

WHY SHOULD
I STUDY
TODAY
WHEN YOU'RE
DESTROYING
MY
TOMORROW

Y
CO
CLIMATE
CHANG

WHY
BE

NO PLANET B

Breaking Down Climate Change & What Can Be Done

Although perhaps one of the most relevant and time-sensitive narratives to portray, the situation surrounding the climate is often overlooked in popular media, in politics, and in the corporate agenda. As the next generation who will inherit the Earth, the responsibility to avoid climate catastrophe falls onto students and young people. Living in a landlocked state, it can be difficult to envision the ways in which climate change impacts the daily life of a Coloradoan. Scientific findings often focus on the negative impacts of climate change on coastal regions, rather than that of areas far removed from the ocean. Recent resurgence of the climate movement has helped to convey the severity of the issue; national and international organizations backed by people of all ages are leading the charge to incite change on a political and social cultural level.

Greenhouse gases. Global Warming. Pollution. All of these words are so often tossed around to describe the various issues plaguing the planet. These terms can be so easily misconstrued and warped in their general understanding even though each refers to a small part of a bigger whole: the destruction of the environment. Climate change is an expansive umbrella that incorporates a wide variety of interconnected issues that all impact the planet.

Global warming is a term to describe the process in which fossil fuels are burned, and subsequently, greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere. Fossil fuels are energy sources that are finite in their amount and must be extracted from the Earth and refined to be used. This extraction process not only releases harmful chemicals into the atmosphere that contribute to the greenhouse effect, but damage the ecosystems and communities surrounding them. The gasses trap heat, ultimately causing the average surface temperature of the planet to increase. This warming and its subsequent impacts can be defined as climate change. Such warming negatively impacts the land, sea, and air integral to life. Over the past 20 years, the impacts of climate change have become more and more evident throughout the world. Increased frequency and severity of natural disasters, increased rates of species extinction, polar ice melt, and widespread evidence of pollution are all evidence of such changes.

Russ Schumacher, state climatologist since 2017, director of the Colorado Climate Center and associate professor of atmospheric science at Colorado State University, emphasizes the importance of broadening our perspectives to include a larger world view.

“I think we all have the tendency to focus on the here-and-now, and what’s happening in our own neighborhood or city or state. [It] requires a willingness to take a bigger-picture perspective,

not just focusing locally or in the present, but on effects that are happening to people all around the world, and will in all likelihood only continue to get worse.”

Although Colorado may not have direct access to an ocean, the state as a whole relies heavily on snowmelt to avoid drought every summer. The increasing impacts of climate change have the potential to reduce snowfall and thus runoff to the point where Colorado could face detrimental and irreversible drought.

“If we focus on Colorado, the biggest concern is going to be related to water. If, as is projected, [our] population continues to grow significantly, and we [could] end up having a bad multi-year drought,” Schumacher said.

The impacts of climate change disregard any arbitrary border humans have denoted; regardless of the someone’s location, the effects of climate change will inevitably be felt. The implications don’t just stop with humans, either. Biodiversity, the variety of species living in a specific area that make up an ecosystem, is also at risk, particularly in areas that host a large array of life such as the rainforests.

Miranda Glasbergen, a volunteer with 350 Colorado, a climate advocacy organization, talked about the gravity of the situation and its implications on wildlife.

“[A] United Nations report released in May projects that one million species on the planet are at risk of extinction from the combined effects of climate change, habitat loss and invasive species, among other things. Quite apart from the heartbreak of losing so much biodiversity, just think how the loss of so many species would threaten our food and water security. That should be enough to keep anyone focused on the urgency of finding solutions.”

SMALL CHANGES, BIG IMPACT

Social media has contributed greatly to the development and spread of information about living more sustainably and intentionally being more environmentally conscious. From simple swaps to full dietary changes, there are a variety of ways any individual can take action to reduce their carbon footprint.

