

The Colorado Climate Project

The mission of the Colorado Climate Project is to reduce Colorado's contributions and vulnerability to climate change, by developing and getting implemented a Colorado Climate Agenda of actions to reduce the state's emissions of global-warming pollutants and to prepare the state for the climate changes that may still occur. The recommended agenda will be presented to Colorado's next governor (who will take office in 2007), the state legislature, local governments, and others.

Colorado's emissions of carbon dioxide from fossil-fuel use are greater than those of 174 of the world's 212 nations. Plus, the semi-arid West is particularly vulnerable to how climate change can disrupt our snow and water resources. What we do here matters.

The Colorado Climate Project, a program of the Rocky Mountain Climate Organization (RMCO), is patterned after similar projects of several state governments, including those of Arizona, New Mexico, and Montana. The Colorado Climate Project, however, will be the first such project undertaken as a private initiative. RMCO has the mainstream credibility to succeed in this pioneering role.

Project Directors

The project will be guided by project directors, who will appoint the blue-ribbon committee that will develop the Colorado Climate Agenda, receive the panel's report and determine whether to adopt it, and serve as key public spokesmen. The project directors are John Hickenlooper, Democratic mayor of Denver; Steve Burkholder, Republican mayor of Lakewood; Doug Hutchinson, Republican mayor of Fort Collins; Tom Long, Republican County Commissioner of Summit County; Gail Klapper, director of the Colorado Forum; and Al Yates, former president of Colorado State University. The staff of RMCO will provide day-to-day management of the project.

Blue-Ribbon Panel

A blue-ribbon panel will be appointed, probably in September, to develop and recommend to the project directors a proposed Colorado Climate Agenda. The panel will be broadly representative, with about 30 public and private leaders from different geographic areas and with different backgrounds, interests, and expertise. Two (of likely three) co-chairs of the panel will be Eric Kuhn, general manager of the Colorado River Water Conservation District, and Dan McClendon, manager of the Delta-Montrose Electric Association. Key federal and state agencies will be invited to designate officials to act as liaisons to the panel; the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment has already done so. The panel will probably take 12 to 14 months to complete its work.

Colorado Climate Agenda

The project directors will give a specific charge to the panel when they appoint its members. The action plans developed or being developed in other states suggest the measures that might be included in the Colorado Climate Agenda, including numeric goals for reduction of emissions in Colorado of heat-trapping gases and recommended actions for meeting those goals. For more detail on other state plans, see the separate fact sheet prepared by the Center for Climate Strategies. Because of Colorado's particular needs, the blue-ribbon panel may also consider measures that are not in other state climate action plans but that could be important here, such as recommendations for consideration of climate-change effects on state water supplies, and other steps to prepare for the local changes that may be coming.

Possible Regional Cooperation

Northeastern and West Coast states have established regional programs to cooperate on climate protection. If Colorado joins Arizona, New Mexico, and Montana in developing and implementing a state action plan, it is more likely that the Rocky Mountain states could become the third such region.

Center for Climate Strategies

The Center for Climate Strategies [www.climatestrategies.us] will facilitate and provide technical assistance to the blue-ribbon panel, as it is doing in Arizona, New Mexico, and Montana. CCS is already conducting under a separate program, endorsed by the Western Regional Air Partnership (a consortium of state and tribal air pollution control agencies which is an initiative of the Western Governors Association), a Colorado emissions inventory and forecast that the panel will be able to consider. For the Colorado Climate Project, CCS will provide technical, policy, and cost-benefit analyses and energy and economic modeling. CCS's involvement not only takes advantage of their experience in helping to develop action plans in other western states, but also may help facilitate regional cooperation.

Budget and Sponsors

The project budget is \$645,000 over 2006-2007, of which a little over half is for the costs of the Center for Climate Strategies and the balance for the other costs of the Rocky Mountain Climate Organization. CCS, itself a 501(c)(3) organization, will help raise funds for its costs. A total of \$250,000 has been raised for the project so far. Initial principal sponsors of the project (contributing at least \$50,000) include the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Denver Water, and the Bohemian Foundation. Initial sponsors (contributing at least \$15,000) include the Rockefeller Family Foundation and the City of Aspen.

RMCO Partner Organizations.

RMCO is a mainstream coalition whose partners include the City and County of Denver; City of Fort Collins; City of Boulder; Summit County; City of Aspen; Town of Silverthorne; Town of Breckenridge; Town of Frisco; Town of Telluride; Denver Water; Aspen Skiing Company; Boulder Community Hospital; Colorado Association of Ski Towns; Colorado Mountain Club; Domani, LLC; IntraWest Colorado; National Wildlife Federation; the Nature Conservancy of Colorado; New Belgium Brewing Company; Qwest; RBI Strategy & Research; Roche Colorado; Rocky Mountain Farmers Union; Westcliffe Publishers; Western Resource Advocates; Wild Oats Markets, Inc.; and Wright Water Engineers.

Contacts

Stephen Saunders
President, RMCO
saunders@rockymountainclimate.org
303-880-4598

Tom Easley
Director of Programs, RMCO
easley@rockymountainclimate.org
303-399-4686