

Jeff 'Free' Luers' Keynote Speech from ELAW conference- March 6, 2005

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Hello and welcome to the 23rd Annual [ELAW conference](#), I apologize for not being there in person today, I simply couldn't get away. My name is Jeffrey Free Luers. In 2001 I was convicted of burning three SUVs and the attempted arson of an oil truck. I am currently serving a [22 year prison](#) sentence for actions that injured no one and resulted in less than 50,000 dollars worth in damage. The state has labeled me an eco-terrorist and a member of the Earth Liberation Front. I am not a terrorist. I am a man guided by my conscience.

Over the years many people have asked me was it worth it. The answer is simple: yes. Prison has not broken my spirit. The threat facing humanity is far more intimidating than any prison cell. Environmentalists are often accused of exaggerating the problem. I think that is because the truth is far more tragic than anyone wishes to believe. Perhaps the most dangerous element of global warming is that it is not viewed as an immediate threat.

Climate change has been a gradual process that is quickly building to its climax. By the time the threat becomes a clear and present danger, it will already be too late to act. Drastic changes are already occurring in the arctic. In 2002, researchers at the University of Alaska concluded that an estimated 24 cubic miles of ice is melting from the Alaskan glaciers annually. From the mid-1950s to the mid-1990s, melt held steady at a rate of about 13 cubic miles per year. In the last few years that rate has nearly doubled. Alaska's annual mean temperature has increased at a rate equal to four times the average global rise. The Arctic Ocean has seen an average rise of ten degrees Fahrenheit higher than the global average, making the arctic the fastest heating region on Earth. According to the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), the IPCC, arctic ice is 40% thinner than it was just 30 years.

It is predicted that by 2015 the Arctic will be free of ice during summer months and is expected to be free of ice year-round, by 2070. Studies have suggested that global sea level has risen 7.8 inches in the last 100 years as a direct result of melting glaciers and a rise in ocean temperatures. The rise in sea level has increased coastal flooding and severe weather patterns around the world. The rise in global sea temperature along with other human pressures has effectively destroyed or threatened with destruction 70 percent of the world's coral reefs as reported by [The Global Coral Reef monitoring network](#). The report compiled by 240 scientists from 96 countries marks an increase of over 11% over the last evaluation in 2000. The loss of coral habitat, compounded with massive overfishing, has contributed to the complete collapse of the world's fishstocks. The depleted fishstock are unable to recover due to cont commercial overfishing and damaged marine ecosystems. The potential loss of this food source has disastrous implications on millions that rely on this as a staple part of their diet... The destruction of the world's oceans is now the world's greatest environmental problem after climate change.

Recent findings in the journal [Nature](#) indicate that climate change is worse than previously thought. The world's largest climate prediction experiment, coordinated by doctor David Frame of Oxford University, concluded that global temp could increase by 3.6 to 20 degrees Fahrenheit, that is nearly double the 2.5 to 10.4 degrees predicted by the IPCC. The

experiment simulated what would happen if carbon dioxide in the atmosphere were double the 280 parts per millionth found before the industrial revolution—a scenario that is likely to be reached by 2050. More disturbing, however, was chief scientist for the project David Stainforth's statement that even present levels of greenhouse gasses, maintained for long periods, may lead to dangerous climate change. In January, 2004, the first comprehensive assessment of the effects of climate change was published. The report, lead by Chris Thomas, a conservation biologist at the University of Leeds, and co-authored by 18 scientists around the world making this the largest collaboration of its type. The researchers worked independently in 6 biodiversity-rich regions around the world comprising 20% of land surface. The report concluded that by 2050 more than 1 million species could be driven to extinction because of climate change. That number comprises a quarter of all known land and animal plants.

The report found that much of that loss, more than 1 in 10 of all land species, is already irreversible because of damage caused by global warming. In January of this year a panel of prestigious scientist warned in international convention gathered at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization headquarters in Paris, France that species are being lost globally at a rate 100 times faster than the average rate of the Earth's history. The finding supports the belief that the world is on the cusp of another mass extinction. Different from the 5 mass extinctions of the geological past only in that this event is caused by human activity rather than external environmental changes. The panel said tens of thousands of species are already committed to extinction. Many scientists are beginning to warn that the danger zone of global warming is not something we are going to reach in 50 years, but rather it is a stage we are entering now, commonly referred to as the point of no return.

Already we are beginning to witness dramatic changes in climate and its effects on various ecosystems. Each of the hottest 15 years on record have all occurred since 1980. Even with the various treaties designed to curb global emissions, not enough has been done to reduce greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere. In fact in 2003, carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels reached a high of 6.8 billion tons, a nearly 4% increase from the previous year. It is widely feared that even if all greenhouse gas emissions ceased, the cycle of climate change may have already been put into motion. Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, told the *Independent UK* in January that widespread dying of coral reefs and rapid melting of arctic ice had driven him to the conclusion that the danger point the IPCC had been set-up to avoid, has already been reached. He called for immediate and very deep cuts in pollution if humanity is to survive.

For the first time in the known history of the Earth, one species controls the fate of the planet. Humans are amazing creatures with extraordinary reasoning capabilities. Our capacity to create is only outweighed by our ability to destroy. The governments of the world were warned about the dangers of global warming in the late 1980s. Science, since then, has only confirmed human influence on climate change. **WE CANNOT COUNT ON OUR GOVERNMENTS OR WORLD BODIES TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM.** Those organizations have not only proved ineffective, they have demonstrated themselves to be unwilling. It is the individual that is the foundation for change. It is our individual concepts about what is valuable, what are acceptable social norms, and what constitutes morally unacceptable behavior that create the societies in which we live. Currently, it is acceptable for corporations to make billions of dollars while releasing toxins into the environment, promoting environmental destruction and climate change. Yet it is unacceptable to sabotage or otherwise use property destruction in an attempt to slow human progression toward catastrophe. An immediate change in thinking patterns is a prerequisite in creating

the social change needed to stop the wanton destruction of our plant.

The above-ground and underground movements must learn to compliment each other. There is no more time for discord because frankly, we are running out of time. Action is needed now, on all fronts--Action that confronts the cause of the problem, and not just the symptoms. Those who disagree with direct action must recognize the necessity for it. We can no longer afford to refrain from or condemn direct action, and those in the underground must recognize and understand that action alone has never changed public conscience. Our only hope is to work together. We ARE united in our fate and we MUST be united in our struggle. Now is the time to resist with all our might. From the legal, to the illegal, action must be taken. Another world is possible, and only we can make it happen but we have to act together, and we have to act now. Thank you.

Jeffrey Luers
13797671
OSP
2605 State Street
Salem, OR 97310