

LAW OFFICES  
**JOHN H. REAVES**  
A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION  
550 WEST "C" STREET, SUITE 930  
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101  
Telephone (619) 525-0035  
Facsimile (619) 525-0077  
[lawreaves@pacbell.net](mailto:lawreaves@pacbell.net)  
[lawreaves.com](http://lawreaves.com)  
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LOOKING FOR UNIFIED GREEN LEADERSHIP IN SAN DIEGO IN AN AGE OF GLOBAL  
WARMING AND WATER SHORTAGES.

By now, I have to wonder who out there does not believe we have a global warming crisis and who does not see the connection with energy and water consuming development (40% of state's electricity moves water around the state). When I was in college in the 1970s, environmental professors described how greenhouse gases (GHG) trap heat and how the world has emitted immense quantities of such gases since the industrial revolution began. GHG primarily include carbon dioxide from the combustion of fossil fuels, such as oil, gas, coal, and wood products, as well as methane and nitrous oxides. They said our insatiable consumerism would inevitably lead to a day of reckoning with potentially dire results.

Well here we are. Over 30 years later, leading scientists across the world, along with our world-class scientists at Scripps and UCSD, have again spoken clearly: Global warming is real and happening at a faster pace than most scientists predicted. Temperatures have been recorded since 1860. We have experienced major warming since 1975, with the *ten hottest years between 1995 and 2005*. The oceans, which act as a vast heat sink, have been warming for the last 50 years. The *upper* waters are warming, another sign of global warming. Carbon dioxide, which parallels temperature fluctuations on earth, has been measured for over 400,000, over the course of several ice ages.

Never has carbon dioxide exceeded 300 parts per million in the atmosphere until the past fifty years. We are now at *380 and trending upward*. Because GHG are very stable in the upper atmosphere, *lasting several hundred years*, we cannot jump off this freight train even if we want to. With population growth burgeoning, that train is actually accelerating. But, we can stop contributing to the problem right now so that future generations have a better chance of surviving with less turmoil.

Who fixes us when *we* are at the heart of the problem? How do we wean ourselves? *We* consume as if our ego depended on it, and *as a society* we have bridled at the notion of restraint *and* at the idea of paying for the *entire* cost of consumption to society. For instance, when we run our faucet at home, who among us thinks about the emissions spewed to produce electricity to pump the water from the Colorado River or the Sacramento Delta to here or the degradation of the bay/delta environment due to the loss of water? When we buy imported electronics, who considers or pays for the emissions and pollution from the manufacturing, shipping, plastic packaging, driving to buy the product, using electricity to run the product, and disposal?

Although this article focuses on development because of local political control over such, it should also be noted that our lust for big cars and trucks with big engines is irreconcilable with the direction we must go. In 2006, the average fuel economy (MPG) (roughly speaking because it was drawn from a chart)) for several countries is illuminating: United States: 25; *China*: 35; European Union: 41; Japan: 47. As a point of reference, transportation accounts for an overwhelming percentage of our county's GHG production at 28% (32% of carbon dioxide). Electricity production accounts for 38%.

The emissions from all the products each of us consume have filled our atmosphere to the point where the *sphere* is dangerously full. Most scientists believe the resulting warming will raise the level of our oceans *by over four feet this century* and cannot rule out the possibility the seas will rise by more than *ten feet*, or even *twenty* if the polar ice sheets completely melt. *In 2006, scientists realized ice sheets were melting at twice the rate they had predicted just two years earlier.* It is not just higher waters that threaten us, but drastic and extreme changes in weather patterns, hurricanes, agricultural patterns and yields, droughts, challenged resources, extinction of more species, spread of disease, and widespread dislocation of people with attendant battles for turf. Scientists theorize *Katrina*, which brewed stronger from gulf waters that were 2 degrees warmer than usual for that time of year, is just one bleak example of what to expect. Are we ready for it? Is holding onto our usual patterns of behavior in light of this mounting evidence worth it?

The same principles apply to water, given our chronic shortages and future dire prognosis. The state has already documented Sierra snow pack melting earlier each year over the last century and predicts major water shortages as global warming continues. There is a drought effecting Colorado River supplies. We are in the middle of a drought here with low reservoirs. Our threatened supplies may be further reduced up to 30% as a result of a recent district court decision. So, how can we, as a region, afford new development that further strains water supplies and is modeled after the failed designs of waste that helped get us to into this problem? Why, again, do we not see our politicians making immediate changes? If a serious crisis is just over the horizon, a leader helps steer away from disaster, not toward it.

