



# Talking About Climate in Climate Terms

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1. Let's not forfeit the argument.
2. Let's not trap ourselves with false metrics.
3. We need to take actions that can only be justified on climate grounds.
4. Let's talk about climate *effectively* and avoid pitfalls that way.

## *1. Let's not forfeit*

In political campaigns:

Never let an argument that will hurt you go unanswered.

If you do, the undecided voters will believe it is true.

## *1. Let's not forfeit*

“Is the earth getting warmer or not?”

34% no

59% yes

20% mostly from natural patterns

34% mostly from humans

Quinnipiac University Poll (Dec. 2009)

## *1. Let's not forfeit*

Asked of Coloradans:

“Do you believe climate change is a scientifically established reality, or do you feel it is still unproven and subject to debate?”

47%: A reality.

47%: Still unproven.

Mason-Dixon Research (August 2008)

## *1. Let's not forfeit*

Climate facts can make a difference:

- Only 51% of Americans understand that the last decade was the warmest in the last 150 years.
- Half of people undecided about climate change think it will begin to harm people in 50 or 100 years.

## *1. Let's not forfeit*

“Do most scientists agree on global warming or is there a lot of disagreement?”

36% they agree

62% a lot of disagreement

ABC-Washington Post (Dec. 2009)

## *1. Let's not forfeit*

The opponents of climate action talk in climate terms.

- “In the 1970s scientists said we faced global cooling.”
- “Scientists can’t predict tomorrow’s weather, how can they predict the future climate.”
- “There is widespread disagreement among scientists.”

## *1. Let's not forfeit*

From a climate denier group:

- “natural causes are very likely to be dominant” in shaping future climate.
- “the latest available research shows a warmer world would be a safer and healthier world for humans and wildlife alike.”

## *1. Let's not forfeit*

“Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed.”

Abraham Lincoln (1858)

## *2. Don't set traps*

Fort Collins Climate Action Plan:

“There are many benefits of reducing greenhouse gases that go beyond doing our part to stem the tide of climate change...

## *2. Don't set traps*

“These benefits range from [1] reduced air pollution, [2] reduced energy bills for businesses and families, [3] expanded recycling opportunities, [4] new jobs, [5] reduced urban sprawl and traffic congestion, and [6] decreased reliance on non-renewable energy sources...

“If implemented, these actions will preserve and even improve the quality of life in our community.”

### *3. Only climate justifies*

- Inventorying emissions of heat-trapping gases.
- Setting goals for heat-trapping emissions.
- Reducing emissions of carbon dioxide.
- Using carbon dioxide emissions to evaluate choices.
- Reducing methane emissions, e.g., from landfills.
- Reducing black carbon.
- Preparing for changes that are coming, e.g., less water, less skiing, more heat waves.

## *4. Talk effectively*

Let's talk about climate—

Smartly and effectively.

## *4. Talk effectively*



RMCO's central message:

This is a special place to live, work, and play.  
Let's keep it that way.

#### *4. Talk effectively*

“The Colorado River is the canary in the coal mine for global warming.”

Eric Kuhn, General Manager  
Colorado River Water Conservation District

## *4. Talk effectively*

What we do here matters.

Compared to the world's 212 nations,  
Colorado emits more carbon dioxide from  
fossil fuels than 174 nations do.

## *4. Talk effectively*

“If not us, who? And if not now, when?”

Ronald Reagan (1985)