

## **Washington Climate Challenge: Citizen Engagement and Action Framework**

Governor Chris Gregoire and the Legislature have set aggressive goals for reducing Washington's contribution to global climate change, increasing clean energy jobs, and reducing reliance on imported fuels. Meeting these goals will require actions taken by all of us, and citizen engagement and action is vital.

### **The need for citizen engagement and action**

The Governor's Climate Change Challenge Executive Order calls for reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. The Governor has also directed the departments of Ecology and Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) to recommend strategies to prepare the State for the effects of climate change that are unavoidable. Washington governments, businesses, communities, and individuals all have a stake in being prepared for the effects that cannot be avoided. In addition, the agencies were asked to develop recommendations for educating and engaging the public in the climate change challenge.

To meet the state's goals and the challenge of climate change, action is needed throughout our economy and communities. Some of these actions will require legislation, policies, or incentives. But most will require people to make changes in their actions, decisions, and choices.

For example, in Washington 45 percent of the state's greenhouse gases are related to transportation. This is an area in which individuals, businesses and communities can make a big difference by making different choices about how and how often they travel. Individual choices and actions can also make a huge difference in how efficiently homes and commercial buildings use energy. Innovative construction and remodeling, new technology, and conservation can reduce energy demands.

In order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet the goals set out by the Governor, consumers, homeowners, and business owners need to see the connections between personal choices and decisions and climate change. They need consistent and reliable information, data, and messages from all parts of government. They also need to be able to see where the challenge of climate change presents opportunities for new technologies, new jobs, and economic prosperity for all, including society's more disadvantaged populations.

### **Supporting citizen engagement and action**

In response to the Governor's Executive Order, Department of Ecology Director Jay Manning and Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) Director Juli Wilkerson appointed a Climate Advisory Team (CAT), representing some of Washington's most influential businesses, environmental and natural resource interests, local and state government, tribes, labor, the faith community, and power producers. As directed by Governor Gregoire and the Legislature through passage of SB 6001 during the 2007 legislative session, CAT members are working to find ways to

reduce greenhouse gas emissions, grow the clean energy economy, and cut spending on fuel imports. They are assisted by Technical Working Groups (TWGs) that focus on specific sectors, such as transportation, buildings and energy supply.

Over the past year, the TWGs developed priority options for the CAT's consideration. All the TWGs identified **public education and citizen engagement as a key strategy in reducing our contribution to climate change.**

Governor Gregoire also directed Ecology and CTED to recommend a strategy to prepare for the unavoidable effects of climate change. Preparation and Adaptation Working Groups (PAWGs) were established to look at the impacts of climate change on human health, water and coastlines, forestry and agriculture. **All identified climate education as a top priority in preparing Washington for unavoidable consequences of climate change.**

The CAT report to Ecology and CTED will include a comprehensive citizen engagement and action plan closely linked to the priorities and recommendations identified by all of the working groups. The plan is being developed in consultation with various stakeholders, climate educators, and K-20 education experts around the state. Three summits were held around the state to tap into westside and eastside knowledge, expertise and regional diversity. This planning is tied in with the E3 Washington (Education, Environment, & Economy) statewide comprehensive environmental education plan. (<http://www.e3washington.org/about-e3-washington>)

### **A proposed framework for citizen engagement and action**

The citizen engagement stakeholder process generated hundreds of ideas for specific actions; however, some overarching goals and specific intended results for a citizen involvement plan emerged. The final recommended plan will identify a series of actions that can be taken to reduce our state's contribution of greenhouse gas emissions and to prepare the state for the impacts of climate change. The actions included here are examples.

### **Intended results and actions to engage citizens**

**Intended Result:** A “green collar” work force will be trained and knowledgeable to help place Washington in a competitive global economic position.

**Action:** Train existing and future employees through targeted programs, mentorships, and apprenticeships and prepare them to work for a clean energy future. For example, Puget Sound Energy is making it a priority to re-train its existing work force and to find qualified employees trained in energy efficiency and clean energy technology. Energy providers, secondary and post-secondary education providers can partner in developing these training programs. Special attention should be paid to low-income and other disadvantaged populations.

**Intended Result: A vocational/technological career pathway** from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade to post-secondary institutions produces a workforce prepared to meet the challenges of climate change.

**Action:** Develop climate change-related vocational and technical programs that meet the needs of students and that prepares them for careers that will help reduce Washington's greenhouse gas emissions. This requires also training teachers capable of developing and teaching the programs. An example of this type of program currently is offered at Cascade Community College in Seattle.

**Intended Result: Existing climate change education programs work in coordination to deliver effective programs in local communities** around the state, such as those offered through Washington State University, University of Washington, state and local governments, utilities, and community groups.

**Action:** Coordinate and support the efforts of existing climate change education programs and local efforts to ensure maximum return for each dollar spent and to minimize duplication. WSU sponsors "Power Your Future," a competition for high school students to develop programs and/or technology related to climate change. WSU is looking for partners to broaden the outreach and participation in this program. Potential partners include Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's "Sustainable by Design" program, Ecology, CTED and Pacific Education Institute. WSU has the potential to reach many students around the state, but needs assistance in getting information about the program to interested teachers and students.

