

## 2011 State Policy Agenda March 28, 2011

The Colorado Climate Network recognizes that actions that at the state level are critical to the success of strategies that local governments implement to reduce their contribution and vulnerability to climate disruption. The Network acknowledges that there are also important roles that the federal government and voluntary actions by citizens and businesses play in meeting those goals. This agenda, though, is focused on those actions that appropriately reside within the purview of state government. The Network believes that a wide range of approaches will enable state and local governments to attain their climate action goals and at the same time pursue the creation of green jobs and strengthened economies.

The Network supports actions by the General Assembly and by state agencies to address the following policies in a manner that respects the roles of local governments to implement programs and enact ordinances that best meets the needs of their citizens. These policies are not intended to represent specific Network positions on pending state legislation or rule-making procedures; any specific Network positions will be expressed in separate documents.

**Take a full range of actions that will enable the state to achieve its goals for reduction of emissions of heat-trapping pollutants.** The state Climate Action Plan adopted in 2007 set targets to reduce emissions 20% below 2005 levels by 2020 and 80% below 2005 levels by 2050. Significant steps have been taken through laws, regulations, and funding assistance during recent years, but it will be necessary to take major additional actions covering multiple sectors and employ a variety of strategies to achieve the state's goals. The Network supports taking those further actions and doing so soon enough to enable the state to meet its goals, beginning with the 2020 goal. The Network also supports the update by 2012 of the state's emissions inventory and forecast, as provided for in the state Climate Action Plan, to assess the effectiveness of what has been done so far and to help determine what else needs to be done.

**Sustain state technical assistance and funding capabilities to support local climate action programs.** The Governor's Energy Office, the Department of Local Affairs, the Department of Public Health and Environment, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Agriculture have in the past delivered key sources of the expertise and which local governments have used to achieve significant progress toward meeting state and local climate-protection goals. Severe cuts have been made to state agency budgets and additional cuts are under consideration to meet the challenges of balancing the state budget brought on by the economic downturn. The Network supports policies that enable these agencies to offer a robust set of technical and financial resources that local programs can access.

**Achieve cost savings and emissions reductions by investing in energy efficiency.** Energy efficiency improvements offer the quickest, most cost-effective, and most economically productive pathway to reductions of emissions of heat-trapping pollutants. Residential and commercial consumers recognize they can substantially reduce their energy costs through such investments but are often held back by the inability to access the upfront capital needed to install the improvements. The Network supports policies that lead to greater offerings by utilities of demand side management programs, that increase consumer access to capital for residential and commercial improvements, and that facilitate adoption of green building and energy conservation codes by local governments.

**Make access to clean energy sources a priority strategy in promoting the vitality of state and local economies.** Investments in clean energy have made this sector of the economy one of the few that has performed well during the recent recession. Communities statewide where development of wind, solar, and biomass is centered are seeing real improvement in a diversified economic base. Electric utilities' customers continue to show strong interest in getting their power from renewable sources. Upgrades to the electricity transmission system are a critically necessary component to integrating these sources with the existing power distribution infrastructure. The Network supports policies that lead to increased utility investments in clean energy sources and that facilitate the construction of an integrated transmission infrastructure in a manner that respects the role of local governments in facility siting and permitting decisions.

**Reduce emissions by adopting statewide waste reduction and diversion strategies.** Landfills and the waste collection infrastructure that serve them are a significant source of heat-trapping gases statewide. Yet there are currently no statewide waste diversion goals, and inexpensive landfill tipping fees and lack of material-specific prohibitions discourage environmentally responsible practices like recycling and composting. The Network supports policies that will decrease the volume of waste headed to landfills and that provide consumers with increased access to waste reduction services.

**Support the development of an efficient and integrated statewide transportation system.** Local governments share with state and federal agencies the responsibility to provide the essential public service of a well-functioning network of roadways, mass transit, and safe corridors for pedestrians and bicyclists. The transportation sector makes up about one quarter of the state's emissions of heat-trapping gases. Yet since vehicle miles traveled tends to track increases in population growth, reduction of emissions from the transportation sector is a challenging goal. Strategies that reduce the rate of growth in vehicle miles traveled and that improve emission control technologies have the added benefits of relieving roadway congestion and of reducing pollutants that threaten public health. The infrastructure that supports emerging technologies such as electric and hybrid vehicles needs to be installed at the local level but requires a statewide framework to be effective. Investments in public transit are also essential to meeting those goals, but are capital intensive. While local governments play a leadership role in finding private sector and public sector sources to support construction and operation of those systems, as a practical matter most cannot be completed without state and federal financing support. The Network supports state policies that effectively engage public and private sector stakeholders in planning, building, and maintaining an integrated multi-modal transportation system.

The state should support local governments in alternative transportation planning in recognition of the essential contributions that communities make to achieving mobility efficiencies statewide.

**Prepare for the changes that are coming through state-level climate preparedness planning and action.** Even if Colorado is successful in reducing its emissions, it will still face changes in its climate and a multitude of impacts on water supplies, other natural resources, public health, and the economy. Heat-trapping gases have long atmospheric life-times, and Colorado will face additional warming and related changes from gases already in the atmosphere, as well as those that will be emitted in the future. The state should recognize that an important component of climate preparedness planning is the assessment of vulnerabilities to the potential effects of a disrupted climate. A comprehensive statewide vulnerability assessment should be performed, but also the state should work with communities to assess their own specific local vulnerabilities. State agencies with jurisdiction over the following types of impacts should use the statewide assessment as a basis to develop preparedness plans for: effects on water quantity and water quality; increases in heat-related deaths and illnesses; increases in air pollution and its effects on mortality and health; potential increases in diseases; increases in the length of wildfire seasons and of the frequency and severity of wildfires; increases in severe weather; effects on agriculture stemming from changes in water supplies and from impacts of increased temperatures on livestock and crops; a reduction of skiing and other snow-dependent outdoor recreation and tourism; changes in the timing and length of warm seasons, increases in warm-season outdoor recreation, especially in the mountains, and increased warm-season congestion on transportation corridors to and in Colorado's mountains; and changes in ecosystems, such as forest-altering beetle infestations and habitat shifts for fish and wildlife. Some of these impacts are already in evidence, and the Network supports policies that enable the state to prepare for and respond to them.