



## **Local Emissions Reductions Retooling for the Future**

### **Fourth Annual Conference of the Colorado Climate Network**

Thursday, December 12, 2013, 8:45 a.m.–3:30 p.m.  
Denver Museum of Nature and Science, 2001 Colorado Blvd., Denver, CO

### **Summary of Proceedings**

#### **Synopsis:**

Colorado communities can point with pride to the progress they have made in reducing heat-trapping pollutants. Yet recent emissions inventories updates are telling us that the state and most local governments are not yet on emission reduction trajectories that will meet short and long term goals. The [Colorado Climate Network's](#) fourth annual conference focused on new and emerging strategies that enable local governments to rethink and reframe emissions reduction approaches. Conference sessions included:

- What state and local emissions inventory updates are telling us.
- Breakout workshops on local programs that are breaking new ground in emissions reductions.
- Choosing midcourse corrections through effective program evaluation.
- Examining new and emerging approaches – net-zero communities, carbon neutrality, and more.
- Next steps forward for local government reductions of heat-trapping pollutants.

**See complete agenda, conference proceedings, and presentations [here](#).**

#### **Conference Sponsors:**

The Colorado Climate Network thanks those without whose support the conference would not have been possible:

- The Denver Museum of Nature and Science donated the use of its facilities and refreshments for the breaks.
- Sponsors: Colorado Municipal League, Denver Department of Environmental Health, and Stratus Consulting.
- Conference contributor: Brendle Group.

#### **Summary of Conference Sessions:**

##### **Conference Introduction**

- Stephen Saunders, president of the Rocky Mountain Climate Organization, welcomed attendees.
- Scott Sampson, vice president of research & collections, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, welcomed attendees and delivered remarks on the importance of

communicating the risks of climate disruption in ways that engage the public and decision-makers and on how the Museum, in its role as a regional cultural institution, structures its programs and public outreach to highlight the perils of climate change and the need to act to reduce their impacts. He also stressed how important it is to get people out into the natural world so that there is a deeper understanding of how important it is to protect its values.

### **Plenary Session #1: State and local government actions setting the backdrop for future emissions reductions**

- **The Colorado Air Quality Control Division's new proposals for control of ozone precursors and – for the first time – methane from oil and gas facilities.**

Presenter: Garry Kaufman, deputy director, Air Pollution Control Division (APCD), Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). [Powerpoint presentation](#)

Garry described the APCD's proposal for changes to the Air Quality Control Commission's (AQCC) rules on control of ozone precursors and hydrocarbons (including methane) from oil and gas facilities. He covered the content of the proposed rules, their estimated impacts in reducing emissions, the rule-making process, how local governments can best participate in the process, and what things would be most useful for the AQCC to know about local government perspectives.

- **The state's updated inventory of heat-trapping gases and projections to 2030.**

Presenter: Garry Kaufman. [Powerpoint presentation](#)

Garry described the process for updating the state's inventory and projections from the previous inventory performed in 2007, the differences in approaches, the modeling process, the draft results, and the next steps for finalizing the inventory. He invited those present to comment on the draft with suggestions on how to improve it, and agreed that APCD staff would convene a special meeting for local governments to discuss and ask questions about the inventory content and methodology prior to the January 31, 2014 deadline for comments on the draft.

- **Progress towards meeting emissions reduction goals: comparing local inventories of emissions reduction results with state level results.**

Presenter: Tom Easley, director of programs, Rocky Mountain Climate Organization. [Powerpoint presentation](#)

Tom described the differences and similarities between the EPA State Inventory Tool used by the state and representative local government inventories, particularly the ICLEI protocol that is being widely adopted by local governments. He pointed out some of the trends in inventory sectors at the state level and at the local level, and generally where there are differences and similarities. He compared the draft results of the state inventory to the state's emissions reductions targets, noting that the 2020 projections leave the state about 24% short of the 2020 goal of a 20% reduction compared to 2005 levels. He also highlighted some of the reductions

trends that local governments are accomplishing, particularly Aspen, Fort Collins, and Denver.

### **Breakout Sessions: Programs that are breaking new ground**

- **Connecting regional and local climate work with state policy for maximum benefit.**

Presenters: Alice Laird, executive director, Clean Energy Economy for the Region (CLEER) [Powerpoint presentation](#)

Mona Newton, executive director, Community Office for Resource Efficiency.  
(*Powerpoint presentation was not used.*)

Alice described the successes that CLEER has accomplished in Garfield County through the establishment of a Clean Energy Authority, including economic benefits of clean energy improvements, reductions in emissions, and the state and federal funding sources it took to make the effort effective. She described energy efficiency improvements accomplished by states nationwide, Colorado's #16 ranking for improvements, and a model Green Communities program in Massachusetts. She finished with a conceptual description of a Colorado Energy Efficient Communities for Economic Development Act and led a discussion of what it would take to get such a law passed and potential funding sources.

Mona called attention to the need for local governments to become more engaged with the proceedings of the state Public Utilities Commission and generally described how the PUC operates and its jurisdiction over clean energy rules and regulations. The interactive discussion included a look at the current PUC commissioners, opportunities to interact with them and the rule-making process, and what sorts of commitments and expertise it takes to effectively participate in the PUC proceedings. Participants also discussed ways to partner with local governments and organizations who are regular participants in PUC proceedings.

- **The road to zero waste.**

Presenter: Susie Gordon, senior environmental planner, City of Fort Collins.  
[Powerpoint presentation](#)

Susie described the successes Fort Collins has had in diverting waste from landfills, achieving a 2012 53% diversion rate (perhaps the highest in Colorado) and 43% reduction in emissions. Now City Council is considering a staff proposal to get to a zero waste rate by 2030, with interim goals. An extensive community engagement strategy has contributed to a plan that includes plastic bag fees, other funding sources, bans of certain landfill materials, composting requirements and centers, and many other elements. The plan considers the positive economic benefit of waste reduction investments compared to future new investments in additional landfill capacity. Susie's program asks the compelling question: "If you're not for Zero Waste, how much waste are you for?"

- **Pairing carrots and sticks to achieve energy efficiency.**

Presenter: Elizabeth Vasatka, business sustainability coordinator, City of Boulder.  
[Powerpoint presentation](#)

Elizabeth described the SmartRegs program that stems from the city's Rental Housing Energy Efficiency Ordinance, which addresses a housing sector that has traditionally been a challenge for incentivizing investments in energy efficiency – particularly in Boulder where 50% of housing is in rental units. The city is phasing in implementation of the requirements for landlords, starting with an extensive incentives program, including discounted energy audits; quick installs of CFLs, low flow showerheads, faucet aerators, pipe insulation, and programmable thermostats; and help with access to rebates. Returns on investments have already been impressive.

## **Plenary Session #2: Program evaluations and midcourse corrections**

- Responding to barriers that constrain program goals.

Leader: Tom Herrod, climate and policy analyst, Denver Department of Environmental Health. [Powerpoint presentation](#)

Tom traced the evolution of Denver's climate-related programs back to 1992. While some concepts have evolved around changing the fuel source and including carbon reduction strategies in broader sustainability efforts like recycling rate, composting, and urban farming, the city is still working on achieving the energy efficiency potential in commercial buildings and homes, cleaner transportation and mode-sharing improvements. While early adopters and eventually others responded, still about half of the population is not participating. Conditions may have changed, such as new awareness brought on by wildfires and extreme storms/flooding, opening the door for reaching laggards. New policies can be pursued accordingly.

- How program audits can lead to improved effectiveness.

Leader: Jonathan Koehn, regional sustainability coordinator, City of Boulder. [Powerpoint presentation](#)

Jonathan reviewed the city's leading edge investments in climate action, such as the nation's first municipal carbon tax to finance programs. He explained that initial efforts such as home and commercial building audits did not get adequate response from building owners. Adapting by way of the Energy Smart and SmartRegs programs, which proactively connect building owners with incentives and assistance, made a big difference. The city's primary lesson: Be willing to modify the approach. There may be a need to pair voluntary incentives with new government requirements. There may be opportunities to link programs through more integrated planning among city departments. One very visible example for Boulder is its energy municipalization exploration project, which essentially is a response to a changing energy economy linked to a bottom line goal of reducing emissions.

## **Plenary Session #3: New ways of doing business**

- The road to sustainability in Fort Collins.

Presenter: Bruce Hendee, chief sustainability officer, City of Fort Collins. [Powerpoint presentation](#)

Bruce reviewed the city's progress towards meeting its existing emissions reduction goals (20% by 2020 and 80% by 2050), pointing out that emissions have declined 9% between 2005 and 2012. The city is exploring net-zero strategies in two main

arenas. The Fort ZED district in central Fort Collins is meant to be a replicable model, consisting of multiple strategies and a strong partnership to reduce emissions. The city is also an active participant in the international Net Zero Cities organization, hosting its 2012 conference in Fort Collins.

- Emerging energy efficiency opportunities in the built environment.

Presenter: Alison Schwabe, sustainability program manager, McKinstry-Rocky Mountain Region. [Powerpoint presentation](#)

Alison pointed out that we can't get to our carbon reduction goals without going through the built environment, since it consumes 70% of the nation's electricity and produces 40% of emissions. Also, from generation of a megawatt to delivery of kilowatts, 50% of energy is wasted somewhere along the line or at the point of consumption. She cited a recent American Council on Energy Efficient Economy report ranking Colorado 16<sup>th</sup> among states and Denver 11<sup>th</sup> among large U.S. cities in energy efficiency policies and programs. She cited ACEEE categories for energy efficiency opportunities, and recommended that local governments consider four categories of performance-based investment opportunities to modernize built environment and infrastructure: energy performance labeling, evolved procurement methods, utility pay-for-performance incentives, and outcome-based energy codes.

- Looking beyond 2020 GHG goals: what can we expect and what do we need to accomplish?

Presenter: Gregg Thomas, manager of air, water, and climate section, Department of Environmental Health, City and County of Denver. [Powerpoint presentation](#)

- Gregg described how Denver is decreasing emissions, largely from the electricity sector due to efficiency improvements and fuel-switching to natural gas. But out past 2020, projected growth in population and vehicle miles traveled poses both a threat to wipe out emissions reduction gains, as well as opportunities to begin planning for that future now. He pointed out that with an effective commercial buildings energy reduction strategy, combined with the new federal tailpipe and CAFE standards of the last few years, there can be significant progress towards meeting the commonly-used 80% emissions reductions by 2050 target of (compared either to 2005 or 1990). Yet there is a good chance that will not be enough. It is important to consider how we can grow, live, and work smarter; and the roles that technology versus behavior change and/or social norms will need to play.

#### **Plenary Session #4: Moving forward**

Group discussion on local government contributions to state actions; and the state role in filling gaps among programs.

Leaders: Lucinda Smith, director of environmental services, City of Fort Collins; Mark Ruzzin, Boulder County Commissioners' Office; and Will Toor, transportation program director, Southwest Energy Efficiency Project, and former county commissioner and mayor.

Collaboration models:

- Could be at three main levels: program, policy-making, and regulatory.
- Can be structured as:

Informal local government coalitions – has been found to be effective for regulatory and rulemaking proceedings, and for PUC dockets.

Formal intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) and memorandums of understanding (MOUs). For example, Broward County, Florida, put in place a compact that included data sharing, preparedness planning, and collaboration on funding of projects and programs; the urgency presented by sea level rise is a driver.

Examples of collaboration in Colorado:

- Denver/Boulder/Boulder County, regarding PUC issues.
- Boulder County Consortium of Cities.
- ICLEI has been a presence for many years.
- Net Zero Cities – international group in which Fort Collins, Boulder, and Longmont have participated, including a 2013 conference in Fort Collins.
- Institute for Sustainable Cities (national group with Colorado participants).

Identified needs the Network could address:

- Data development and sharing.
- Source to share lessons learned and for best management practices.
- Promotion of regional engagement and participation.

Opportunities to come together:

- The upcoming federal Environmental Protection Agency proposal to establish carbon pollution standards for existing electric power plants (under Section 111(d) of the Clean Air Act), followed by the state Air Quality Control Commission's process to set and implement performance standards to comply.\* Discussion: It is far easier to affect state policy through agencies such as the AQCC, than it is through the PUC.
- The state Air Quality Control Commission's current rulemaking on control of methane escape from oil and gas operations.\* Discussion: A common Network position may be useful; there is also opportunity to piggyback on, or get guidance from, local governments who have requested party status to the proceedings and who are already cooperating with each other (Denver, Fort Collins, La Plata County, Boulder, possibly others).
- Additional efforts the Air Quality Control Commission could take to control emissions (for example, from agricultural or coal mining operations).\*
- Rules related to the control of emissions under consideration by the state's Public Utilities Commission.\* Discussion: Consider also a possible PUC 101 initiative to inform local government program staff about the basics of PUC proceedings.
- Proposals to establish a state funding source to finance local government clean energy programs.\* Discussion: There may be an emerging effort to establish such a source; this was featured during the Breakout Session on connecting regional and local climate work with state policy.
- The water/energy nexus.
- Recycling and reuse: State legislation on paint recycling is under consideration for 2014. Other potential future legislation could be on control of waste stream waste (e.g., cardboard bans in landfills). Another need is increased data provision by the state.

Session wrap-up: The Network Steering Committee will consider the points made during the discussion to identify and prioritize items upon which the Network can focus its efforts during the next year and beyond. Some of these opportunities will be included as part of the post-conference survey that RMCO will conduct.

Note: The items marked by an asterisk (\*) from the above "Opportunities to come together list" were included in the post-conference survey. Respondents were asked: "How valuable to do you think it would be for the Network to help local governments learn about the content of, and opportunities to affect, the following?" and asked to rate the five topics as little value, somewhat valuable, and very valuable.