

The New York Times

Tackling Global Warming

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New York Times Sunday Dialogue



Niv Bavarsky

New York Times readers react to a letter by Robert Fri, chairman of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' Alternative Energy Future project and a visiting scholar at Resources for the Future.

My take:

The solution to global warming — the only real solution — starts and ends with making polluters pay. It does wonders, large and small.

A cap on sulfur dioxide in the 1990s stopped the worst effects of acid rain by removing much of the sulfur dioxide produced by coal-fired power plants. Carbon caps and pricing are helping to decarbonize electricity generation in Europe, California, New Zealand and Australia.

The prices don't have to be high to show effects. A 5-cent surcharge per disposable bag in Washington, D.C., cut bag use 80 percent within a year by some estimates.

Of course, wishing we had a strong cap on carbon won't make it so. That's where decisive, [immediate action from President Obama's administration](#) comes in: everything from applying the Clean Air Act to global warming pollution, as instructed by the Supreme Court, to reining in methane leakage from our natural gas system.

Put together, these administrative actions alone could get us a long way toward where we need to be, until Congress finally gets ready to follow the will of the people to tackle global warming pollution.

GERNOT WAGNER

Economist

Environmental Defense Fund

New York, April 3, 2013

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