and the need. Though Americans are concerned, and our President supports action on climate (at some point), our work is just (re)beginning.

Summit leaders agreed that climate change is upon us – and that the implications are dire. Climate change induced damage to the built environment and to natural systems that support our well-being is increasing. The costs to society from this damage plus the cost to prepare for it will be greater than the costs of a reasonable shift to non-polluting energy sources. **Amidst this is new opportunity.** In place of science we have reality. In place of the Arctic, we have America. And, in place of 2030 we have 2013. We face these new realities with a burgeoning supply of fossil fuels, a powerful carbon industry, and a gridlocked political system, but transformative solutions that could power the next millennia of human potential are all around us.

Hundreds of organizations in America are working on climate solutions – and dozens of their leaders attended the *Changing Seasons, Changing Lives* Summit. These fragmented, often duplicative and sometimes conflicting efforts can be the foundation of the solution. **Aligned with shared principles and empowered in collective action, we could shift our energy regime in ways that promise a more secure, safe, healthy, and prosperous future.**

Summit leaders remain hopeful, but not confident that we can pull our act together and lead America toward climate solutions. We have the assets – people and money. We now need to put principles before policy and common cause before organizational self-interest. If we can pull ourselves together, we will be able to pull the nation together around climate solutions. **We need to expand our movement, empower leadership, address climate directly, and connect with the hearts of Americans.** We can help America attain the cultural and economic benefits that come from addressing climate change.

At ecoAmerica, we're paying heed to the wisdom from *Changing Seasons, Changing Lives*. In January, 2013, we will launch **MomentUs**, a strategic organizing initiative that will work in the background to: 1) empower and support organizations working toward climate solutions with deep and applicable research; 2) foster leadership and collaboration within and beyond the movement with a diverse and robust network, and; 3) build public will for climate solutions in America with a new narrative and national campaign that inspires Americans and demonstrates that solving for climate is at the center of their values. **We invite you to join us** in this venture.



*"I was blown away by the calibre of the conversation, organization, and outcomes. Bravo! I actually feel... dare I say it?... hopeful."*

- Whitney Mortimer  
Partner, IDEO

## Session I: New Realities



Our world is different than it was just a few years ago. We face new climate and energy, political, and economic realities plus new American perspectives on climate change and other issues. Rand Rosenberg introduced the session, sharing how PG&E embraced their new reality to invest in renewable energy, despite internal corporate push-back. He called for leaders to determine the most promising macro message frames to capitalize on the new realities, reignite progress, and engage Americans in effective climate solutions.

### SPEAKERS

#### **Maggie Fox, President and CEO, The Climate Reality Project**

Climate change is no longer a distant threat, but an observable reality in America, says Fox. As carbon emissions continue rising, drought, extreme storms and hard-to-control wildfires rage. Recent advances in clean energy technology and investment are real and reap significant benefits, but natural gas fracking technology has put vast dirty energy reserves within dangerous reach. Our nation faces hard choices, but now, the choices must be made in the context of observable impacts of climate change, no longer distant warnings.

#### **Paul Tewes, Partner, New Partners**

The climate change movement...isn't, says Tewes, who offered the "movement" lacks teeth, gets no respect within the electorate or elected bodies, and is failing to make the most of political assets. There is missed opportunity: climate polls better than we act; there are committed organizations and financial and human resources available, and; the issue enjoys similar or higher levels of support that have gone on to become forces to be reckoned with in voting booths, including the Tea Party Movement and gay marriage. Hold accountability, instill fear, reward value propositions and push a unified message to make this issue a cause.

#### **Andy Hoffman, Professor, University of Michigan**

Insights from the social sciences can empower climate change communicators, says Hoffman. Obstacles to a social consensus include political ideology (liberals are more inclined to believe in climate change than conservatives), distrust in science and scientific process, and varying levels of acceptance around governmental, moral and ethical responsibility to deal with the issue. To move towards a social consensus, one must know the audience they're reaching, move beyond models, frame the message in language they accept, employ "climate brokers" to act as messengers and use the power of observable events to drive a change in social awareness and beliefs.

#### **Matt Nisbet, Associate Professor, American University**

Matt Nisbet puts forth the view that while political participation on climate change issues is low, the potential for action is high if people are urged to take action – where is our ask? Attitudes around choices between economic and environmental considerations show un-harvested opportunities for political will among the American public, especially if the frame of health and impacts on the personal health of people is used as a lead framing issue.

## Session I: Discussion Group Priorities

In Session I, leaders shared a vision of a world at or near crisis state, lamenting both the lack of public discourse on climate change and the failings of a variety of messaging and political efforts that seemed to have little, or even negative, impact in building public support for action. Leaders agreed that we shouldn't give up on talking about climate change specifically, but we should focus on how to do so.

Leaders were motivated to harness this unfortunate but catalyzing moment of widely observable impacts to recalibrate public support efforts, increase social capital, build political capital, and break the logjam of inaction. They agreed we need to begin by developing salient master narratives, built on people-centric impacts and compelling benefits.

