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Washington state climate advocates laud U.S. and Canadian leaders for setting greenhouse-gas reduction goal

Climate and clean-energy advocates from across Washington today applauded Gov. Chris Gregoire and other leaders of the Western Climate Initiative (WCI*) for taking a crucial step toward regionwide reductions in global-warming pollution.

The WCI, led by the governors and premiers of six western states and two Canadian provinces, today announced a goal of reducing overall emissions to 15 percent below 2005 levels by the year 2020. The goal is a starting point for the significant reductions the scientific community says are needed to avoid the worst impacts of global warming.

A PDF (224 kb) version of the WCI statement is available here:

http://www.westernclimateinitiative.org/WCI_Documents.cfm

A statement from Western regional clean energy advocates is attached, and is also viewable [here](#).

WCI's announcement coincides with Washington state's attempt to fashion policies aimed at achieving the reductions in global-warming pollution mandated by Gov. Gregoire's executive order on climate change and by state law. Gov. Gregoire and the Legislature took a major step by setting long-term reduction goals; the next step is to make these goals real by weaving them into the state's legal structure. Responsible, economy-wide limits on global-warming pollution will give legal force to the state's pollution-reduction goals and stimulate investments in the emerging clean-energy economy.

"Gov. Gregoire has committed to building the clean-energy economy in Washington," said Becky Kelley of the Washington Environmental Council, one of the groups deeply involved in the pollution-cutting effort. "Now, through the WCI, she's helping to bring the entire Western region to the forefront in finding solutions to climate change."

KC Golden, policy director of Climate Solutions, another participating state organization and himself a member of the governor's Climate Advisory Team, urged leaders of each Western state and province to "adopt strong emissions-reduction policies that achieve or exceed WCI's reasonable and attainable goals while building a robust clean-energy economy. We urge Gov. Gregoire and the Legislature to enact responsible, economy-wide limits on global warming pollution to meet Washington's goals, reduce our fossil fuel dependence, and position us for success in the burgeoning clean energy market."

David Allen, executive vice president of the region's top construction/engineering firm, McKinstry Co., has seen the economic benefits of global-warming solutions up-close and personal. Leading the way in improving energy efficiency of commercial and industrial facilities has allowed McKinstry to "help avoid thousands of tons of carbon emissions each year while

growing our workforce at a blistering pace.” Allen said a strong state climate plan “will continue the energy savings and economic growth we’ve seen and allow many more to share the benefits of climate solutions.”

Washington is not alone in feeling the impacts of global warming. Temperatures in the Western States have increased more than 1 degree Fahrenheit in the past 50 years; if we do not act, increases of up to 10 degrees are predicted by the end of this century. This will have serious consequences for the economy and other elements of life in Washington state and the West, from agriculture and ranching to skiing, tourism and public health.

“We already have the leadership, technology and creativity we need to slow, stop and eventually reverse global warming,” said NW Energy Coalition policy director Nancy Hirsh, a participant in the state climate-change task forces. “Now, in conjunction with the Western premiers and governors, we must make the state and WCI goals real by establishing responsible limits for global warming pollution that apply to all sectors of the economy.”

Puget Sound Clean Air Agency executive director Dennis McLerran noted “the governors are showing continuing leadership by establishing the goals announced today. Taking the steps necessary to accomplish the goals will put us on track to begin reducing our impacts on the Earth’s climate. But we cannot forget that science tells us that by 2050 the U.S. will have to see reductions on the scale of 70-80% below 1990 levels to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.”

“There is a growing consensus among religious leaders that climate change is the most important moral issue of this generation,” said LeeAnne Beres, executive director of Earth Ministry, an ecumenical organization that engages people of faith in environmental stewardship. “If we allow human-caused environmental disasters like climate change to destroy ecosystems and cause our human brothers and sisters to lose their homes or means to feed themselves, we have truly failed to love our neighbors as ourselves.”

“Western states headed by Republican and Democratic governors are showing strong climate leadership by setting ambitious but reasonable standards that will grow the market for cleaner energy technologies and reduce our country’s dangerous dependence on oil,” said Republicans for Environmental Protection policy director Jim DiPeso. “The Western states are setting a great bipartisan example that we hope the federal government will follow sooner rather than later.”

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* The **Western Climate Initiative** is currently comprised of the states of Arizona, California, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and the provinces of British Columbia and Manitoba.
Link: <http://www.westernclimateinitiative.org/>

Other useful links:

Climate Solutions: www.climatesolutions.org

Washington Environmental Council: www.wecprotects.org

NW Energy Coalition: www.nwenergy.org

McKinstry Co.: <http://www.mckinstry.com/>

Puget Sound Clean Air Agency: <http://www.pscleanair.org/>

Earth Ministry: <http://www.earthministry.org/>

Republicans for Environmental Protection: <http://www.repamerica.org/>