



GreenTown Los Altos Celebrates Earth Day with Climate Change Lecture

By Peg Champion

More than 80 guests filled the Los Altos Library Program Room to hear “Global Climate Change in the Decades Ahead: Fact vs. Fiction,” part of GreenTown Los Altos’ educational lecture series. Appropriately scheduled on the eve of Earth Day, Stanford University Professor Robert Dunbar gave an informative presentation, including animation and film clips, detailing the current and future state of global climate change.



Figure 1: Professor Robert Dunbar Discussing Climate Change

Director of the Earth Systems Program at Stanford University, Dunbar provided a scientific perspective based on his research in the Antarctic, the Pacific Ocean and the Americas. He showcased the ways scientists differentiate between manmade and natural climate change effects, using ice and sediment drilling and prehistoric research.

Professor Dunbar also addressed some commonly held climate change misconceptions, as well as the knowledge gap that exists between scientific and public understanding. For example, many nonscientists assume that the issue of greatest concern is warming temperatures. Dunbar explained that, in fact, changes in rainfall, ocean acidity and sea level

rise are more serious threats due to increasing levels of CO₂ in the atmosphere.

Dunbar noted that globally, the first 3 months of 2010 make this year the second warmest winter on record, with 2005 being the warmest ever. Rebutting those who point to this winter's extensive snowfall on the East Coast he said, "A cold winter does not end global warming!"

But there is hope. The good news, according to Dunbar, is that it is not too late to act. Studies show that efficiency measures account for two thirds of the emission reductions we need to achieve in the next several years. "Through personal action, each of us can impact global climate change. Individual acts offer the greatest opportunity for positive change: for example, the car you drive, your home energy use and support of good policy."

Peg Champion is an environmental communicator who supports sustainability both in her personal actions and through her professional work. Follow Peg on Twitter at MACHampion.

Professor Robert Dunbar, whose research includes climate change, ocean-air interactions, marine ecology and biogeochemistry, heads a group that investigates past and present changes in ocean and coastal climates and its impacts on organisms; he has published more than 160 scientific papers. He can be reached at dunbar@stanford.edu.

About GreenTown Los Altos

GreenTown Los Altos is a volunteer-driven, non-profit environmental organization founded in 2007 to help our community become more environmentally healthy and vibrant. Our mission is to educate and inspire the people of Los Altos and Los Hills to take action that will reduce waste, energy and water use. Together, we will implement programs that will improve our neighborhoods, schools and economy, now and for future generations.

Learn more at <http://www.greentownlosaltos.org>; follow GreenTown Los Altos on Twitter at green_town; and become a GreenTown Los Altos Facebook fan!