After much debate, leaders determined the most promising macro-messaging frames. These top choices center on personal relevance and protecting human well-being, because people “are ego-centered, not eco-centered.”

### **Social Benefit**

We must illustrate and foster clear and personally tangible social benefits for supporting action on climate, grounded in reality and common sense. We should focus on community, and emphasize the self-benefits involved with helping others.

### **Morality**

We need to stop arguing, and take our message to the mountaintops. We need to tap into the deep American value of “doing the right thing,” as stewards for our families, children, communities, and world.

### **Preparedness**

Americans seek answers and actions that are tangible and practical. Preparedness offers a way for Americans to prepare for change while also taking steps to prevent further risk (read: mitigation). “Adaptation” was eschewed as negative and demobilizing.

Additional recommendations evolved out of leader conversations, such as the utility of personal experience, evoking the “power of place,” to build stronger emotional connection. Leaders also surfaced the “bad guy frame”, that we need to identify and characterize an opponent and enemy. There was agreement, however, that fear-based frames should be used strategically, and could only be successful with clear solutions.

## Session II: Strategies for Solutions



We can address climate solutions on many levels, and advocate around a spectrum of policy solutions. But what are the principles behind effective policies, those that undergird solutions that will win public support and political viability? ecoAmerica Board member Lisa Renstrom introduced the session by positing that "principles are meant to guide us." She guided leaders to develop principles that serve to build alignment in the movement, inspire public will, effectively address climate change, and bring about winning national climate policy solutions.

### SPEAKERS

#### **Simon Johnson, Prof. of Entrepreneurship, MIT Sloan School of Mgmt**

Simon Johnson advocates a hard-nosed approach to change and to bringing solutions to life politically. Johnson's assessment of the climate change movement so far is that it has failed to take advantage of known tools for leverage and influence such as holding politicians accountable for support and promises, punishing those who don't fulfill commitments and wielding the economic clout and influence of those Americans who are supportive. Johnson challenged the movement to take stock of why the cause isn't moving forward and to take action.

#### **Eli Lehrer, President, R Street Institute**

Conservative activist and pundit Eli Lehrer says that science alone cannot dictate public policy, that arguments used with conservatives to persuade often do the opposite, and that a conservative response must be...conservative. Such solutions should be forward-looking, cut bureaucracy, and should involve efforts to reduce the size and scope of government. They cannot be excuses to increase taxes or accomplish other liberal goals. Common ground can be found – conservative solutions aren't always right, but then again, neither are progressive ones.

#### **Kathleen Welch, Partner, Corridor Partners**

Kathleen Welch pushes more politics and less policy and says a full range of proven political tactics must be deployed to win on climate. Most importantly we must demonstrate to policymakers that there are consequences – both rewards and punishment – for where they stand on climate change. What's needed most is more engagement in elections and hard hitting lobbying and accountability, along with better grassroots mobilization, strategic communications and opposition research. Winning means showing that climate matters to voters back home.

#### **Peter Lehner, Executive Director, Natural Resources Defense Council**

The incentive and ability to act to lessen climate change requires understanding both that climate change is real and affecting people now, and that there are feasible and effective solutions. We all need personal pictures in our minds of both the problem and the solutions. Lehner sees melting glaciers on mountains he's climbed and efficiency measures at factories and in homes and vehicles as those pictures. Efficiency can save money that can help fund the transition to clean energy. We should all be seeing solar panels and wind mills soon.

## Session II: Discussion Group Priorities

In Session II, leaders indicated a moderate degree of optimism that America CAN meaningfully impact the trajectory of climate change, but were less certain that America WILL do what it takes.

Leaders agreed that a successful solution or set of solutions would be rendered impotent without strong public engagement and political strategies. Climate change has failed to make the public agenda with enough efficacy to inspire either political courage or fear. Leaders also acknowledged that we are currently “allergic” to talking about carbon and raising its price, however we must overcome this.

After energetic discussions at each table, three principles emerged as most important for any type of public policy solution. Leaders agreed on the obvious need for “reducing carbon,” and coalesced around these additional three principals:

### **Boosts/Strengthens Economy**

Americans do not tolerate sacrifice, and are worried about an underperforming economy. The opposition has been quick to message hypothetical negative economic impacts of climate change solutions. We must illustrate and prove that solving for climate change will strengthen the U.S. economy, now and as an investment for our children’s future.

### **Benefits Families**

Solutions must appeal to mainstream values, foster and defend fairness (doubling as an umbrella for both Democrats and Republicans to come together), and enhance and defend the American Dream. Benefits must be clear, tangible, and be able to be realized by every American, particularly the working and middle classes.

### **Invest in Renewables**

If solutions must be boosted by strong positive economic impact and enhance the American Dream, then leaders agreed it is logical that investment in renewables would be the third top principle. America has led all major technology revolutions for over a century, and we should continue to lead through investment in renewables and efficiency.

