



STATE OF THE CITY

Mayor Roy D. Buol Winter 2020

The Winter 2020 installment of Dubuque's "State of the City" is a focus on the global significance that can be created by our cumulative efforts to positively affect the state of our planet... when we "Think Globally and Act Locally."

While we find ourselves in a time where our nation is divided on many significant issues, there is one issue for which we can take personal action and corporate social responsibility within our own communities and cities: continuing and enhancing our efforts and partnerships to prepare for and respond to climate change.

This global problem, with indisputable facts and scientific consensus, is showing up in real time on television and in our news with increasing regularity. According to the latest climate data collected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and NASA, 2019 was the second hottest year on record globally. This is just the latest in a long series of objective, scientific confirmations that the Earth is steadily getting hotter.

We are in a decades-long trend of increasing temperatures that is expected to continue. Alarmingly, our planet is on track to significantly exceed the temperature targets set by the Paris Agreement, developed to help countries deal with greenhouse gas emissions mitigation and adaptation and ratified by over 180 nations and the European Union.

According to NASA, "Global climate change has already had observable effects on the environment. Glaciers have shrunk, ice on rivers and lakes is breaking up earlier, plant and animal ranges have shifted, and trees are flowering sooner. Effects that scientists had predicted in the past would result from global climate change are now occurring: loss of sea ice, accelerated sea level rise, and longer, more intense heat waves."

Different parts of the planet are being affected by global climate change in different ways. Locally and regionally, warmer average temperatures are affecting our weather patterns. According to the most recent National Climate Assessment, "The frequency and intensity of heavy precipitation events across the U.S. have increased," especially in the northern and central parts of the country.

National Climate Assessment Reports released by the U.S. Global Change Research Program identify the following impacts currently being experienced in the Midwest and say they will continue, "Extreme heat, heavy downpours, and flooding will

affect infrastructure, health, agriculture, forestry, transportation, air and water quality, and more."

Here, in Dubuque, we are seeing more extreme and less predictable weather resulting in dangerous and destructive flooding. Last year, the Mississippi River was above flood stage in Dubuque for a record 86 days and the early predictions for this spring indicate a strong chance for more flooding in the Midwest.

As we look out into the future of our children and theirs, this means that by 2050, Dubuque could experience a 15 percent increase in average rainfall, a 30 percent increase in heavy precipitation; our average annual temperature could increase 11 degrees and we could see an additional 48 days above 95 degrees resulting in a 266 percent increase in air conditioning demand. Our growing season could increase by 48 days and we could have 35 fewer days below 32 degrees, which may sound good to people who don't like winter, but it comes at a significant cost.

What would be the impact to Dubuque? Flooding, more extreme weather, decreased air quality, increased mosquito and tick diseases, power grid failures, food insecurity, and even wildfires. The people most vulnerable to climate-related threats are children, older adults, individuals with disabilities, those in economic stress, people of color, at-risk workers, food-insecure individuals, and people without vehicle access.

As mayor, it is my responsibility to work alongside my city council colleagues to develop policies and provide resources to City staff to identify climate hazards for our community, develop workable solutions to those risks, and build resiliency for Dubuque residents and businesses.

Currently, a group of passionate residents and city employees are working to update Dubuque's Climate Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to climatic impacts. I invite and urge your involvement in that process. Please visit www.sustainabledubuque.org or call 563.690.6038.

"The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in their shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life."

Rabindranath Tagore, Indian poet