Reusable bags have been commonplace in society for years and continue to be a simple way to reduce the waste an individual produces on a daily basis. According to Reuse This Bag, the estimated life of a plastic bag is 12 minutes; 12 minutes between when groceries are placed into when it is discarded. That same plastic bag can take up to 1,000 years to decompose in a landfill. Cities across the United States have implemented plastic bag bans, with California, Hawaii, and New York banning them on a state-wide level. These bans are only the beginning in implementing legislation to protect natural areas and the species that inhabit them.

Although it has the potential to be an outlet for the spread of false information and negativity, social media can be instrumental in raising awareness for environmental initiatives. #stopsucking took social media by storm, urging people to ditch plastic straws in favor of their metal alternatives. The movement was successful in raising awareness for the dangers plastic poses to

marine life; however, the message that there are bigger, more prominent problems plaguing the planet outside of straws can be overshadowed by smaller issues.

The idea of zero waste has been around for almost 20 years and steadily evolved from a movement incited by recycling activists to something people from all walks of life have adapted to fit their lifestyles. Now, the movement has transitioned from one of recycling to one of reducing waste in the first place. From people on Instagram sharing photos of their mason jars and reusable straws to students here at SLHS, each individual has the capacity to make a difference in the movement.

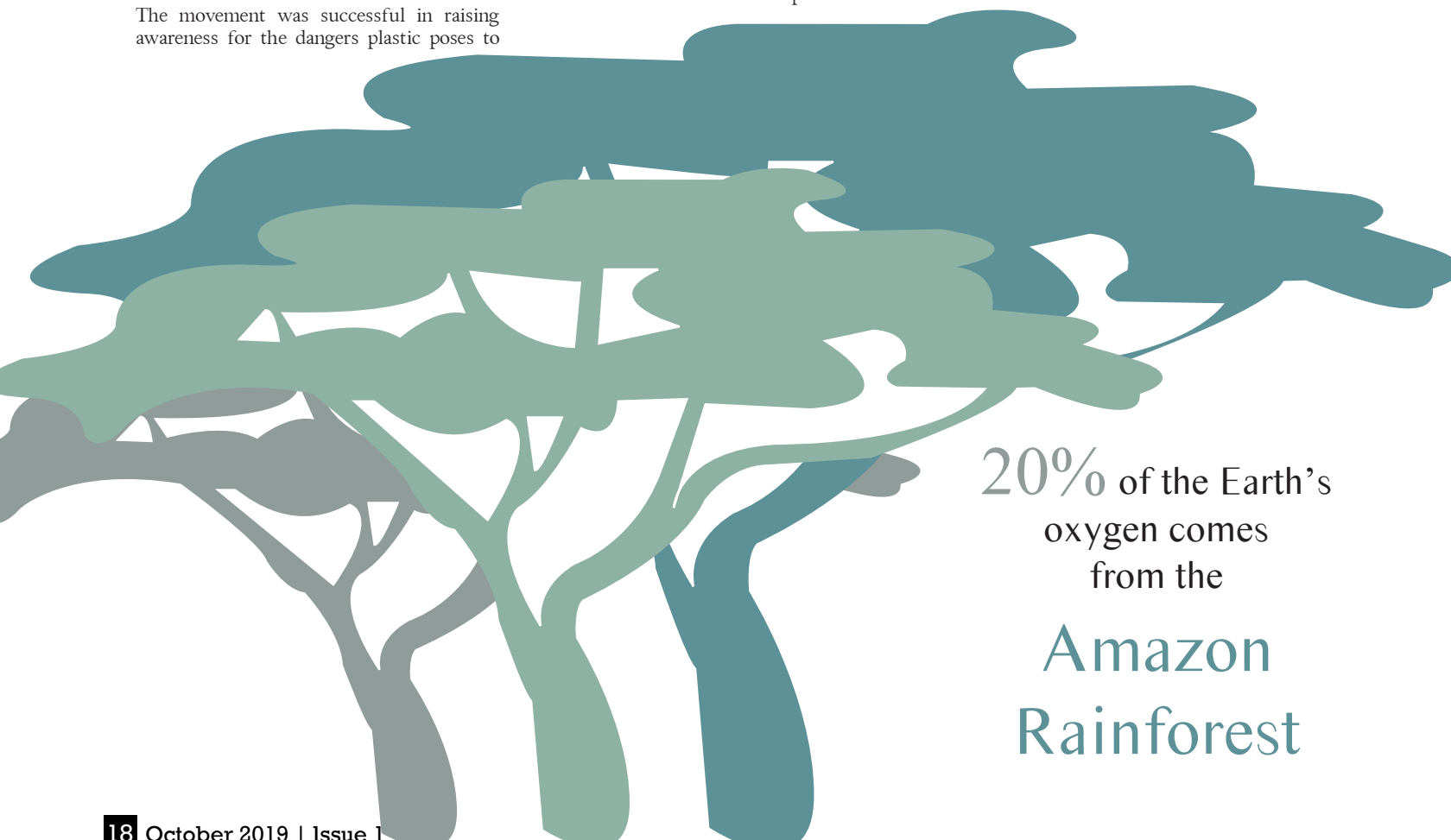
Polly Torian '22 shared her experience with Zero Waste and her motivation for starting zero waste.

