Bellingham conference will cover adapting locally to climate change

JARED PABEN / THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

A conference Friday, April 8, won't debate whether humans are causing climate change. Neither will it focus on ways people can reduce their carbon footprints, although that's part of it.

Instead, the free, all-day event will focus on how Whatcom County residents can prepare to live in a world with an altered climate, dealing with warmer summers, less snow pack, changing sea chemistry and more.

"The wheels are in motion, and we can't stop them now," said Lindsay Taylor, program coordinator at the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association.

The conference at St. Luke's Community Health Education Center will bring in local and regional speakers to discuss how to live with the impacts. They'll include everyone from Bill Dewey at Taylor Shellfish Farms discussing shellfish and ocean acidity to Clare Fogelsong, environmental resources manager at Bellingham Public Works, discussing the water supply. The conference will cover water and forest resources, infrastructure and food.

Organizers wanted to keep it as local as possible, while still including speakers from the Puget Sound area, Taylor said.

The keynote speaker will be Thomas Ackerman, director of the Joint Institute for the Study of the Atmosphere and Ocean at the University of Washington. He is also an atmospheric sciences professor at the university. The institute focuses research on the climate, environmental chemistry, marine ecosystems and coastal oceanography.

The event is part of a monthly speaker series by the Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee and the Whatcom Watershed Information Network, although this event is larger than the regular monthly events, Taylor said.

As of Tuesday, April 5, more than 100 people had confirmed they would attend, she said, but there is still space available.

"We've been talking about climate change issues here and wanting to do something like this for a while," she said.

IF YOU GO

For more information on the conference, and to RSVP to the event, go to n-sea.org/events.

Reach JARED PABEN at jared.paben@bellinghamherald.com or call 715-2289.