Washington's Approach to an Integrated Climate Change Strategy

Due to observed and projected warming from increased concentrations of greenhouse gases already accumulated in the atmosphere, Washington will face certain impacts to our forests, agriculture, snowpack, rivers, coastal waters and other natural resources we value.

This past spring, Governor Gregoire signed legislation (E2SSB 5560) requiring the development of an "integrated climate change response strategy" that will "better enable state and local agencies, public and private businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals to prepare for, address, and adapt to the impacts of climate change."

The legislation directs Ecology, in partnership with the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and Transportation to develop an initial state strategy by December of 2011.

Steering committee

These six agencies have formed a steering committee to oversee the development and scope of the strategy. The committee is currently gathering input from the public and other stakeholders in addition to working with other state agencies that will be directly or indirectly impacted by a changing climate.

Advisory groups

Over the next couple of months, the steering committee will form four topic advisory groups. The four topic advisory groups are:

- Built environment/infrastructure and communities
- Human health and security
- Ecosystems, species and habitats
- Natural resources (productive lands and waters)

The advisory groups will consist of representatives from federal, state, local, and tribal governments, businesses, nongovernmental organizations and individuals. The advisory groups will work closely with the scientific community as they develop their recommendations and strategies.

MORE INFORMATION

Ecology's Climate Change Impacts, Preparation and Adaptation Website
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/climatechange/adaptation.htm

Washington Climate Change Impacts Assessment, Climate Impacts Group (CIG), University of Washington
http://cses.washington.edu/cig/res/ia/waccia.shtml

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Special accommodations:

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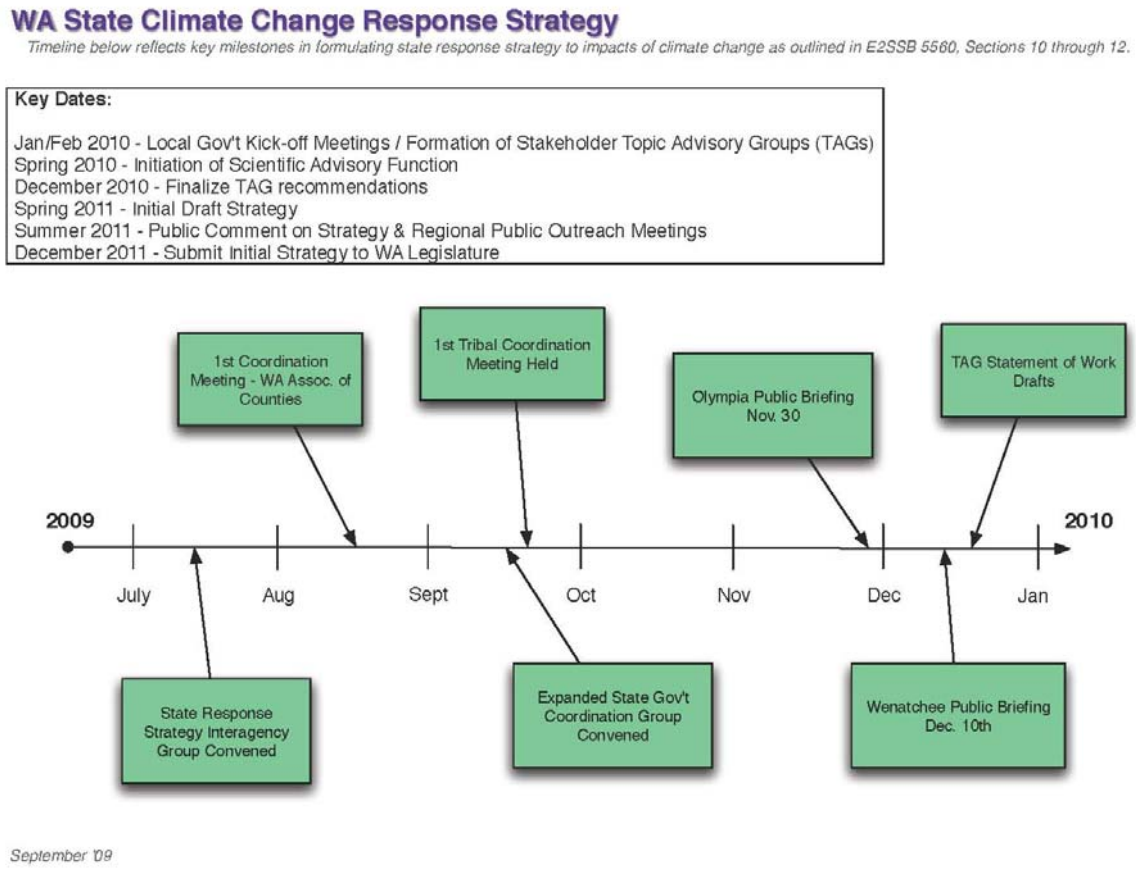
Timeline

The timeline below reflects key milestones in developing the state strategy.



Projected Impacts of Climate Change in Washington State

In February of 2009, the Climate Impacts Group (CIG) at the University of Washington released a study that provides a comprehensive assessment of climate change impacts on the State of Washington, as the 2007 Washington State Legislature mandated in House Bill 1303.

Using global climate models scaled to the Pacific Northwest, CIG projects that even with moderate reductions in the rate of current global greenhouse gas emissions Washington can expect climate impacts resulting in:

- Higher temperatures
- Changes in precipitation patterns
- Lower water supply in summer months
- Elevated stress on certain animal species and habitats
- Increased risk to our forests
- Reductions in air quality
- Positive and negative impacts to agriculture
- Increased risk to coastal areas
- Decrease in summer hydro power production
- Increase in summer energy demand

More information related to these impacts can be found on Ecology's Climate Change Impacts, Preparation and Adaptation webpage (www.ecy.wa.gov/climatechange/adaptation.htm).