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Climate experts to visit North Dakota capital

North Dakota conference will address emissions

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By: [Patrick Springer](#), INFORUM

The debate over global warming in Washington has largely moved from whether fossil fuels are the culprit to how best to curb greenhouse gas emissions as the nation switches to more green energy sources.

An international climate stewardship conference in Bismarck later this month will bring together an international panel of energy experts to talk about how North Dakota can negotiate the transition.

"The rest of the world has moved beyond climate change," said Brad Crabtree of the Great Plains Institute, an organizer of the climate stewardship conference June 29-30 in Bismarck. "That's a settled issue."

Speakers will include industry representatives from China, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, as well as from the United States, including Gov. John Hoeven and Rep. Earl Pomeroy, D-N.D.

Michael Morris, chairman and CEO of American Electric Power, one of the nation's largest utilities and the largest user of coal in the western hemisphere, will talk about his company's wide-ranging efforts to boost energy efficiency and explore alternatives to fossil fuels.

"Coal is going to continue to be burned, no question about it," Morris said in an interview previewing his remarks. Therefore, the nation must aggressively seek ways to capture and store carbon. "Technology is the answer."

Earlier in his career, Morris helped develop the Great Plains Coal Gasification Plant near Beulah, N.D. Ohio-based AEP, which provides electricity to 5.2 million customers in 11 states, is exploring the feasibility of building a high-voltage transmission line to export wind power from the Dakotas.

"North Dakota is particularly important to us," Morris said, noting it is part of the Great Plains wind corridor that extends south to Texas.

To accommodate a large increase in renewable energy sources, including the solar fields of the southwest and the wind fields of the Dakotas and beyond, the nation must beef up the transmission grid, Morris said.

Congress is embroiled in negotiations to draft legislation addressing climate change, a task Morris doubts will come together this year but might gel next year.

The political heavy lifting would be easier with a clear consensus that curbing greenhouse gases is part of humanity's responsible stewardship of the planet, another panelist said.

Deborah Kiesey, bishop of the Dakotas Conference of the United Methodist Church, said caring for God's creation is something Christians and other faith groups can agree upon. A move to renewable energy sources and conservation, regardless of one's views on global warming, would be good for the environment, she said.

"It is a faith issue for me and I think it ought to be for all Christians," said Kiesey, who is based in Mitchell, S.D., but formerly was based in Fargo. "We are such an interdependent part of all creation. What we do affects that creation."

If you go

- **What:** International Climate Stewardship Solutions Conference
- **When:** June 29-30
- **Where:** Bismarck Civic Center
- **Info:** www.climatestewardshipsolutions.org

Readers can reach Forum reporter Patrick Springer at (701) 241-5522

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