

Climate Change Communications

Meet People Where They Are!

Pollution from our smokestacks and tailpipes is impacting our climate. And climate change, in turn, is impacting the land, water and natural resources across Montana. Yet we know that this issue is politically polarized, more prone to falling into tired clichés than building a constructive conversation. Here are some handy tips for talking about climate under the Big Sky.

Climate change is a hard sell in Montana. By meeting people where they are, we can make real progress on promoting clean energy solutions, *even when people disagree about the problem.*

BEST PRACTICES FOR CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS

1. **Self-identify with your faith.** “As a Christian, the Bible teaches me...” “As a parent of faith....” “As a small-town minister, I’m called by God to...” Make it personal.
2. **Know your goal.** What does success look like? Know the difference between advocacy and education. What *specific* change do you want to see?
3. **Know your audience.** Know who you need on your side and understand their language, values and hopes, dreams and fears.
4. **Lead with shared values.** Speak to the heart first, by evoking stewardship, responsibility, family, community, faith. Keep it positive.
5. **Then, and only then, state the problem.** The problem may be pollution, but it also maybe the need for jobs in rural communities.
6. **Always emphasize solutions.** Communicate a sense of hope and agency. Montanans love clean energy! (Even if they scoff at climate change).
7. **Translate it to real-world threats:** In Montana, climate change = Droughts, fires and floods. Not polar bears or rising sea levels.
8. **Avoid jargon and technicalities.** Instead of talking about “greenhouse gas emissions,” talk about “pollution from tailpipes and smokestacks.” Make it real.
9. **Embrace clean energy.** Montana is rich in wind, small hydro and solar energy. Let’s use it! Embrace efficiency and stopping waste.
10. **Empower people by asking them to DO something.** It doesn’t have to be much, but it must be something.

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