**Intended Result: Consumers, homeowners, business owners and others have the technical assistance they need** to make choices that will reduce their contribution to greenhouse gas emissions.

**Action:** Implement grassroots efforts through existing channels, such as energy providers, municipalities, and extension offices to provide technical assistance with such things as programmable thermostats, smart meters, consumer purchasing decisions, transportation options, and lighting options. WSU Extension is developing a Carbon Masters program, similar to its Master Gardener program, in which people will be trained to teach others about reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. Another effort creates labels to be used on appliances and products to help consumers make informed choices.

**Intended Result: A climate change clearinghouse** provides a convenient, cost-effective place for educators, consumers, businesses, homeowners, and others to get the information and resources they need to help them reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

**Action:** A statewide clearinghouse related to climate change is developed and maintained. Currently, many groups and programs are working separately and independently to inform and assist Washington citizens to reduce their greenhouse gas contributions. In the citizen engagement summits held around the state in 2007, participants voiced a strong interest in access to a clearinghouse to find resources, to stay informed, and to collaborate with colleagues. A responsible party is needed to

develop and maintain an effective clearinghouse of information and resources; a function that could be provided by a state agency.

**Intended Result: A peer to peer network of informed youth** is motivated and provides leadership to reduce personal contributions to greenhouse gas emissions, to seek careers and business opportunities, and to develop appropriate technologies to reduce GHG emissions.

**Action:** To reach youth, enlist the assistance of informed youth to develop enticing and compelling messages via sources most familiar to young people (such as YouTube, MySpace, etc.). A youth network of peers could be developed through the use of culminating projects at the middle and high school levels.

**Intended Result: The media have the consistent information they need** – when they need it – to help their readers, viewers, and participants make informed decisions and to be involved in responding to the climate challenge.

**Action:** Consistent messages and data – and timely news opportunities - are provided to the media by government, business, education program providers, and others. Information is easily accessible to the media through websites, press releases, and personal communication, such as editorial boards and tours of local projects.

### **Recommended next steps – supporting the framework**

Several state and local agencies have a role in meeting the challenge of climate change, but none have the existing capacity to carry out the public outreach and citizen engagement necessary to meet the climate change challenge. Their existing communication and engagement resources are devoted to helping them carry out their current core missions. Climate change is new and evolving. Consistency in messages to the public is critical.

To further develop and implement the plan to help the State meet its climate change goals, new elements are needed:

#### **Phase 1 (Feb. 2007—April 2008):**

- Ecology and CTED provide opportunities for citizens to understand and participate in Washington’s efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by:
  - Developing and maintaining a climate change website and listserv.
  - Informing the public about the Climate Advisory Team, the Technical Working Groups, the Preparation and Adaptation Working Groups, and the Education and Engagement process, providing opportunities for comment.
  - Sharing draft documents on the climate change website and via the listserv; soliciting public comment.
  - Releasing the draft recommendations of the Climate Advisory Team and the PAWGs, both of which will be posted on the Ecology website for public review and comment. Experts are available to the media to answer questions.

- Conducting news and editorial briefings around the state prior to the release of the final reports and recommendations to CTED and Ecology.
- Announcing the final recommendations of Ecology and CTED to Governor Gregoire on Feb. 7, 2008. Experts are available to the media to answer questions.

**Phase 2 (2008):**

- Contingent on funding availability, establish a Citizen Engagement & Action coordinator at Ecology to serve Ecology, CTED and other state and local agencies involved in carrying out Washington Climate Challenge strategies beginning in 2008.
- If funded, this coordinator will:
  - Leverage the combined communication and engagement resources of several state agencies in helping Washington communities, businesses and citizens to meet the challenge of climate change.
  - Organize and support a Washington Climate Action Network of citizen, community, business and public-sector groups around the state.
  - Be accountable for carrying out an engagement and action plan and delivering specific outcomes.
  - Work with the Climate Action Network to establish quantifiable and measurable targets that will demonstrate the impacts of local and individual actions to achieve greenhouse gas emissions goals.
- Use the new Climate Action Network to identify gaps and overlaps and recommend targeted engagement investments for decision makers to consider in 2009-11.

**Phase 3 (2009—2011 and beyond):**

- If established, the Citizen Engagement & Action coordinator will
  - Continue to implement and coordinate a fully-functioning Climate Action Network.
  - Collect measurable data from network members to document the number of people involved in activities that will help meet the State's greenhouse gas reduction goals.
  - Working with staff at Ecology, who will be measuring GHG reductions to assess the success of the state's various strategies to reduce emissions, develop and disseminate information on the state's efforts to the public.
  - With the Network, evaluate engagement programs to determine where efficiencies can occur and where additional funding is needed to build capacity.
  - Work with the Network, funders, and users of the engagement program(s) to identify gaps.