

A Super Week at Climate Week

By Linda Brown

Ten years ago, Napa County residents joined together to form Napa Climate NOW!. Today, the non-profit's mission – to promote understanding and adoption of responsible climate mitigation and resilience measures based on best available climate science – feels more urgent than ever.

Since that time, we have experienced historic wildfires, heat waves, and other signals of a rapidly changing climate, impacting air quality, health, homes, treasured natural places, and, of course, Napa's economic powerhouse, our wine industry. If ever there was a time to apply the old adage, "Think Globally. Act Locally", it's now!

"We emphasize empowering residents to engage with neighbors, friends, and families, and through their work." said Lynne Baker, Napa Climate NOW! co-chair. "There are so many things we can do, not just to make a difference locally, but to lead by example, and to collaborate with others around the country and the world."

This collaboration is essential. No single strategy can stop global warming, and nobody has all the answers. So it was a great privilege for me to travel to New York City in late September to hear from some of the world's brightest thinkers and doers during Climate Week.

It's a happening.

Climate Week isn't just an event; it's a happening. Hundreds of symposia, workshops, presentations, art installations, creative gatherings, networking socials – most offered for free – take place all over the Big Apple. You simply pick your favorites, then go-go-go from morning to night, soaking in the latest news, developments, opportunities, and making new friends and contacts along the way. You meet scientists, dignitaries, journalists, company CEOs, innovative start-ups, students, researchers, environmental and human rights NGOs, sustainability professionals, financiers, and more.

Climate Week was launched in 2009 to coincide with the annual meeting of United Nations General Assembly in New York. Leading up to and ever since the signing of the Paris climate agreement in 2015, climate has become a regular topic of discussion. With so many official representatives and guests in town, Climate Week organizers recognized this as an opportune time to share information and learn from one another about how to solve our climate crisis.

Targeting super pollutants

One of the hottest topics this year was "super pollutants." These are greenhouse gases and other emissions that are far more potent than carbon dioxide in terms of their ability to warm

the planet. Together, they account for more than half of all global warming, but so far have attracted only a tiny fraction (5%) of climate finance.

Unlike carbon dioxide, which lingers for centuries in the atmosphere, most super pollutants are short-lived, lasting only a few days, weeks, months, or years. Methane – by far the most prominent among these – is the second largest contributor to global warming. Super pollutants also include refrigerants, black carbon (a constituent of soot), smog-related ozone, and other emissions.

Climate scientists now see eliminating short-lived super pollutants as the only way, together with decarbonization, to hold global temperatures below the 2°C temperature threshold established in the Paris agreement. Because they are so short-lived, reducing or avoiding these pollutants will rapidly eliminate their supercharged warming effects, and therefore, help reduce global heat faster.

Not surprisingly, companies and start-ups that are making headway on reducing methane, refrigerants, and other super pollutants were featured speakers. (Here's a link to one such presentation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4BBhTu6kh8>.) There was even a whole session dedicated to a new international X-Prize competition, which is expected to award hundreds of thousands of dollars in prize money to incentivize innovative methane reduction.

Other fascinating topics included our country's changing stance on climate, the nexus between climate, water, and biodiversity, the growing challenge of climate-driven migration, the health consequences of a changing climate, international legal frameworks establishing climate responsibility, and much more.

Check out highlights from the New York events at the Climate Week NYC 2025 website (<https://www.climateweeknyc.org>). Closer to home, keep your eyes open for San Francisco Climate Week this coming April around Earth Day. Get ready to be truly inspired!

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Photo credit: SCS Global Services

Photo caption: Linda Brown (center) with colleagues at their Global Heat Reduction Initiative booth during an event at Climate Week NYC

