Why ski towns would benefit from a national carbon tax/fee

My prepared remarks

The text I prepared for my remarks in Ouray on Oct. 24. See:
http://mountaintownnews.net/2014/11/05/comments-support-carbon-fee/

Selected sources

Books

"The Case for a Carbon Tax: Getting Past Our Hang-ups to Effective Climate Policy," by Shi-Ling Hsu

"The Climate Casino: Risk, Uncertainty and Economics for a Warming World," by William Nordhaus

You can get both at Alibris used books (but new) for $30 to $15, and about the same on Amazon, although they have kindle options.

Magazine

"Time to Tax Carbon: Enhancing environmental quality and economic growth," in September-October issue of Harvard Magazine.
http://harvardmagazine.com/2014/09/time-to-tax-carbon

Contrary viewpoints

For a slightly contrarian point of view, see Paul Krugman's review of "The Climate Casino" in the Nov. 7, 2013 issue of The New York Review of Books.
http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2013/nov/07/climate-change-gambling-civilization/

For a dissenting opinion about the severity of the climate threat, see former Clinton adviser Steven Koonin in the Wall Street Journal, "Climate Science is Not Settled."
http://online.wsj.com/articles/climate-science-is-not-settled-1411143565

Speaking arrangements

If anybody is interested in having me speak to one of your community groups, that can be arranged. I'd need some financial help for travel costs and, depending upon the location, some lodging. Call or write: 303.463.8630 or allen.best@comcast.net

Carbon fee: key take-aways

• Atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide have accelerated dramatically since the mid-20th century. It took 200 years to gain 35 parts per million. In my lifetime, we have gained 80 ppm. We're at 400 ppm now, and most climate scientists think the substantial risk of a destabilized climate begins at 450 ppm. At our current rates, we'll be there in 15 to 25 years.

• Climate change theory leaves much in doubt, as there is much about atmospheric processes that are still understand. Overall, however, the evidence strongly supports the theory. Arguably, the predictions of change have been too cautious.

• One very fundamental problem is that it's free to pollute the atmosphere. No cost that recognizes the risk to civilization has been assigned to carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions.

• A carbon tax or fee would assign a cost at the place of production. It could start out low and be phased in, such as has been the case in British Columbia. It could be viewed as similar to a sales tax, but perhaps should be better viewed as a user tax.

• Most economists agree that a carbon tax/fee is the most cost-efficient and effective way of giving the market clear and strong price signals, and spurring creativity. Presumably it will stimulate energy efficiency and renewables, but it does not dictate the solutions. It only recognizes the cost of carbon emissions and let the market figure out solutions. Think of it as crowd-sourcing.

• A case for a carbon tax can be made with these basic tenets: 1) It creates jobs; and 2) It an be structured in a way that income and other taxes are reduced; and 3) It's wrong to kick this gigantic can down the road to the next generation.

• Why should CAST get engaged? 1) Mountain town economies depend upon healthy regional, national and international economies. Even the affluent will suffer from the consequences of a topsy-turvy climate. Plus, it's the right thing to do.

• How can CAST get engaged? Start reaching out with your elected congressional representatives and their staffs, laying out the argument for why they should support a carbon tax or fee.

• When should this happen? Soon, starting after the November elections.

Quotes

• "Energy and transportation costs have been so low and the effects of carbon emissions so hidden from consumers that we usually have no idea how carbon-intensive products are." "The Case for a Carbon Tax," Shi-Ling Hsu

• "The simple genius of a carbon tax is that it aggregates disparate pieces of information, transmitting a price signal at every stage in which there is fossil fuel usage, and transmitting it in proportion to the carbon emissions of the production process." "The Case for a Carbon Tax," Shi-Ling Hsu