Connecticut Climate Change

Connecticut continues to show great leadership in addressing climate change through forward-thinking public policies, ground-breaking regional initiatives, and innovative actions by towns, businesses, schools and campuses, community organizations, and individuals. The State's key climate change programs are highlighted below. For more information and detail, visit www.ctclimatechange.com.

Governor's Steering Committee on Climate Change (GSC)

The GSC, established in 2002, directs Connecticut's climate change initiative, including development and implementation of Climate Change Action Plan. It includes agency heads from Departments of Environmental Protection, Transportation, Public Utility Control, and Administrative Services, the Office of Policy and Management, and the CT Clean Energy Fund. The GSC is supported by a staff-level interagency Climate Change Coordinating Committee that meets monthly.

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets

Connecticut is one of few states with mandatory greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets. The following targets were established through the 2008 Global Warming Solutions Act:

- 10% below 1990 levels by 2020
- 80% below 2001 levels by 2050

The Act also requires comprehensive planning to inventory statewide GHG emissions, develop additional GHG mitigation policies, perform policy analysis, and issue rule development timelines.

Greenhouse Gas Registry

Connecticut helped spearhead and continues to participate in development of The Climate Registry, a multi-state multi-sector greenhouse gas reporting initiative. Connecticut looks forward to continued and expanding partnership opportunities and the finalization of a robust national GHG reporting program.

CT Climate Change Action Plan

Connecticut was one of the first states in the nation to adopt a climate change action plan. The 2005 Plan contains 55 actions that address the following emissions categories: transportation and land use, electricity generation, residential/commercial/ industrial energy use, agriculture/forestry/waste, and education. Implementation is ongoing and coordinated with requirements of the 2008 Global Warming Solutions Act.

Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)

Connecticut played a leadership role in developing the first-in-the-nation cap and trade program to reduce GHG emissions. RGGI will stabilize carbon dioxide emissions from power plants in the northeast through 2014 and achieve a 10% reduction by 2018. RGGI state leadership and the successful auction of CO2 allowances demonstrate that significant investments in energy efficiency further reduce emissions, contain program costs, and promote a clean energy economy.

Cost-Effective Energy Efficiency as Resource of First Choice

The electric distribution companies in CT have developed an integrated resource and procurement plan that meets needs through all available cost-effective energy efficiency and demand-reduction resources before calling on traditional supply.

CT Energy Efficiency Fund (CEEF)

The CEEF, funded by a surcharge on electricity bills, supports the efficient use of energy. Annual funding for 2008 was $108 million. The lifetime savings of the CEEF programs implemented in 2008 yield nearly four dollars in electric systems benefits for each dollar invested. Major initiatives of the fund include lighting, air conditioning, and HVAC, for commercial, industrial, residential and low income customers as well as improved building codes. 2008 investments in CEEF programs will result in lifetime savings of 4.2 billion kWh. This is equivalent to 516 thousand homes powered by electricity for one year, $774 million in electric energy costs, and 2.4 million tons of carbon dioxide avoided.

Renewable Portfolio Standard

Connecticut law requires that an increasing percentage of electricity generation come from clean renewable sources (e.g., wind, solar, landfill gas, small-scale hydro). There are 3 classes of renewable energy defined by statute, including energy efficiency and combined heat and power. The RPS requires a total of 12% renewable energy in 2009, increasing to 27% in 2020.

CT Clean Energy Fund

The CT Clean Energy Fund, funded by a surcharge on electricity bills, develops, invests in, and promotes clean energy sources for the benefit of Connecticut ratepayers. To date, over 1,150 clean energy systems have been installed or are underway, including fuel cell, solar photo voltaic, biomass, wind, landfill gas, and advanced hydro systems. These systems provide the energy equivalent of electricity for over 10,800 homes, avoiding approximately 293,600 tons of carbon dioxide over their useful lives. In addition, 8 large-scale projects totaling 124 megawatts of clean energy capacity are underway.

CT Clean Energy Options

Since 2005, the CT Clean Energy Options program allows most electricity customers in CT to support clean energy. Customers who enroll in the program continue to receive electric delivery service from their utility and pay a small clean energy surcharge for Renewable Energy Credits. To date over 20,880 customers have enrolled in the program.

Clean Car Standards and Incentives

California Low Emission Vehicle II standards became effective in CT with 2008 model year vehicles. Connecticut has also adopted California standards for greenhouse gas vehicle emissions. In addition, CT has a greenhouse gas labeling program in effect for new vehicles sold or leased in CT.

Public Transit

Increased funding for rail cars, locomotives, and buses has resulted in improved fuel efficiency and expanded service. Rail ridership increased between 4.2% and 17.5% in 2008, with new weekend service offered on one line. The design and manufacturing of new M8 rail cars for Connecticut utilizes the latest advances in technology, resulting in improved energy efficiencies. Savings will be gained from a regenerative braking system, LED lighting, and a state-of-the-art Central Diagnostic System that optimizes performance and increases equipment reliability. The full deployment of the M8 rail car on both the New Haven Line and Shore Line East services will reduce the number of diesel locomotives, thus reducing the amount of fine particulate matter in New Haven and Fairfield Counties, both of which have been identified as non-attainment areas for these emissions.

Responsible Growth

The Office of Responsible Growth, established through Executive Order in 2006, coordinates state efforts "to revitalize cities, preserve the unique charm of our state and build livable, economically strong communities while protecting our natural resources for the enjoyment of future generations." An Interagency Steering Council helps coordinate state policy development and capital planning, while Regional Roundtables provide a forum for municipal officials and other stakeholders to develop planning agendas tailored to the needs of each region. Specific responsible growth efforts include: 1) Regional Performance Incentive Program grants to implement voluntary shared services agreements among municipalities; 2) grants to municipalities for planning, approval and development of Incentive Housing Zones; 3) CT Land Use Academy training for municipal land use commissioners to help promote informed decision-making at the local level; 4) Geographic Information Systems coordination; 5) Grants to municipalities to assist in updating their local plans of conservation and development; and 6) hosting the Green and Growing website which includes a responsible growth tool box summarizing various forms of state assistance.

Green Building Requirements

Legislation passed in 2009 requires that the State Building Inspector amend the building code to meet optimum construction standards for thermal envelope and mechanical systems. Provisions must also address indoor air quality, water conservation, and the building's lighting and electrical systems. The code must reference nationally recognized green building rating systems. Demonstration of building compliance is required prior to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy.

Appliance Efficiency Standards

In 2005, appliance efficiency standards for several products were established in Connecticut as a result of legislation. This effort, combined with efforts in other states, resulted in the establishment of nationwide standards for those products. Public Act 07-242 added five new products that must meet energy efficiency standards. Standards for four of the products are currently in effect. The standard for the fifth product becomes effective in 2010.

Education and Outreach

The Connecticut Science Center, a new LEED designed building that opened in 2009, hosts a Smart Energy Gallery, climate change theater, interactive Energy City exhibit, and other programs that teach about climate change and energy. The Governor's Steering Committee on Climate Change annually recognizes individuals and organizations that have taken exemplary actions to address climate change through the CT Climate Change Leadership Awards Program. Climate change and energy teaching resources and curriculum are closely aligned with the CT Department of Education's frameworks. Keeping CT Cool: The Climate Challenge, an annual competition for middle and high school students, has engaged students in implementing climate solutions in their schools and local communities for four years.

Adaptation

The Adaptation Subcommittee of the Governor's Steering Committee on Climate Change is studying climate change impacts on Connecticut's infrastructure, public health, natural resources and ecological habitats, and agriculture. Reports on projected impacts and recommendations will be available in 2010.

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