



Frequently Asked Questions

WESTERN CLIMATE INITIATIVE TO REDUCE GREENHOUSE GASES

What is the Western Climate Initiative?

The Western Climate Initiative is an historic effort to collaborate climate action policies of the western United States, Canada and Mexico. To join, partner states and provinces must be willing to agree to the principles of the original initiative, as well as the goals outlined in the goals statement.

Which states or provinces have signed on to the Western Climate Initiative?

The agreement was originally signed by the Governors of Arizona, California, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington at the 2007 National Governors' Association Winter meeting in Washington, D.C. on Feb. 26, 2007.

Utah and the Canadian provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia have also joined. In addition, several states and provinces are observing the Western Climate Initiative proceedings including Sonora, Mexico; Colorado; Kansas; Nevada; Ontario and Quebec, Canada and Wyoming.

What are the goals of the Western Climate Initiative?

The Western Climate Initiative commits the partners to the following actions:

- Set regional greenhouse gas reduction goals within the first six months
- Create a blueprint for a regional cap-and-trade program by August 2008 to meet the goals
- Participate in multi-state registry to track and manage greenhouse gas emissions
- Continue promoting clean and renewable energy, increasing energy efficiency, advocating for sound regional and national energy policies and identifying new measures to fight global warming.

Why are individual states and provinces taking action?

In the absence of federal action to curb greenhouse gas emissions, states and provinces must lead the way. Recognizing the need to respond immediately to the potential impacts of global warming and to demonstrate that global warming pollution can be reduced without harming economic growth, states and provinces are joining together to establish complementary climate action programs to ensure maximum environmental and economic benefits.

What are other states doing to match California's legally-binding cap on greenhouse gas emissions?

California is confident that the members of the Western Climate Initiative are committed to fighting global warming. We've made tremendous progress to lead the way ahead of the federal government, and each member is committed to adopting an enforceable cap. Many partners already have established programs and regulations to promote energy efficiency, clean up vehicle emissions and support best management practices. In addition, many partners have established advisory teams to provide next-step recommendations on climate action.

What is the regional goal that the partners in the Western Climate Initiative agreed to?

On August 22, the eight partners of the Western Climate Initiative set a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 15 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. The number reflects the aggregation of the partners' individual reduction goals. The amount to be reduced is more than 350 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (mmtCO₂e).

Is the regional goal feasible and how will it be reached?

Yes. Each partner has established state or provincial goals and the WCI goal reflects the aggregated total. In many cases, states have already adopted powerful regulations to reduce emissions from motor vehicles and set standards for energy efficiency. These are the types of strategies that will be necessary to meet the regional goal.

Can California move forward on developing a regional emissions trading system ahead of implementation of the Global Warming Solutions Act?

Nothing moves ahead of AB 32. In fact, the Western Climate Initiative was written to move parallel with implementation of AB 32. By working together we help build compatible systems to ensure that our programs can be linked for maximum environmental benefits as the lowest cost.

As outlined in the original Western Climate Initiative agreement, design recommendations for a proposed market based system will be drafted by August 2008. By then, the Air Resources Board will have published a draft scoping plan to demonstrate the strategies needed to rollback California's greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels. That proposed scoping plan is expected to include the use of market based mechanisms.

Why is it important to form regional partnerships on climate action?

California alone cannot defeat global warming. That battle requires the active participation of other states and countries. Towards that end, regional partnerships serve several important functions:

- They open the lines of communication for sharing valuable information, such as academic research, effective policy initiatives, lessons learned and technological innovation. The power of these connections cannot be overstated.
- They send a strong message to federal governments that states and provinces are not waiting on them to join the international fight on global warming.
- Forming regional partnerships helps anticipate linkage issues for global climate action strategies such as carbon trading. By working together to establish similar design principles, we can influence future trading systems.
- By expanding the marketplace we lower the cost of reductions and demonstrate to the rest of the world that economic growth and environmental protection can go hand in hand.
- They help minimize the potential for leakage, so polluting companies have no incentive to move outside one state's border to escape from regulation.

Why did the partners choose to start with 2005 as the baseline?

The bedrock of an emissions reduction program is a rigorous system where sources report accurate emissions data. As a group, the partners of the Western Climate Initiative were able to assemble adequately complete and reliable data to support setting a goal relative to 2005 emissions.