“[The] whole climate change thing stresses me out immensely, especially with pollution [and] the fact that no one’s really doing [anything]. I figured that I’m gonna at least contribute as little [waste] as possible... [Every] piece of plastic you use is still out there.”

These movements are crucial for raising awareness about human impacts on the

environment and its inhabitants, as well as providing simple ways for people to reduce their environmental impact. Many students have begun integrating different aspects of environmentally conscious movements into their everyday life. Students are using metal straws, reusable water bottles, and beginning to bring reusable tumblers to their favorite coffee shops. Other students have made the switch to zero waste products and have gotten their friends involved too.

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20% of the Earth’s oxygen comes from the Amazon Rainforest

POWER TO THE STUDENTS



Katie Brunk '20 and Emmy Lewan '20 at the Climate Strike on September 20th

Perhaps the most accessible avenue for students to be involved with climate activism is the climate strikes. Started and spread by Greta Thunberg, a 16 year old from Sweden, students across the world rally in front of their capitol buildings and march through their cities nearly every Friday. And have been for over a year.

The culmination of over a year's worth of youth mobilization and activism was realized during The Global Climate Strike that took place on September 20th. The strike was the largest gathering of people demanding climate action in history, with 4 million people worldwide coming together to advocate and rally around the cause of climate action. The strike in Denver had over 7,500 people in attendance, including a number of Standley Lake students, marching down 16th Street and rallying on the steps of the Capitol Building. One student, Emmy Lewan '20, talked about the atmosphere of the event.

“It was really encouraging to see so many people trying to make a difference, instead of the pessimism that overrides everything any other time I think about climate change,”
Lewan said.



Standley Lake Students at the Strike



These movements were not started by adults; they were started by students who had a vision of what needed to be done and were passionate enough to make it happen. The voices of young people are often disenfranchised in politics and business, and overlooked by those in charge. The strikes offer a mechanism for students to be involved and work towards creating real change on a national.

Lewan offered advice for any student who wants to get involved in the climate movement, but is unsure how.

“Start with research, have a reason why you are supporting these changes, know what the issues are and try to make your own personal difference by supporting sustainability and reducing your waste,” Lewan said.

Attending strikes is not the only way to participate in climate advocacy; it can start with something as simple as refusing single waste plastic or educating a fellow student about a certain climate issue. As the necessity to take initiative regarding the global climate crisis increasingly falls into the hands of youth, it is important to understand why.

“Today’s youth are likely to see and experience the worst impacts of the climate emergency first hand, by the simple fact that they will live long enough to see the scientists’ prognoses come true. Youth have everything to lose, and everything to gain by creating a more equitable, more sustainable world with a chance for a stable climate,” explained Glasbergen.

