



Chris Field is a professor of environmental earth system science at Stanford University.

Understanding the world through science

Portola Valley
 ecologist
 says the public
 needs to 'get'
 science now

By Dave Boyce

Humans like to think about the past as a simpler time, and when viewed through the lens of scientific progress, that kind of thinking has an element of truth to it.

How reassuring it must have been for a 19th century carpenter to think he understood gravity after learning that the experiments thought to have been carried out by Italian scientist Galileo three centuries earlier from atop the Leaning Tower of Pisa were still being taught: If you drop two objects of different masses from a height, they will hit the ground at the same time.

How dismaying, then, for that carpenter's 21st century counterpart, eager to understand science and opting to start off with basic gravity only to learn that scientists don't understand its nature

and speculate that it might be related to the four-dimensional curvature of space and time. There's a tough nut.

But scientific literacy is very important, particularly in an era of climate change, says Portola Valley resident Chris Field. Explaining science to people is his metier, and in December in San Francisco, the Commonwealth Club of California will be honoring him with the 2015 Stephen H. Schneider Award for Outstanding Climate Science Communication. The honor includes a \$15,000 prize.

Mr. Field is a professor of environmental earth system science at Stanford University, the director of the Carnegie Institution's Department of Global Ecology at Stanford, and the Melvin and Joan Lane Professor for Interdis-

ciplinary Environmental Studies. He is a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and co-chairs the working group concerned with the impacts of climate change, aspects of life on Earth vulnerable to climate change, and adapting to climate change.

"It is a real thrill to be associated with Steve Schneider's approach to climate-change science and climate-change communication," Mr. Field said in a statement about his award.

The Almanac sat down with Mr. Field for an interview in his office at Stanford.

Real risks ahead

There was a time when scientific theories and progress were accessible to

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Understanding the world through science

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public understanding, Mr. Field says. In the days of Issac Newton and, later, Thomas Jefferson, educated people could keep up with the pace of scientific discovery, he says.

Science's complexities have accumulated, however, and by the second half of the 20th century, educated people could no longer keep up. The public, Mr. Field says, came to see scientists as experts not expected to explain what they were doing.

Not true today, he says, when science is much more complex and society's values and aspirations are factors. If the problem is disease and the solution is new medicine, for example, who is treated and how much treatment do they get? If the problem is endangered species and the solution is protecting them, which species should have priority and what does protection mean? How is a particular new development going to affect farmers, or children, or grandchildren? Scientific, technological and humanitarian issues now interlock, he says.

While science has become less accessible to lay people, everybody should try to understand the big issues and figure out why they're important to their lives, he says. Climate change is the big unsolved problem of the times. While educating children represents a tremendous opportunity, he says, adults should learn about it, too, because there are real risks over the next couple of decades as the odds go up for extreme events, what he calls "the sharp end of the climate-change stick."

Chris Field is being honored by the Commonwealth Club of California for his work in climate science communication.



A heat wave in Europe in 2003 caused 30,000 to 70,000 deaths. Crop yields are not increasing as they have, and fish are harder to find. "Things can become unmanageable (and) we really need to bend the curve in a super meaningful way by the end of the century," he says. "The most powerful asset is a good clear understanding of what the risks are."

If sea level continues to rise by a tenth of an inch a year, that's an inch a decade. That may not seem like much, but when combined with storm surges and extra high tides, he says, it can mean the difference between a flooded subway system or water treatment center and waves safely pummeling the far side of a sea wall.

The inundation of New York City subways in 2012 by Hurricane Sandy because the water level was higher than normal helps demonstrate this, he says.

Cynthia Rosenzweig, a climate expert at the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, describes sea level rise as being like a set of stairs. "The 12-inch increase in New York Harbor over the last century means we've already gone up one step," she says on climate.gov, and an incoming storm system now sits on that step.

"For Sandy, that meant greater coastal flooding in New York and the surrounding region than we would have experienced a century ago," Ms. Rosenzweig says. "Continuing to climb the staircase of sea level rise means we'll see greater extent and greater frequency of coastal flooding from storms, even if storms don't get any stronger."

"It doesn't take very much to put you past the tipping point for big change," Mr. Field says. "Every extra inch is a big extra problem."

Sophisticated players

If excessive use of fossil fuels causes climate change, and if the fossil fuel industry has been fighting effective action to curb their use, do they deserve a place at the table?