While carbon is the enemy, solutions must be seen, and actually be crafted as, workable and beneficial. Punitive is less useful than practical to appeal to Americans, but where politicians are concerned, the movement must be diligent to reward friends and punish enemies. The opposition has mastered this craft and we will either learn by our own defeats in the past, or once again snatch defeat from the jaws of victory at the next seminal moment when a viable solution makes its way to Washington.

## Session III: Collaborating for Success

Most Americans believe environmentalists are a unified movement. In reality, climate solutions advocates pursue different goals and tactics at different scales -- collaboration is more exception than rule. ecoAmerica Chief Engagement Officer Meighen Speiser introduced the session, positing we are positioned for success. Learning from past successful social movements, we must recognize there is a role for each organization. We must be respectful and inclusive, strengthen and broaden our collaboration beyond the current movement, and demonstrate that solving for climate is at the center of American values.

### SPEAKERS

#### **Richard Kirsch, Author, Fighting for Our Health**

Kirsch emphasized that a powerful collaborative effort is grounded in agreement on specific principles of reform, which reflect a shared vision and policy approach, rather than principles that are so broad that do not separate stakeholders with different values. He said that the principles should be ambitious, but still within the realm of political possibility. And that the vision and policy solutions should be understandable to the public, values driven, and defensible in an intense public debate. He stressed the importance of organizing people outside the Beltway to engage strategically in the campaign for reform.

#### **Peter Byck, Director and Producer, Carbon Nation**

Find the center and work your way out around common values that are less tied to partisan politics and very much observable and relevant to everyday living, says Peter Byck. Use real stories, real people and real solutions to connect and get around the barriers of politics and world view to start with values commonly held – you may be surprised at the level of agreement people find who were presumed to be distant and irreconcilable.

#### **Marshall Ganz, Senior Lecturer, Harvard University, Kennedy School**

Ganz argues that social change in the US is driven not by marketing or lobbying, but by social movements: broad based, locally rooted, and nationally coordinated. Launching such movements requires investment in local leadership development, training, and local, regional, and national campaigns. Developing such campaigns requires answering three questions: who are my people, what, in their experience, is the urgent problem, and where is the hope.

#### **Mindy Lubber, President, Ceres**

Mindy Lubber emphasized the existential threat of climate -- from a national security, public health, environmental and financial perspective. We need to deepen the base of supporters from all sectors that are impacted. Specifically, the financial risks as well as the opportunities from the climate challenge place this challenge in the center of financial markets. Economic risks from climate disruption will impact nearly every business and we are seeing more leadership from the business and financial sector to act on this economic imperative.



## Session III: Discussion Group Priorities

The unanimous decision from leaders was that current levels of collaboration and cooperation within the climate advocacy movement are at near dysfunctional levels. We should start within our own circles of influence, building much higher levels of collaboration. And, we need to avoid short-term and shallow collaborations beyond our movement. Instead we need to authentically bring in new constituencies in meaningful ways.

Leaders agreed we need to set aside differences, and actively seek shared ground out of necessity. We need to collaborate with many key constituencies, and leaders prioritized them in the order that follows:

**Major Sectors** – such as health, faith, business, higher education, military, agriculture

Leaders called for the engagement of sectors the top priority. The more seeds of positive benefit we leave along the path, the more Americans will jump to that path and create a road toward transition.

**Elites** – people of significant political and monetary influence

We must build a fortress of support that will empower success and help render the opposition's attacks futile.

**Activists** – people engaged and active at the community level

We shouldn't be afraid to fight the good fight on the ground. Activists can promote and defend American values, build authentic connections with the public, and uncover the atrocities of the opposition.

**Demographic Groups** – such as women, people of color, youth, moms

Americans look within their social networks for cues on how to think and behave. Engaging key demographic groups is a necessity, those who are proven trusted messengers possessing higher social capital.

**The American Public** – directly with the American people

We must reboot our collaboration directly with the American people. We need to listen, engage on their terms, demonstrate personal benefit in solutions, inspire their authentic kinship, show we're on their side, and motivate them to support climate solutions.

**Political/Ideological Networks** – such as Democrats, Republicans, Independents, Conservatives, Liberals, Progressives

Let's not show up to the next political rodeo with an emaciated one-party pony. Finding and articulating a vision of an American future that transcends partisan divide and starts with shared, every day values absent of ideological labeling will open up new paths to success.

Leaders highlighted the role of media, celebrities, press, the internet, as tactically important in order to engage elites, activists, and the American Public.

A movement built with people, on a platform of common hopes and activated by a network of disciplined stakeholders that care about a common victory can be the catalyst we need. This time, a strong showing will come from the support of Americans from a broad swath of the public, many from new and unusual allies.



# *Changing Seasons Changing Lives*

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presented by:

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1900 L Street NW Suite 607  
Washington, DC 20036

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ecoAmerica.org  
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ecoAmerica grows the base of popular support for climate solutions in America.

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