Despite the clear and convincing available evidence, there are still some who do not recognize, or want to believe we are in, the stage of consequence because they are in denial or they refuse to accept changes to lifestyle must occur. Of course, many politicians' backers are invested to varying extent in the status quo and fear change means loss. They may fight until the train hits the wall. This is not a gamble, or battle, we can afford to lose. If the pace of global warming is as bad as scientists say and continues unchecked, the amount of world-wide misery will be numbing, and many of us will witness that. I, for one, do not want to explain to my grandchildren how I did not choose to listen to the warnings and rationalized continued excess and pollution as usual.

I am not alone in my view. A September 2007 survey by Yale found 68% of those surveyed were "completely" or "mostly convinced" that global warming is occurring and favor policies to slow it. With AB 32 (Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006) and other laws, our state and Governor Schwarzenegger have taken the lead and set the bar fairly high on a wide array of state measures that are bound to influence other states and notions. Through AB 32, GHG must be reduced to the 1990 levels by 2020 and reduced 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

The state is starting to implement interim measures and is developing far-reaching standards that will take effect up through 2012. But, the state does not exercise jurisdiction over everything that occurs in this state. Localities have great discretion over land use, so our local politicians can also make a difference *or continue to add to the problem*.

*So my two key questions are, where do our local politicians stand on global warming, and what are they doing on a local level to stop it?* Why have we not seen the type of wide-scale, immediate, and meaningful efforts to reduce GHG that could be taken? I can hear the denial from many already. I am sure only a few politicians would publicly deny global warming is real, and some, such as San Diego City Council member Donna Frye, really understand the issue. Moreover, there are many examples in San Diego where cities and the county have taken efforts on their own behalf to reduce GHG. While laudable, such efforts are not nearly enough. For instance, although the City of San Diego reduced GHG 10% between 1990 and 2004, despite a 20% increase in employees (mostly by recovering methane from landfills and the sewage treatment plant), the city's overall share of GHG emissions in San Diego is only 1% (was 2% in 1990). In the meantime, the city's energy consumption grew 148%. The overall regional energy and water consumption continues to grow per capita despite shortages.

Our problems are also challenged by additional growth. The county predicts a population growth from 3 million to nearly 4 million in the next 25 years! In addition to increased GHG, San Diego predicts a 25% increase in water needs despite aggressive water conservation! If my faculties are working right, that means we should not allow new development of the same type that has already contributed mightily to our GHG and water problem that we have not yet corrected. Green buildings, smart growth, distributed energy generation, and wise water use and reuse can reduce GHG and conserve water resources. If that is the case, it only makes sense that all new development start *now* to take a new approach that does not add to the problem. I do not see, however, politicians in our county taking *any* emergency measures to change existing development requirements to get our arms around the problem. It seems there is no collective political will to curb our appetite.

If we know we have a critical condition in our region and world, why would we allow development to proceed as usual? Buildings represent the greatest source of GHG in the United States, at 43% in 2002 (followed by 32% transportation and 25% industry). Why allow inefficiencies to continue? If they had the will, a simple majority on every city council in San Diego and the Board of Supervisors could radically revamp our antiquated development standards.

The price of admission has changed. All development should pay its own way for new energy needs. It is time for our politicians to stop allowing the usual types of energy and water hogging developments to get approved, including projects currently in the pike. LEED silver "green" buildings, reaping the benefits of solar energy, should *now* be the norm. Regional governments should, among other things, create energy complexes, such as windmill and photovoltaic farms, in the desert. New development which lacks room on site to be energy independent could add to the complex to generate sufficient amount of energy off-site, in the same way that developers preserve off-site habitats when there are impacts on site. New development could then be GHG neutral. We also need political will to change legislation to allow offsite energy distribution. The existing utility monopoly system can be expected initially

to resist changes to the status quo or moving toward the bold GHG reduction goals outlined here, although there will be abundant opportunities to participate in, and profit from, the paradigm change. With the right vision, we could actually be a county that is energy independent and free of foreign oil dependency by 2050.

We can start today in requiring new development to recapture rain water, and stop allowing wasteful water support of tropical plants and grass in our semi-arid environment. In the meantime, we have to get serious about reusing our wastewater. Mix in better conservation measures, and we should be able to cope with our water limitations. But to take no immediate action to stop the typical abuses when a serious crisis is known could be analogized to the proverbial crazy person who repeats an unsuccessful action over and over hoping for a different result each time.

The good news is that changes to a greener society will make us financially better off and stronger as a whole. Remember Roosevelt's New Deal that put America back to work? Imagine the jobs created by the widespread installation and servicing of solar panels, wind farms, water capture systems such as cisterns, gray water reuse for irrigation and the like. Engineers and architects will flourish as we look for more efficient designs and building materials. New and improving technologies will spawn new products, cleaner air, and wealth. Quality of life will improve. Cleaner air will reduce asthma and respiratory conditions with their associated lost productivity and medical bills.

The time for action is now. San Diego is calling for leaders. In the meantime, let each of us start today to do all we can to reduce our own consumption. Start with turning off your lights when not needed.