



Are you aware of the four percent 'environmental surcharge' on your monthly Gallup residential utilities bill? That's about \$5 a month for most households. Words like surcharge and fee are simply euphemisms for taxes. The purpose of this environmental tax is apparently to fund 'environmental endeavors', or in other words a slush fund for 'whatever pet project we wish to finance'. The environmental surcharge fund currently holds more than \$14 million.

The term 'environmental' is so vague to interpret it's no wonder the tax revenue can be construed as a slush fund. Here in a country ranked in the top six percent in the world for clean air, my own environmental concerns are simply picking up hundreds of pounds of trash every year discarded in our subdivision by the neighbors up the canyon, and keeping the ATV's and wild horses out. It is apparent to me our local bureaucracy, politicians, academia and media are somewhat in the dark regarding our local environmental needs other than the dogma they are fed from the climate crisis industry.

In regards to environmental health hazards, wood burning stoves are easily our primary local concern. The particulate matter emissions from burning renewable wood fuels create some outdoor air pollution however the big concern is the indoor air pollution from those stoves with the consequence of winter respiratory ailments to the residents who are confined in their homes for most of the day, notably women, small children and elderly. The obvious environmental cure is finding ways to provide the fuel impoverished with affordable clean energy such as natural gas or nuclear with the additional benefit of attracting businesses and industry to our region.

Unfortunately my definition of environmental is contrary to the prevailing paradigm of green activists who rather than seek practical solutions are more interested in advancing a broad worldview political agenda based on theory rather than empirical science. To them affordable energy is not the solution, it's the problem - if only we could reduce consumption of energy we may save the planet by reducing the earth's perpetually fickle temperature by one tenth of one degree - maybe - and the easiest way to reduce energy consumption is to increase its cost. Yet what is the unintended consequence when fuel costs go up? – more dependence on wood and coal burning stoves. Another consequence is economic – scaring off potential businesses and industry.

Written by By Joe Schaller Guest Columnist
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Rather than seeking methods to reduce our energy bills, our local Sustainable Gallup Board activists say citizens should 'get used to sustainable energy' by investing in solar farms. However 'sustainable' has been exposed as nothing but an euphemism for 'unsustainable fantasies', as Europeans have discovered the hard way over the past decade with their rocketing energy costs and resultant fuel poverty hammering the poor with premature mortality in the winter cold.

Here's my own environmental impact study. The SGB would first have the city tack on a likely \$5 a month for curbside recycling. The current \$5 a month environmental tax we've been paying for years will likely go towards unsustainable energy projects which have led to an average 38 percent increase in energy rates in the 29 states with renewable mandates. That could mean another \$20 a month to your bill with all of those taxes totaling close to an extra \$400 annually added to our utility bills for environmental endeavors such as solar farms which each and every household must 'get used to' so that the elite can feel good about themselves, even though indoor and outdoor pollution levels would increase due to increased wood burning. It is apparent to me that 'environmental endeavors' is nothing more than an euphemism for 'putting the screws to the poor and powerless'.

Here's a better idea. Get rid of the environmental tax, scrap any plans for curbside recycling or environmental endeavors and expand availability of sustainable, abundant, clean, safe and cheap natural gas - better yet, nuclear. After all, aren't the poor and powerless part of our environment also?

Oh, and that \$14 million slush fund? That amounts to a potential \$2,000 Christmas rebate for each and every household of Gallup or \$650 per citizen. That sure beats blowing it on pie-in-the-sky unsustainable green projects destined for failure.

Merry Christmas.