'It doesn't take very much to put you past the tipping point for big change. Every extra inch (of sea-level rise) is a big extra problem.'

CHRIS FIELD

They are sophisticated players with a good understanding of science, Mr. Field says. They may disagree with climate scientists and emphasize the benefits of fossil fuel, but "science

is a wonderful tool for figuring out what we agree on and what we don't agree on," he says.

The industry has climate change-related concerns, including exposure of their assets to hurricanes, the prospects for drilling in the Arctic, and carbon taxes. "We can all do better if we have a discussion that is based on facts," he says.

Some companies are acting now. Mr. Field noted that the chief executives of six European oil and gas companies, including BP in Britain, Royal Dutch Shell in The Netherlands, Total in France and Statoil in Norway, wrote to the United Nations recently.

They noted what they're already doing, including increasing natural gas production (gas emissions are half those of coal), improving the efficiency of their operations, investing in carbon capture and storage, and exploring low-carbon technologies and business models. To speed the pace of all that, they also proposed a step that oil and gas interests

tend to oppose.

"We believe that a price on carbon should be a key element of these frameworks," the executives say. "If governments act to price carbon, this discourages high carbon options and encourages the most efficient ways of reducing emissions widely." The executives say they want a "direct dialogue" on carbon taxes with the UN and "willing governments" at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in December.

"It's really a time for deep rethinking in that industry," Mr. Field says. There are better options than using the atmosphere as a waste dump, and for industry, there are lots of ways for them to become part of the solution, he says.

Many of the right pieces are in place to have an agreement in Paris that's meaningful, he says. "I'm very optimistic that we can have a discussion that's much better than we had before, and take serious steps to unlock future steps that are much more serious." ▀



Photo courtesy Facebook

Members of Facebook's Vocal Network will be among the five a cappella groups, all from Silicon Valley companies, performing at a free Menlo College concert on Friday at the campus, 1000 El Camino Real, Atherton.

High-tech a cappella groups belt 'em out at Menlo College

Menlo College will cap its free summer concert series with an "only in Silicon Valley" event on Aug. 21 as vocal groups from Facebook, Google, Pinterest, Dropbox, and Twitter appear at an a cappella night featuring emcees

Heidi Roizen and Menlo College President Richard Moran.

The event, sponsored by NASDAQ Private Market, is from 5 to 8 p.m. on the college campus at 1000 El Camino Real in Atherton. Food trucks will be on site.

The groups are: Googlepella

from Google, The Vocal Network from Facebook, Songbirds from Twitter, Pintune from Pinterest, and Syncopation from Dropbox.

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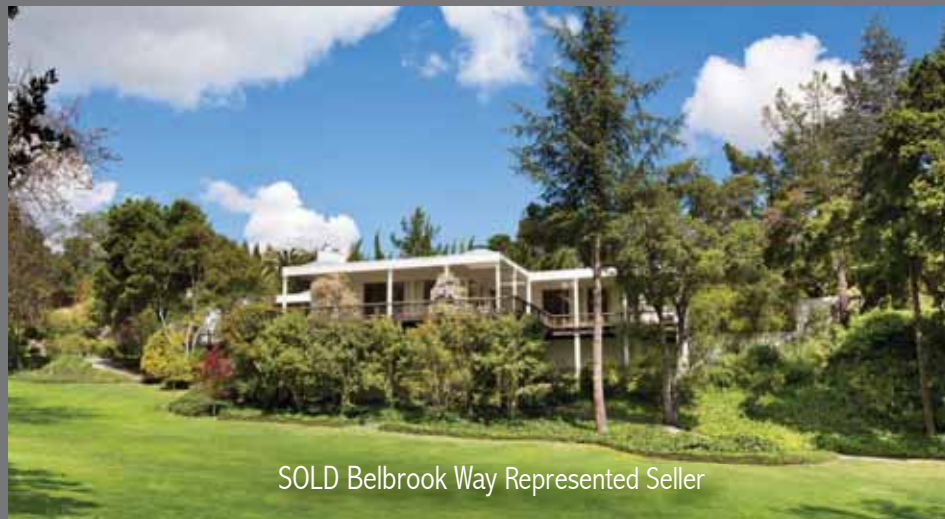
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association, savings association or savings bank specified in Section 5102 of the California Financial Code and authorized to do business in California, or other such funds as may be acceptable to the Trustee. In the event tender other than cash is accepted, the Trustee may withhold the issuance of the Trustee's Deed Upon Sale until funds become available to the payee or endorsee as a matter of right. The property offered for sale excludes all funds held on account by the property receiver, if applicable. If the Trustee is unable to convey title for any reason, the successful bidder's sole and exclusive remedy shall be the return of monies paid to the Trustee and the successful bidder shall have no further recourse. Notice to Potential Bidders If you are considering bidding on this property lien, you should understand that there are risks involved in bidding at a Trustee auction. You will be bidding on a lien, not on the property itself. Placing the highest bid at a Trustee auction does not automatically entitle you to free and clear ownership of the property. You should also be aware that the lien being auctioned off may be a junior lien. If you are the highest bidder at the auction, you are or may be responsible for paying off all liens senior to the lien being auctioned off, before you can receive clear title to the property. You are encouraged to investigate the existence, priority, and size of outstanding liens that may exist on this property by contacting the county recorder's office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge you a fee for this information. If you consult either of these resources, you should be aware that the same Lender may hold more than one mortgage or Deed of Trust on the property. Notice to Property Owner The