CLIMATE CHANGE BY THE NUMBERS

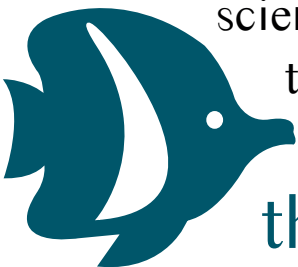
July 2019

 was, globally, the **hottest** month ever recorded

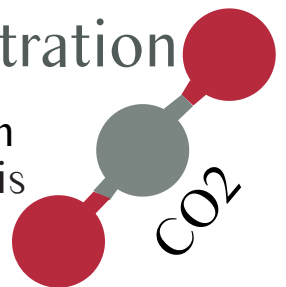
The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that there's over a **95%** chance that **human activities** over the past 50 years have warmed the Earth



By 2050,

 scientists predict that there will be **more plastic than fish** in the ocean.

The concentration of CO₂ in Earth's atmosphere is **higher** than it has been in 3 million years

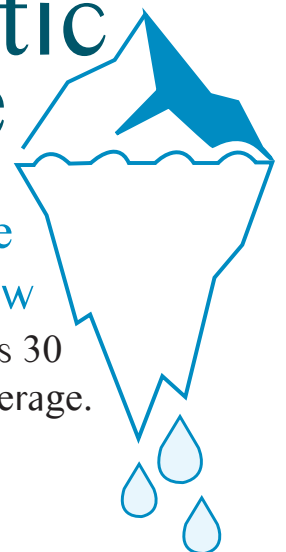


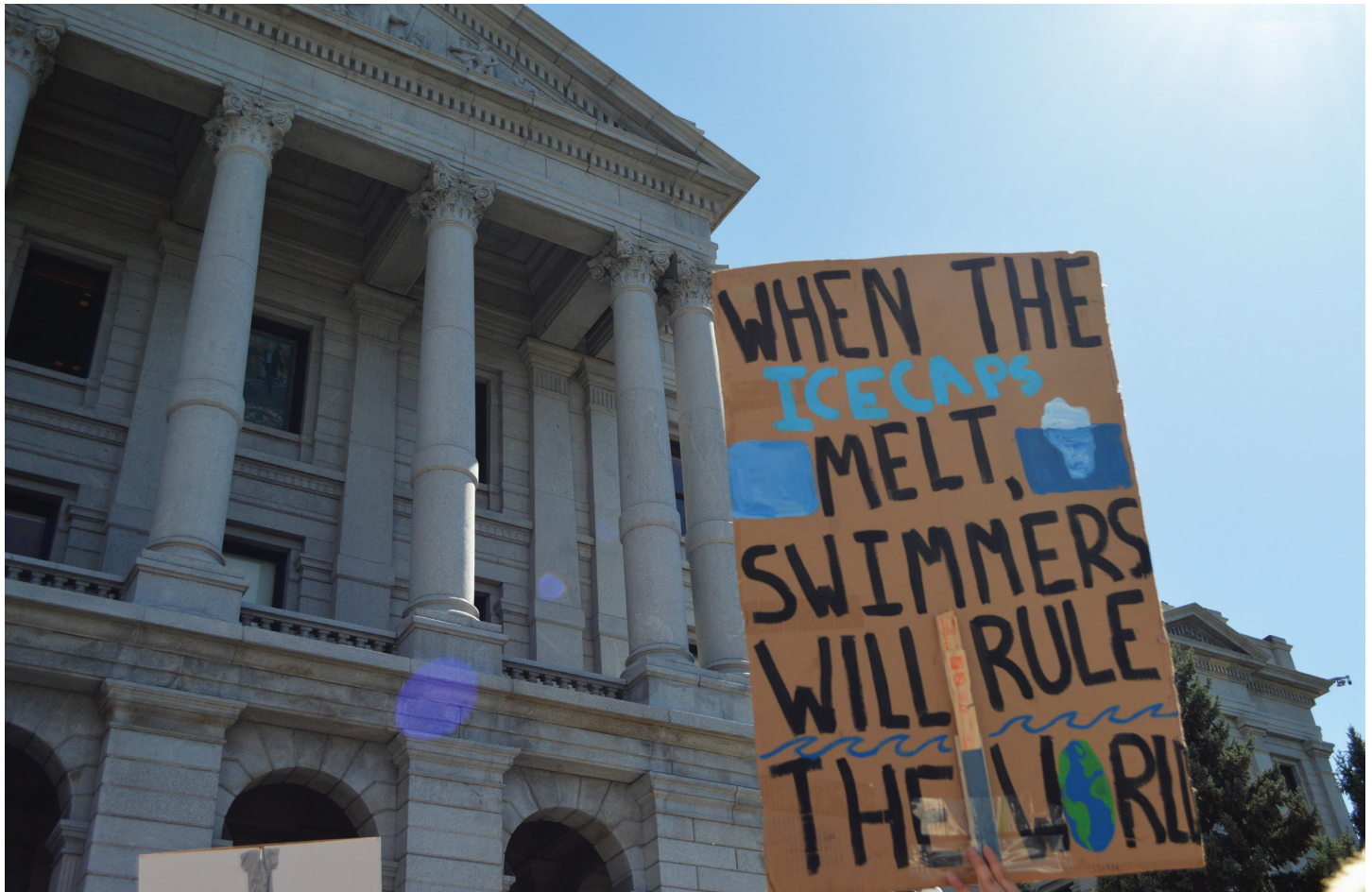
99% of plastic is produced using **fossil fuels**



