

My Climate Story

Name of Interviewer(s): Sarah

Name of Interviewee: Sarah

Location of interview: online, Maine

Date: 12/15/2021

Do you give permission for your interview material to be edited and shared? YES

1) Where do you live? Describe something meaningful to you in your environment or community, or in the place where you grew up.

I have lived in Maine part time since 1990, full time since 2000. I chose Maine as my home for a few reasons: the rugged coastline, the cold ocean water, that late afternoon light that makes the pine trees and rocks glow golden under grey stormy sky, the snowy winters, and the hardworking, genuine people. I used to live in downtown South Portland, where I loved my neighbors, walking my errands, and biking to work. My house was at 15 feet above sea level. I thought about that a lot. Now I live just 9 miles from downtown Portland next to the woods, at more like 150 feet above sea level. We can hear the highway on one side, and owls on the other.

2) What changes in your environment have you observed that may be due to climate change?

The first winter I lived in Maine - in Bangor - it was cold. I recall that the temperature didn't climb over 20 degrees F for the first two weeks of January (though I question my memory!). We skied all winter in the University Forest in Orono. These days, it rarely seems like we have a "true" winter. Snow storms are frequently followed by rain. The last few autumns have been so long and mild that spring flowers have emerged. Where is our long winter's rest?

3) How are you responding emotionally to these changes?

I'm scared, I'm sad, I'm dismayed, I'm embarrassed that I've not done more myself.

You know that feeling you have when you realize you've made a big, irreparable mistake that you are going to have to recover from, somehow? You know you can't fix it, but you know that you can, if you act quickly and deftly, make some amends to minimize the damage. That's the feeling I get when I read about evidence of changing ocean circulation, or instability of ice sheets, or desertification.

4) What are some ways you are creating a positive future?

I have the good fortune to do work - like this ABCD project and in citizen science - that I think make the world a better, more equitable place by giving people new tools for discovery and learning. I commuted by (electric) bike in 2018 and 2019, and I have averaged even fewer car trips to Portland since the pandemic hit. I've been a vegetarian for most of my life. I pick up trash wherever I go. I appreciate that these actions are grasping at

straws, but in the end, I'd rather have a fistfull of straw than an empty hand.

With thanks to the Climate Stories Project (www.climatestoriesproject.org) for the suggested interview format.