sale date shown on this Notice of Sale may be postponed one or more times by the Mortgagee, Beneficiary, Trustee, or a court, pursuant to Section 2924g of the California Civil Code. The law requires that information about Trustee Sale postponements be made available to you and to the public, as a courtesy to those not present at the sale. If you wish to learn whether your sale date has been postponed, and, if applicable, the rescheduled time and date for the sale of this property, you may call In Source Logic at 702-659-7766 for information regarding the Trustee's Sale or visit the Internet Web site address listed below for information regarding the sale of this property, using the file number assigned to this case, CA08001537-15-1. Information about postponements that are very short in duration or that occur close in time to the scheduled sale may not immediately be reflected in the telephone information or on the Internet Web site. The best way to verify postponement information is to attend the scheduled sale. Date: August 5, 2015 MTC Financial Inc. dba Trustee Corps TS No. CA08001537-15-1 17100 Gillette Ave Irvine, CA 92614 949-252-8300 TDD: 866-660-4288 Miguel Ochoa, Authorized Signatory SALE INFORMATION CAN BE OBTAINED ON LINE AT www.insourcelogic.com FOR AUTOMATED SALES INFORMATION PLEASE CALL: In Source Logic AT 702-659-7766 MTC Financial Inc. dba Trustee Corps MAY BE ACTING AS A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT. ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED MAY BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. ORDER NO. CA15-002603-1, PUB DATES: 08/19/2015, 08/26/2015, 09/02/2015 ALM

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WOODSIDE

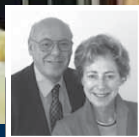


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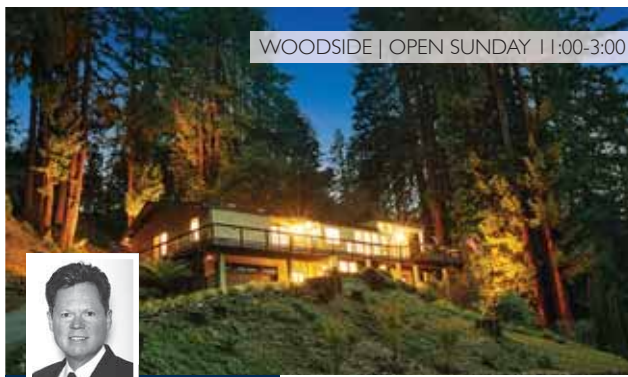


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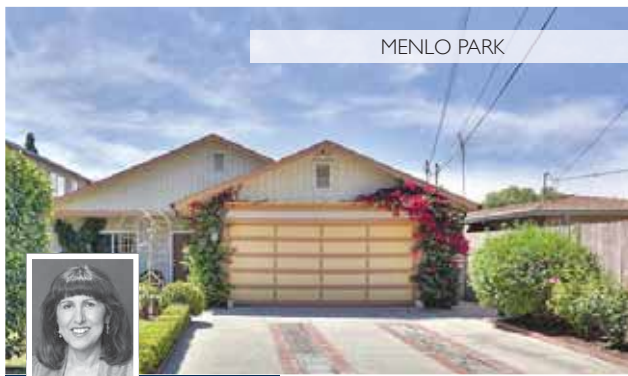


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