Arctic Sea ice

was recorded to be **726,000 square miles below** the previous 30 years' average.





WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

Often times, saving the planet is perceived to be a daunting task that can only be completed by one singular individual. This misconception has the potential to prevent people from taking the smaller actions in their daily lives. Change requires a collaboration between people from all backgrounds and walks of life; however, while governments continue to overlook the gravity of the situation, initiative must originate from grass-roots movements.

“[There] are a lot of different ways that people can make a difference depending on their capabilities or expertise or experience, but we can all talk about it and keep this subject as an important topic of conversation,” Schumacher says.

Each individual taking smaller-scale action to reduce their waste, take public transportation, or support sustainable businesses all converges to eventually incite change on a large scale. The global organizations and movements occurring would be impossible without the local and individual activism occurring on interpersonal and communal levels.

With the urgency to make a change that increases everyday, many don't realize the simple things they can do to help. While not everyone has the opportunity to eliminate single-use plastics from their lives and using one's voice to speak out about climate change is not an opportunity afforded to everyone, most people can instead vote with their dollar.

Purchasing from companies that are certified in their environmental commitments such as B-corporations can also be a simple way to promote climate health. In addition, avoiding those which practice 'greenwashing', in which a company makes false claims regarding the eco-friendliness of a product. Bringing reusable shopping bags and produce bags to the grocery store and swapping plastic dog waste bags for biodegradable ones all cut down the amount of wasted plastic. Choosing bamboo toothbrushes in-

stead of plastic ones or a shampoo bar over liquid shampoo are other great ways to reduce plastic consumption. Transitioning to a partial vegetarian or vegan diet is the single greatest way to reduce an individual's carbon footprint, as the agriculture industry is one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases. When dining out, bringing a reusable container in which to pack away leftovers can also have immense benefits for the planet, as traditional takeout boxes are often lined with plastic and can be slow to decompose.

Climate change is a massive issue that, if not acted upon, will continue to have detrimental and irreversible impacts across the globe. Although daunting, there are a variety of things each individual can do to make an impact. From simple swaps to taking part in climate strikes, each individual has the capacity to make a difference. Get educated, have conversations and take action; no change is too small and it is only together that the climate crisis can be reversed.

| Sejal Goud | Sarah Hesser | Anthony Hill
Maya Merta | Kaylynn Tran
Macy Mohlenkamp | Riley Ruff