**Paris Climate talks - COP21**

France will chair and host the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21), from November 30 to December 11, 2015. The expected outcome is a new international agreement on climate change, applicable to all, to keep global warming below 2°C. As 2014 was the hottest year on record, and 2015 is likely to surpass that, while 2013 broke all records for carbon pollution, there is a degree of urgency behind achieving a ground-breaking deal at the Paris Summit.

**The Climate Negotiations Since 1992**

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted during the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992 and was a milestone in the international negotiations on tackling climate change. This Framework Convention is a universal convention of principle, acknowledging the existence of anthropogenic (human-induced) climate change and giving industrialized countries the major part of responsibility for combating it.

Article 2 of the Convention states that the ultimate objective to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations "at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human induced) interference with the climate system." It further states that "such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened, and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner."

The Kyoto Protocol of 1992 which entered into force in 2005 set industrialized countries binding greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. Up until 2012 when the agreement expired, it was the only legally binding mechanism, which committed countries to reducing their carbon dioxide and methane emissions. The scientific consensus is that the increase in emissions due to human activity has already caused an average global temperature rise of about 0.8 Celsius since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

After the 2014 Lima, Peru, conference, all the States were invited to submit their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) towards achieving the objective of the Convention as set out in its Article 2.

The INDC may include quantifiable information on the base year, time frames for implementation, scope and coverage, planning processes, approaches for estimating and accounting for anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and removals, and how the Party considers that its INDC is fair and ambitious and how it contributes towards achieving the objective of the Convention as set out in its Article 2.

Whether an agreement signed in Paris in December 2015 will be legally binding or not is still a point of contention, but what is clear is that the agreement will not come into force until 2020 with most national targets set for 2025-30.

**INDC Pledges for the Paris Climate Talks**

The U.N. recently released its synthesis report on the projected impact of INDCs submitted by 147 countries so far, which predicts world's average per capita emissions will be reduced by up to 9 percent by 2030, compared with 1990 levels. This will lead to about 2.7C of global warming over the century.

A 2C threshold is widely regarded scientifically as the limit of safety, beyond which many of the effects of climate change - floods, droughts, heatwaves, sea level rises and more intense storms - are likely to become much more dangerous.

**Specific pledges**

China, the U.S., and the EU are the three biggest emitters of CO2 in the world, so meeting or exceeding their pledges is crucial. The US has pledged to reduce GHG emissions by 26–28% below 2005 in 2025 and recently up-dated its pledge to 32% which still leaves it far behind the EU’s “at least 40% target”.

China, has pledged to peak emissions by 2030, and cut levels of carbon emissions per unit of GDP by 60%-65% from 2005 levels, whilst boosting the share of renewables and nuclear in its energy-mix to 20%.

**Citizen Action**

Paris is likely to deliver an agreement, but will its targets be high enough and will they be legally binding? One suspects that the answers to these two questions will be ‘no’, so citizen pressure is crucial to a good outcome.

The Nevada County Climate Change Coalition invites concerned citizens to a demonstration **at 3pm November 30 at the Brunswick intersection** focused on the Paris climate talks.We will be joining with people all over the world in calling for world leaders to take strong action at Paris to limit greenhouse gas emissions and to stop global warming and climate change.