

EDITOR'S NOTE:

PSIA-AASI's Sustainability Policy, adopted in 2018, focuses on educating association members on how a sustainable professional and personal lifestyle can positively influence the future of skiing and snowboarding. Here, Marian Krogh (a member of PSIA-AASI and the New Zealand Ski Instructors Association) offers her ideas for how ski and snowboard instructors can be part of the conversation on climate change. For more on PSIA-AASI's Sustainability Policy, visit tiny.cc/SustainabilityAtPSIAAASI.

Talking to Your Guests About Climate Change

TIPS FOR TURNING YOUR PASSION INTO PURPOSE

By Marian Krogh

With warmer, shorter, and more variable winters directly impacting the lifestyles, and livelihoods, of instructors across the country, the PSIA-AASI community is on the front lines of climate change. Indeed,

the snowsports industry as a whole is growing more aware of the environmental and economic effects of climate change and stepping up to address it.

While you may be fully aware of the need to protect snowy winters, the same can't always be said of guests visiting our ski areas and mountain communities. To help educate your students, consider sharing how we can work together to preserve the winter lifestyle... actions that can also help prevent the all-too-common wildfires and floods they likely *are* aware of.

HOW TO SPEAK TO YOUR GUESTS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

As a snowsports professional, you are a leading expert with a platform to share messaging about the climate crisis. You can connect with your guests over a common passion – snowsports and a love for the outdoors. We spend a lot of time chatting on chairlifts. Here are some steps to help you educate others who might want to learn more about climate change and its impact on winter snowpack.

First, listen. Asking others about their feelings on climate change and then sharing yours makes it possible to see – and learn from – each other's perspective. Ask your guests what changes they've noticed. One family I recently spoke to, who have skied Snowmass for 30 years, said, "We used to only have spring skiing in spring, now we have weeks of spring skiing all season long." Another on a recent powder day said, "It's like skiing in the '90s again." Clearly, each in their own way recognized that there was more predictable snowfall throughout the season – and more powder days – decades ago. You don't need facts or stats about polar bears and

glaciers retreating, just personal experiences. Sharing your feelings is powerful.

Second, tell your climate story. People love and understand stories. Learn your climate story before you speak to someone else. What is your experience of climate change and why do you care about it? Use some real-world examples, like photos from spring skiing adventures or patches of brown beneath the chairlift. Share the impacts you are seeing and experiencing in the local mountains you love, like shorter winters, snowfall extremes, and flooding. This makes it real for the guests with whom you're engaging.

Third, you can help them envision the future. If you have kids, you can talk about your fear of them growing up without access to the same outdoor opportunities you – and your guests – enjoy. What might their winter break look like in 20 years?

HOW YOU AND YOUR GUESTS CAN TAKE ACTION

If you, or your guests, recognize the threat of climate change but wonder what can be done, there are a variety of ways to take action. Here are my suggestions but, of course, how you get involved is up to you. The important thing is that you do get involved.

- ▶ **Contact your senators, governor, mayor, and other local government officials.** Moving forward, action and policy change at a local level will be a crucial component of enacting effective change.
- ▶ **Vote with your wallet.** Support brands and businesses that share your environmental values.
- ▶ **Move your money.** Make sure your bank doesn't fund fossil fuel projects.



Protect Our Winters (POW) helps the outdoors community protect the places and lifestyles they love from the increasing impacts of climate change.

If you switch banks, make sure you let your bank know why you are closing your account.

- ▶ **Join a POW Local Alliance.** Connect with other passionate outdoors enthusiasts in your home area through these groups created by PSIA-AASI partner Protect Our Winters. Local Alliances are currently found in New England, Colorado, California, and Oregon. Another option, of course, is to donate to POW (at protectourwinters.org/donate).
- ▶ **Embrace imperfect advocacy.** Perhaps you drive a gas guzzler to your mountain rather than bike or take the bus. Maybe your guest flew across the country in search of epic powder turns. That doesn't mean you both can't ask for climate justice and fight to stop the apex issue of our times. We all have a carbon footprint. Instead of chasing perfection, pursue progress.

When it comes to sustainability, the PSIA-AASI community has the passion, the information, and the resources to make a difference. Are you doing your part? **32**

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