

Paul Hawken Shares A Plan To Reverse Global Warming

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For author Paul Hawken, a leading environmental entrepreneur working with a coalition of research fellows, advisors and expert reviewers, the climate goal is drawdown, or reversing global warming—the point in atmospheric time when the concentration of greenhouse gases peaks and begins to decline on a year-to-year basis. Hawken edited *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*, a compendium of the 100 most substantive solutions that already exist.

Why is drawdown the goal?

If we don't name the goal, we are unlikely to achieve it. To date, language like mitigation, stabilization and reduction has been used to address climate change. These goals are not particularly ambitious and will do little to preserve civilization. Those verbs are about slowing the amount of released gases, but do not reverse them. If you are

going the wrong way down a road which heads straight over a cliff, slowing down is not a helpful goal. We need to turn around, and that is what drawdown research is all about.

Why and how did you do the research?

We wanted to know if it was game over with respect to global warming, or could we reverse the buildup of greenhouse gases with techniques and practices already underway? We gathered a qualified and diverse group of 70 researchers from around the world to identify, research and model the 100 most substantive existing solutions. They modeled the impact the solutions will have if they continue to scale in a rigorous, but reasonable way, and what the cost and profits would be. All carbon data was based on peer-reviewed science. Economic data came from respected international institutions like the World Bank. The goal of the book was to present the findings and describe the solutions in ways that fascinated and informed, accompanied by images that enlivened and inspired.

What are the top 10 solutions?

The top 10 solutions, in order, are: refrigerant management, wind turbines, reduced food waste, plant-rich diet, tropical forests protection, educating girls, family planning, solar farms, silvopasture—the intentional combination of trees, forage plants and livestock as an integrated, intensively managed system—and rooftop solar. All 100 are listed at [Drawdown.org/solutions-summary-by-rank](https://drawdown.org/solutions-summary-by-rank).

Did any of the solutions surprise you?

None of the solutions surprised us, but their rankings did. For example, educating girls, number six, has a dramatic bearing on global warming. Women with more years of education have fewer, healthier, children and actively manage their reproductive health. Educated females realize higher wages and greater upward mobility, contributing to economic growth. Education is the most powerful lever available for breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty while mitigating emissions by curbing population growth.

Ranked seventh, family planning, particularly in low-income countries, impacts world population. For women to have children by choice rather than chance and to plan their family size and spacing is a matter of autonomy and dignity.

Together, these two solutions would account for significant reduction in greenhouse gases by 2050. The United Nations estimates a difference between the high and median population projections in 2050 of 10.8 billion versus 9.7 billion. The difference is almost entirely determined by availability of family planning.

Are you optimistic about achieving the goal?

Drawdown is not about optimism, hope or pessimism. It is a reality project. The science on climate change is amazing, if not stunning. It is the best problem statement humanity has ever created, which I see as a gift, not a curse. Global warming is feedback from the atmosphere. The Earth is a system, and any system that does not incorporate feedback fails. It holds true for our body, ecosystems, social systems and economic systems. The knowledge of global warming and its potential impacts is creating huge breakthroughs in energy, transport, agriculture, housing, urbanization and materials. If it wasn't for the science of climate change, we would be destroying our planet faster than we already are.

Focusing repeatedly on the problem does not solve the problem. Diagnosis is not prognosis unless we give up. The science of what will happen if we do not act has been here for a long time. What *Drawdown* points out is that humanity is on the case. The plan we refer to in the book's subtitle is not our plan; we found a plan being activated by the collective intelligence of humanity. This is a different story than one of gloom and doom. It is a story of innovation, creativity and generosity—that is who we are.