

WNC -Physicians for Social Responsibility Quarterly Newsletter

Impact of Climate Change on Infectious Diseases

Eight cases of malaria acquired in Florida. Cutaneous Leishmania endemic in the United States. Dengue fever outbreaks in Texas, Hawaii and Florida. What is going on? We are now seeing “tropical diseases” at previously unheard-of frequencies within the United States. More striking, persons are getting infected at home, not just from traveling abroad.

This is likely just the tip of the iceberg. A perfect storm is brewing, brought on by a warming climate, extreme weather, and a host of other factors that have a strong impact on infectious diseases. Vectors of disease, mosquitos and ticks, are finding previously unwelcome habits are now not so hostile. Viruses such as dengue and chikungunya are transmitted by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito which is thriving in warming temperatures in urbanized populations.

Ticks which spread diseases are moving northward as the winters become milder. Ticks and the disease they spread have increased by about 25% between 2011 and 2019. Lyme disease, the most common tickborne disease in the U.S. has increased about 44% according to the CDC.

The spread of these vector borne diseases is taxing the already strained US public health system. What can be done? We need to continue to invest in disease surveillance and maintain a strong public health system. We need to understand that climate change disproportionately affects socioeconomically disadvantaged people. We need to combat climate change.

Scott Mahan (WNC- PSR Member)



Congrats to Terry and Brita Clark

Terry and Brita were awarded **Peacemakers of the Year for 2023** by NC 4 Peace for their tireless efforts to stop Nuclear Proliferation. (see photo of meeting on this page with Terry and Brita in attendance)

A Word from the Chair

Thanks for the Work You Do!

Among the gifts that I was thankful for this Thanksgiving are for those working around the world for nuclear weapons abolition and for measures to reduce the warming of our planet. *People like you!* Note the words of Jamie Dimon, JPMorgan CEO (and not an oft-quoted voice in support of nuclear weapons reduction.) In October he stated, “The most serious thing facing mankind is nuclear proliferation.” We agree. So let’s keep it up! And thanks on behalf of our “Mother” (that is, Earth).

Last month I was pleased, along with other Chapter leaders around the country, to be involved in the interviews of applicants for Executive Director of PSR national, and even more pleased when my first choice for the job was selected, Brian Campbell. Brian recently has been the Director of the Iowa Environmental Council, a coalition of over 100 organizations working for environmental health in Iowa. (continued on page 2)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Holiday Potluck and brief PSR business meeting: December 15th at Dot’s house

Next PSR Meeting: Friday January 19th at 12:30 pm (meetings third Friday of each month at First Congregation Church at 20 Oak St. Asheville)

Climate Change Workgroup:

Happy Hour -TBD (some time in Jan or Feb) at Scott Mahan’s House (preceded by short meeting)

Recent Events:

PSR Booth at Oktoberfest Half-marathon and 5K – Hi-Wire Brewing– Sat. Sept 31st, 7-11 am (see photos on page 2)



President-Scott Baker

Secretary- Terry Clark

Treasurer- Bert Crain

Editor- Scott Mahan

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A Word from the Chair (continued)

Congratulations to Mary Olsen for organizing the Zoom meeting of November 28 on how to teach to the public the basic provisions of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Our chapter wrote numerous letters to officials seeking their support of an effort to convince President Biden to send representatives to listen to the discussions of the Second meeting of the States Party to the TPNW.

Looking ahead, WNCPSR has voted to sponsor the Uranium Film Festival in March of next year. The International Uranium Film Festival (IUFF) is a collection of movies and documentaries about nuclear weapons and nuclear power designed to stimulate discussion of these vital topics and what they mean for the future of humanity. The IUFF has presented films around the world - from India to Brazil to Canada. We are excited about the impact this could make on public awareness here in Western North Carolina.

This may be my last chance to wish you a very Happy Holiday season: Happy Hanukah, Merry Christmas (my family celebrates both) and Happy Kwanzaa as well. We may have been kicked out of the Asheville Holiday Parade for being “too political” (!!!) but nevertheless we will continue to celebrate and work on our own for the advent of peace and the care of creation during this special season of the year and throughout the years to come.

Scott Baker, Chair WNC- PSR

Nuclear Energy isn't a safe bet in a warming world- here's why. (excerpted from article by Paul Dorfman published June 28,2021)

The overwhelming majority of nuclear power stations active today entered service long before the science of climate change was well-established. Two in five nuclear plants operate on the coast and at least 100 have been built just a few metres above sea level. Nuclear energy is, quite literally, on the frontline of climate change – and not in a good way.

Recent scientific data indicates sea levels globally will rise further and faster than earlier predictions suggested. Even over the next couple of decades, as extreme weather events become more frequent and destructive, strong winds and low atmospheric pressure will drive bigger storm surges that could threaten coastal installations.

Nuclear power plants must draw from large sources of water to cool their reactors, hence why they're often built near the sea. But nuclear plants further inland will face similar problems with flooding in a warming world. Increasingly severe droughts and wildfire only ramp up the threat.

The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission concludes the vast majority of its nuclear sites were never designed to withstand the future climate impacts they face, and many have already experienced some flooding. A recent US Army War College report also states that nuclear power facilities are at high risk of temporary or permanent closure due to climate threats – with 60% of US nuclear capacity at risk from future sea-level rise, severe storms, and cooling water shortages.

Nuclear power may become a significant casualty of intensifying climate impacts. As things stand, nuclear infrastructure is largely unprepared. Some reactors could soon become unfit for purpose. This should prompt a substantial reassessment of nuclear's role in helping the world reach net zero emissions. *To learn more about our concerns regarding nuclear power please check our website www.wncpsr.org*

