

Winter Olympians Say: Protect our Winters!

By [Andrew Newell](#)

Theme: [Environment](#)

Global Research, February 11, 2014

[Protect our Winters](#) 10 February 2014

As ice and snow melt away in sweltering Sochi, US Ski Team member Andrew Newell and another 104 Olympians call for action on climate change – and a commitment to a global agreement before the Paris climate talks in 2015.

Several pre Olympic skiing and snowboarding events had to be canceled because of poor conditions, something that has been a consistent problem both in Central Europe and Scandinavia.

Kicking and gliding on snow is my life. From a very early age, the feeling of weightlessness and sliding across the snow has brought me true joy and a deep connection to nature.

I was too young to remember but fortunate enough to have a photo of my first time skiing in December 1985, at my grandparent's house just outside of Philadelphia. I had just learned to walk, so I gave it a try with skis on the few inches of snow we had in the backyard.

This year, while preparing for my third Olympic games in Sochi I had to ask myself: what's changed? What has changed since that day in 1985 when I first experienced that thrill and came to love this sport?

Vermont's consistent winters are no more

Thankfully, much is the same except there is no escaping that the once-consistent winters that I saw as a young kid are no more, especially near my home in Vermont.

As a result of this heightened awareness of climate change, many of us who spend our lives in the snow are more aware of its effects and have changed our lifestyles to be respectful of the health of the environment.

We recycle, we try to consume less, we use our vote to try to influence policy. We're also using the platform we have as athletes to speak out in the media and to mobilize the winter sports community to join us. We're doing our best.

When will our 'leaders' lead?

But what can be said about Washington? What can be said about governments all around the world? Where is the big legislation that can implement real change we need?

This is what prompted me to partner with [Protect Our Winters](#) and rally over one hundred fellow winter Olympians to present a letter to world leaders:

"Recognize climate change by reducing emissions, embracing clean energy and preparing a commitment to a global agreement at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in

Paris 2015."

Olympians from around the world, from every winter discipline have signed this letter, a sign of solidarity against climate change and a clear signal to world leaders that, as representatives of the 65 million member snow sports community, we need them to step up with real progress.

The 'artificial snow Olympics'

The urgency of this letter is not to be taken lightly since time is definitely something we do not have on our side. This year alone, nearly half of the FIS cross country World Cup international competitions have taken place on artificial snow.

Even last year in Sochi, several pre Olympic skiing and snowboarding events had to be canceled because of poor conditions, something that has been a consistent problem both in Central Europe and Scandinavia.

Snow conditions are becoming much more inconsistent, weather patterns more erratic, and what was once a topic for discussion is now reality and fact. Our climate is changing and we are losing our winters.

There is no doubt about it. As someone who spends my life in the mountains, I'm seeing the effects of climate change first-hand.

Running out of future host cities

But a recent study by Daniel Scott put it in the context of the sport we're all celebrating over the next two weeks. With a rise in the average global temperature of more than 7 degrees Fahrenheit possible by 2100, there might not be that many host cities left in which to hold the Games.

In fact, of the 19 cities which have already hosted the Winter Olympics, as few as 10 might be cold enough to host it by 2050, and only 6 by 2100. As an Olympian, that's a scary and sobering thought.

My home in Southern Vermont, like many low altitude areas, potentially has the bleakest future when it comes to snow. The image of a two-year-old boy experiencing his first backyard ski at Christmas, just like I once did, is becoming more and more rare.

Environmentalist and writer Porter Fox warns that without the typical December snowfalls of the past decades there is talk of nearly half the ski resorts in the Northeast having to close their doors within the next 30 years.

More than just skiing is at stake

The economic devastation for New England would be incredible, not to mention how snowless winters would affect our culture and our communities and the foundation on which our families are built.

But the continued loss of snow is only the beginning, and unless changes can be made at a federal level, it will be more than our skiing that's at stake.

I'm not an environmental science major, I'm not a scientist, in fact I didn't even go to college. But just like most Americans, I know that as the snow dwindles so does our water supply, our food, our health and our economy.

Unless our governments can stop letting politics get in the way of common sense we're all in for some more sobering and painful environmental changes that will truly change the face of this planet. It's time to truly urge the leaders of this world to take action.

