

City leaders promote ways to cut warming

By Robert Smith

July 12, 2007 – Fayetteville, Arkansas

A New Mexico architect on Wednesday pushed city and county leaders at a national workshop to cut energy consumption and oppose new coal-fired power plants.

Ed Mazria, who created the “2030 Challenge” to promote reductions of fossil fuel use in new buildings, was the keynote speaker at the national workshop of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives.

Mazria talked about global warming and his belief that cities and counties can slow it by passing initiatives that reduce the need for coal, oil and natural gas energy. The goal of the 2030 Challenge is to reduce the use of fossil fuels in new buildings by 50 percent immediately, 90 percent by 2025 and entirely by 2030.

“If you reduce demand for energy, we don’t need those coal plants,” Mazria said. “We need to get consumption down. We need to understand this country is threatened.”

Arkansas has coal-fired power plants operating near Gentry, Newark and Redfield. A 600-megawatt, coal-fired power plant is planned 15 miles northeast of Texarkana and is considered the centerpiece of Southwestern Electric Power Co.’s plan to add to its power grid by 2011.

Some scientists believe carbon dioxide, which is produced when coal, natural gas and oil are burned, is a main cause of global warming because carbon emissions rise into the atmosphere and trap heat.

Others contend the causes of global warming aren’t clear.

Coal-fired power plants are part of the problem, Mazria said.

As temperatures increase, Mazria said, glaciers melt and oceans rise. He spent time Wednesday using computer models to show how the rise would flood cities such as New Orleans, Boston and Atlantic City.

By cutting the amount of fossil fuel energy consumed in buildings, cities can reduce the need for new coal-fired power plants and slow global warming, Mazria said.

“You’ve got to call for no dirty coal,” Mazria said.

Some of the 160 people attending the national workshop in Fayetteville described their efforts to reduce energy consumption.

Kevin Foy, the Chapel Hill, N. C. mayor, said the city and University of North Carolina paid to make rides on the bus system free and stopped widening streets for cars.

That doubled bus riders to 6 million trips a year, and it cut the number of people who drive to work each day, he said.

Paul Ferguson, chairman of the Arlington (Va.) County Board said his county is leading efforts in the Washington area to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A county program established in January set out to reduce emissions 10 percent by 2012.

The county provides free energy audits for homeowners and gives a personal property tax break to people who buy hybrid vehicles.

“It’s the right thing to do, and it’s becoming good politics,” Ferguson said.

Fayetteville Mayor Dan Coody touted his city’s efforts after Mazria’s speech. The city installed energy-efficient light bulbs in traffic signals, is studying similar improvements to street lights and started using biodiesel fuel for city vehicles earlier this year.

“We’re trying to get other cities in the state to be like us,” Coody said.

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