

Oregon Interfaith Energy and Climate Charter

Note: Organizations, denominations, committees and individual religious leaders are welcome to endorse the principles and vision (sections A-D) alone or the principles and vision and the recommendations (section E).

A. Introduction: Oregon's Legacy and Opportunity

A Treasure at Risk

Oregon is a vibrant, richly endowed corner of Creation that needs energy and climate policies worthy of its riches. Our diverse natural endowment of forests, floodplains, coastline, rivers and deserts is precious by all measures, from the spiritual to the economic. Yet, it is at risk. Oregon's current use of energy is unsustainable; we are squandering our natural endowment for the short-term profligate use of energy. Oregon's climate is already changing due to global warming gases caused in part by burning fossil fuels for energy and transportation. The dangers that climate change brings to Oregon are serious and many, but may be controllable within a narrow window of opportunity. In Oregon, a central threat posed by global warming is reduced snowpack and earlier snowmelt from the Cascades that will reduce water available for irrigated agriculture, fish, recreation, and municipal water supplies, and sharply curtail the ski season. Oregon is one of the most biologically diverse states in the nation. Climate change threatens this natural heritage.

A Call for Change

As religious leaders, we call for changes in our energy system, and for a new climate policy, as our state enters into a new policy framework that will shape life in Oregon for decades to come. Oregonians have been national leaders in land-use planning, recycling and livability. Agriculture and livability fuel much of our economy. These depend on our natural systems, which depend in turn on a stable climate. Native Americans have flourished here for thousands of years, living sustainable lives supported by these same systems. The health of the climate is a treasure we must steward now and for generations to come. Such stewardship calls for bold, visionary and sufficient policies.

Choosing a Just and Sustainable Energy Path in a Time of Increased Energy Demand

Our current use and production of energy has adverse environmental and social impacts, in addition to global warming. Oregon's renewable energy potential is great, yet in 2002, 50 percent of Oregon's electricity generation mix came from fossil fuels. However, no energy resource is without its impacts. The Northwest's economy has benefited greatly from hydroelectric power generated by the large dams in the Columbia River. Although this hydropower emits next to no global warming gases, the dams threaten the long-term viability of salmon runs as well as the integrity of our nation's treaties with the Columbia River Native American tribes whose cultures are vitally intertwined with the salmon. It is not acceptable to place additional pressure on the Columbia River hydroelectric system to compensate for decreased dependence on fossil fuels.

To meet growing energy needs, a number of electrical producing natural gas plants have been approved or are in the planning stages in different parts of the state. The pollution that they emit locally is a threat to health. These plants may also use large quantities of water, exacerbating water quality and quantity problems. Carbon dioxide emissions from electricity generated by natural gas are less than coal. However, over-reliance in meeting increased energy demand in this way delays us on getting on the path to a sustainable energy system. Clean, renewable energy, especially wind energy, should be emphasized instead to meet new energy demand. Renewable energy development can especially benefit rural communities affected by low agricultural prices.

Nationally there is a strong push for development of nuclear energy to supply growing energy demand without adding carbon dioxide emissions. Oregon's one nuclear plant, Trojan in Rainier, Oregon, was closed in 1993, in part from pressure from citizens. Much of Northern Oregon is also downstream for the Hanford nuclear site whose radioactive and toxic pollution is migrating to the Columbia River systems. Even with safety improvements, nuclear energy poses unacceptable risks to human health and the environment through the entire nuclear fuel cycle and does not have a place in Oregon's, or our nation's energy future. Furthermore, nuclear

energy uses large amounts of mostly fossil fuel energy when mining, uranium enrichment, building and decommissioning and storing of radioactive waste.

The shining achievements of good land-use and high livability that are Oregon's pride were born of long-term thinking, innovative leadership and concern for the common good. Oregon can display similar leadership around issues of energy and climate change.

B. State of the State's Energy and Climate Policy

Oregon's Leadership Legacy

Nationally Oregon has long been viewed as a leader in sustainable energy and environmental policy. Many of our state's laws, such as the landmark Carbon Dioxide Standard for new power plants, have demonstrated the foresight of Oregon's leaders. The Oregon Department of Energy has developed solid energy plans. Governor Kulongoski has announced initiatives for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the Oregon Department of Energy released the Oregon Renewable Energy Action Plan in April 2005. This plan calls for Oregon to meet 25 percent of its electricity load by renewable sources by 2025. Oregon's Utility Restructuring Law (SB 1149) passed in 2002 increased resources for energy efficiency and renewable energy. Oregon's two largest utilities, PGE and PacifiCorp have among the highest residential participation rates in the nation for their voluntary green power programs. The number of utility customers purchasing "green power" in the Northwest has increased by 40% from 2003 to 2004, according to the Renewable Northwest Project (RNP).

Benchmarks

Our image and our vision, however, are belied by our failing to meet the benchmarks we set for ourselves. In 1989 the Oregon Legislature instructed state government to develop a strategy to reduce global warming gas emissions to a rate 20% below 1988 levels by 2005. The Oregon Progress Board set a Benchmark to hold emission levels to the 1990 level. But, under current policies, Oregon will fail to meet these goals by somewhere between 25% to 50%.

Oregon has the Ingredients for Leadership in Energy and Climate

Oregon energy and climate policies have failed to adequately address the global warming threat. In truth, Oregon levels of global warming gases are moving in the wrong direction. However, our state's pioneer heritage, entrepreneurial character and rich sense of place would suggest that we can substantially change our direction quickly.

C. Principles for a New Energy and Climate Policy

1. Reverence for Life. The interfaith community is united in viewing all peoples and life-forms as Divinely created, and worthy of respect. Many spiritual traditions hold plants, animals and life-systems to be sacred. Many people of faith see the harm inflicted by pollution and global warming to be tearing at the very fabric of Creation.

2. Stewardship. We must care for and protect the earth and its life-forms by using resources in a sustainable manner. To exploit and abuse the earth's resources is morally unacceptable. We are called to pass the bounty of the earth down from generation to generation.

3. Social and Environmental Justice. All people have inherent value and dignity, regardless of their rank or wealth, nationality, color or belief system. Each person deserves access to resources of the earth needed for a healthy, productive life that does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Such conditions are only possible with energy that is clean, safe and affordable, and accessible to all. Benefits of improved energy policies must accrue to the poor and not only to those who already have enough. The global warming and high levels of toxicity born of our current energy policies disproportionately harm the poor and vulnerable. Adverse environmental impacts should be shared equitably between rich and poor.

D. Objectives for Energy and Climate Policies

1. Increase efficiency and energy conservation as the highest priority in policy. The cheapest and most environmentally friendly energy is the energy we don't need to generate. Bear in mind that the \$2.4 billion investment Oregon made in efficiency between 1990 and 2002 has been repaid in energy savings every 18 months.

2. Strategic planning. Develop and implement a long-range, comprehensive, and coherent strategic plan encompassing energy production, energy transmission, energy use, transportation, land use, research, technological innovation, and economic viability.

3. Transition to sustainable energy, greatly reducing or phasing out coal as an energy source and phasing in renewable energy and co-generation. The Pacific Northwest has enough wind, solar and geothermal resources to provide at least 40% of its energy. Also, transition from dependence on the individual automobile to greater reliance on public transportation and to communities designed to reduce the need for automobiles.

4. Use full-cost accounting in measuring energy performance. Devise and implement new ways of measuring energy performance that count the economic value of services contributed by natural systems (i.e. watershed providing clean water supply and forests providing the carbon sequestration that slows global warming). Full-cost accounting should also measure the economic losses incurred by energy production and use (increased health care costs from fossil fuel pollution).

5. Leadership. Make Oregon a leader in sustainable energy and energy efficiency, so that our expertise in this field becomes a highly valued export to other states and nations.

I (we) endorse the principles and objectives of the Oregon Interfaith Energy and Climate Charter

Signed:

_____ or
Name and title, denomination, congregation or organization

Name of committee of congregation or denomination, organization or religious body

E. Recommended Goals to Move Oregon to a Sustainable Energy System for 2005

In early 2004, Governor Kulongoski established the Governor's Advisory Group on Global Warming to draft a Global Warming Strategy. By unanimous vote on December 17, 2004 they approved a strategy that offers recommendations to the Governor, to state agencies. The following are actions recommend to the Governor's Advisory Group on Global Warming in a letter signed by over 40 people submitted to the committee. Most of these recommended goals affirm what was already included in the report, some with modifications.

1. Adopt and work toward goals to reduce Oregon's global warming gas emissions commensurate with, or exceeding, goals set by New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers: a) to 1990 levels by 2010 as a near term goal; b) to 10 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 and an intermediate goal; and c) to a long-term goal of 75 to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. Although the first step of reducing Oregon's greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2010 will be a challenge, we believe that Oregonians possess the will, creativity, and ethical concern to meet this challenge. Global warming is a matter of great moral urgency. Knowing the magnitude of the change needed, we must ask for what Oregon needs to do to start moving in the right direction as soon as possible.

2. Through rulemaking or legislation adopt California's Low Emissions Vehicle Standards (LEV II) and California Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Pavley) Standards.

3. Seize every opportunity to increase energy efficiency to save money and reduce carbon dioxide emission including adoption of California appliance efficiency standards.

4. Adopt a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) that requires at least 20% of every Oregon utility's supply to come from renewable resources by 2020. This would reverse Oregon's current energy import trends and generate an estimated 6,700 more jobs, 1.3 times more jobs than new natural gas and coal power plants would create. Also, Oregon consumers would save \$620 million in costs.
5. The state should continue improving the fuel efficiency of its fleet such as purchasing a hybrid model for at least 50% of replacement vehicles as suggested in the Oregon Interfaith Global Warming Campaign's report, *Driven by Values: Recommendations for Improving the Fuel Economy of the State of Oregon's Vehicle Fleet*, presented to Governor Kulongoski in September 2003.
6. Build upon, improve, and enlarge Oregon's strong incentive base for energy and resource conservation. Protect forests (especially old-growth), wetlands, agricultural lands and other undeveloped lands for both their intangible/spiritual value and their tangible services of biological sequestration.
7. Maintain Oregon's strong land-use policies to direct continued control of urban sprawl and promotion of high-density urban areas that minimize automobile use. Studies of the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) impacts of integrated packages of land use and transportation have found regional and statewide VMT reductions ranging from 2-10% below business-as-usual projections, resulting in roughly equivalent CO2 reductions (1 VMT ~ 1 lb CO2).
8. Improve efficiency of freight movement. As one example, we suggest support for policies to enhance local food production, expand markets for locally grown and processed food and reduce food miles traveled.

Additional Goals

Through research and conversations with other groups and organizations, we identified other goals that are key to Oregon's progress on energy and climate.

1. Reduce transportation emissions through consumer education.
2. Increase biofuels use and production.
3. Increase the number of cities and towns throughout the state that develop and adopt greenhouse gas emissions reductions plans.
4. Within 15 years, greatly reduce or eliminate coal from Oregon's overall energy mix with a just transition for the workers and communities where coal plants are located.

This document is being circulated for endorsement and study by the Oregon Interfaith Global Warming Campaign Steering Committee. For more information, please call 503-221-1054 ext. 278.

I (we) endorse the 2005 goals of the Oregon Interfaith Energy and Climate Charter

Signed:

_____ or
Name and title, denomination, congregation or organization

Name of committee of congregation or denomination, organization or religious body

Please fax to 503-223-7007 Attn: OIGWC, mail to OIGWC/EMO, 0245 SW Bancroft Suite B, Portland, 97239 or e-mail to inec@emoregon.org by November 28, 2005. If you get this after November 28 or if you have a committee that meets later in the year. Call 503-221-1054 ext. 278 to see if deadline is extended.