A rather more important event in Paris, 2015

For the next two weeks, I'll be in Sochi giving it my all on the ski course, just like thousands of Olympics athletes from around the world putting politics, religion, all of our differences aside to come together in the spirit of competition. Coming together for something that is bigger than one individual, or even one country.

Next year in Paris, world leaders will also have that chance. Previous climate conferences have ended with nothing to show for it, but Paris needs to be different. We can't risk inaction any longer and we're asking our world leaders to come together in the spirit of something bigger than just our individual goals.

On behalf of the more than 100 Olympians that have signed this letter, we're urging you to act in Paris to set limits on global emissions and take meaningful steps forward in fighting climate change. It can be done and let's use the global stage of the Olympics as the call to action.

Athlete signers:

Andy Newell, United States
Sophie Caldwell, United States
Ida Sargent, United States
Erik Bjornsen, United States
Noah Hoffman, United States
Simi Hamilton, United States
Jessie Diggins, United States
Callan Chythlook-Sifsof, United States
Katie Ryan, United States
Lindsay Van, United States
Dylan Ferguson, United States
Alex Deibold, United States
Brace Bennett, United States
Bryan Fletcher, United States
Wiley Maple, United States
Lila Lapanja, United States
Nick Hendrickson, United States
Brett Denney, United States
Madison Gorelik, United States
Alison Lee, United States
Taylor Fletcher, United States
Tyler Smith, United States
Michael Ward, United States
Adam Loomis, United States

Joe Swensson, United States
Brant Crossan, United States
Liz Stephen, United States
Jenna Feldman, United States
Ian Griffith, United States
Abby Ghent, United States
Arielle Gold, United States
Tyler Gold, United States
Chris Klebl, United States
Kikkan Randall, United States
Bettina Gruber, Switzerland
Astrid Jacobsen, Norway
Nate Holland, United States
Kjersti Buaas, Norway
kaitlyn farrington, United States
Arielle Gold, United States
Bryan Fletcher, United States
Nick Hendrickson, United States
Michael Ward, United States
Susan Dunklee, United States
Sara Studebaker, United States
Liz Stephen, Switzerland
Edward Dombroski, United States
Barb Saxe, United States
Kadri Lehtla, Estonia
Caroline Grace, United States
Sylvan Ellefson, United States
Grete Gaim, Estonia
Rosanna Crawford, Canada
Lydia Lassila, Australia
Michael Jones, United States
Nigel Spratt, Australia
Silvia Duman, Australia
Sadie Bjornsen, United States
Sarah Ainsworth, United Kingdom
Laura Dahlmeier, Germany
Lowell Bailey, United States
Annelies Cook, United States
Lauren Miles, United States
Catherine Guglielmo, United States
David Zabek, United States
Jessica Jerome, United States
Alissa Johnson, United States
Nina Lussi, United States
Abby Hughes, United States
Atsuko Tanaka, Canada
Taylor Henrich, Canada
David Newell, United States
Lilla Fortunoff, United States
Hannah Dreissigacker, United States

Tim Burke, United States
Julien Lizeroux, France
vibeke skofterud, Norway
Anna Haag, Sweden
Dakota Blackhorse-von Jess, United States
Brian Gregg, United States
Dasha Gaiazova, Canada
Elena Runggaldier, Italy
Zachary Caldwell, United States
David Paarlberg-Kvam, United States
Sarah Holton, United States
Kris Dobie, United States
Rob Russell, United States
Ed Luban, United States
Matt Muir, United States
Lise Grottenberg, Norway
Thomas Wisdom, United States
Sam Pratico, United States
Koby Gordon, United States
Marine Dusser, United States
Asa Chalmers, United States
Lori Horn, United States
Mike Pratico, United States
Sarah Willis, United States
Gretchen Bleiler, United States
Danny Davis, United States
Faye Gulini, United States
Spencer Davis, United States
Elena Hight, United States
Chanelle Sladics, United States
Sam Bliss, United States

Andrew Newell is an American cross-country skier who has been competing on the international level since 2001.

The original source of this article is [Protect our Winters](#)
Copyright © [Andrew Newell](#), [Protect our Winters](#), 2014

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Andrew Newell](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants

permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca