

Dear members of the STE committee,

My name is Mary Beth Raven and I'm a 34-year resident of Merrimack. Before that I lived in Londonderry.

Please do establish a commission to figure out the monetary costs of climate damage to New Hampshire.

Climate change has already been damaging NH in many ways. One way is that more carbon in the atmosphere means that **poison ivy is stronger** – the oils on the plant are more potent. (Source: <https://www.npr.org/2023/08/30/1196712560/why-poison-ivy-loves-climate-change>)



Poison ivy vine growing on a tree

A 2006 study found that poison ivy was the most responsive species to the higher carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The average little tree grew 8 percent faster, but poison ivy grew 149 percent faster than it would have under normal carbon dioxide conditions.

That might not seem like a big deal, but it has already cost me. Over the past 3 years I've missed about 9 days of work due to getting poison ivy so bad that my eyes were swollen shut and I could not work. I've included a photo below to show you just how puffy, uncomfortable – and potentially dangerous this was. (The doctor immediately put me on steroids because poison ivy could permanently damage my eyesight)



Of course I try to avoid contact – but the oils are present and getting stronger in the stems, branches and roots. I've gotten poison ivy in early April before any leaves are present – because I can't tell that a simple branch or stem is poison ivy.



Early spring poison ivy looks a lot like a maple tree sprout

And it's not just me. The U.S. Forest Service says that up to [85 percent of people will experience an allergic reaction to poison ivy](#), oak and sumac when exposed. Can you imagine a whole bunch of NH workers out sick because of poison ivy?

Here are some key points about the economic effects of worse poison ivy:

- **Healthcare Costs:**

A significant increase in the severity of poison ivy reactions could lead to more people seeking medical treatment, resulting in higher healthcare costs for individuals and insurance companies.

- **Lost Productivity:**

Workers in outdoor occupations like construction, landscaping, and forestry could experience reduced productivity due to time spent managing poison ivy reactions, potentially leading to lost workdays.

- **Tourism Impact:**

Areas heavily infested with poison ivy could see a decline in tourism revenue if visitors are deterred by the risk of severe allergic reactions.

- **Management Costs:**
Public spaces like parks and trails may require increased management efforts to control poison ivy growth, adding to maintenance costs.

So please, establish this commission before Steven King writes his next horror novel about how Poison ivy took over the USA!

Thank you.

Mary Beth Raven

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