

Washington's Comprehensive Plan to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Strategies to reduce global warming pollution that will create jobs, stimulate the economy, and reduce our dependence on foreign oil

Global climate change is the economic and environmental issue of our lifetime. The science is clear that we must move forward quickly to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions if we are to mitigate its effects. Without action, climate change will negatively affect nearly every part of Washington's economy through changes in temperature, sea-level, and water availability.

In 2008, the Washington State Legislature passed Engrossed Second Substitute House bill (E2SHB) 2815. This bill put into law the state's GHG emissions reductions first adopted by Governor Gregoire in Executive Order 07-02 that set Washington's goals for reducing GHG emissions to:

- 1990 levels by 2020.
- 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2035.
- 50 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

E2SHB 2815 requires Ecology to develop a comprehensive plan to achieve the required emissions reductions and submit that plan to the Legislature by December 2008. The first edition of that plan focuses on the emissions reductions required by 2020. It is available at www.ecy.wa.gov/climatechange/2008CompPlan.htm

Implementing this plan with help the state reach its goal of increasing green economy jobs to 25,000 by 2020 from the 8,400 green economy jobs the state had in 2004.

Confronting climate change will unleash technological innovation and further cement Washington's position as a green economy hub now and into the future. It will allow us to be a winner in the worldwide competition in energy efficiency and clean energy, creating good family wage jobs that cannot be outsourced. But we must act quickly. If we fail to act now on climate change, we will lose our leadership position and many of the opportunities it presents.

A plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Many GHG emissions reduction policies are already in place and if fully implemented will result in about 45 percent of the necessary reductions need by 2020. To reduce emissions even more we believe it is necessary to have a centerpiece policy like a cap-and-trade program and to implement the recommendations from the 2008 Climate Action Team (CAT).

Policies in place

The policies in place will:

- Provide consumers with fuel efficient vehicles designed to run on clean transportation fuels grown and produced in Washington.

- Guarantee Washington's large utilities use new clean renewable power for at least 15 percent of their electricity.
- Decrease electricity and natural gas demand through energy efficiency measures, building energy codes, and strict appliance standards.

Cap-and-trade program

Ecology recommends implementing the Western Climate Initiative (WCI) cap-and-trade system. By capping GHG emissions, we will achieve the results needed to slow the rate of climate change. The program will give emitting industries flexibility on how they make the needed reductions and will make clean energy sources more competitive with fossil fuel. It will also provide the regulatory certainty needed to support long-term investments in the green economy, investments that will move us down the path towards a low carbon future, creating jobs along the way.

Recommendations from 2008 Climate Action Team

The comprehensive report presents a suite of complementary policies the Climate Action Team (CAT) has identified as strategies that will further reduce GHG emissions. Implementing all of the policy recommendations from the CAT will generate jobs and could result in about 39 percent of the reductions necessary to meet our 2020 emissions reductions. If fully implemented, these policies will:

- Increase public transportation and ridesharing options, providing individuals with a variety of alternatives to single occupancy vehicles.
- Direct growth and development to compact, transit oriented areas, and away from rural and resource lands.
- Create jobs by expanding energy efficiency programs, strengthening building and energy codes, and increasing the use of combined heat and power.
- Reduce the amount of solid waste generated and disposed of through increased recycling and reuse programs, and improved product design.
- Protect Washington's working forests and agricultural lands.

2020 and beyond

The 2008 comprehensive plan should not be considered static. To the contrary, it is essential that we be nimble, adaptive, and that we learn from the experiences in other jurisdictions to help us identify the actions we need to take to meet our 2035 and 2050 emissions reductions. Many of the recommendations around land use and transportation are longer-term strategies. Innovation will make things possible tomorrow that may seem out of reach today making it possible to reach our goals.

More information

Washington's Climate Change Web site
www.ecy.wa.gov/climatechange/index.htm

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