



MONTANA CLIMATE SOLUTIONS COUNCIL

GHG COMMITTEE

WHITE PAPER: LOCAL COMMUNITY PLANNING FOR CLIMATE MITIGATION

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This paper parallels the CAID paper: building community resilience to climate change

KEY ISSUE

Montana communities and counties are strongly encouraged to embrace planning processes that build local climate resilience and address the root causes of climate change. Here we focus on mitigation planning and actions – reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; adaptation and/or transition planning can occur simultaneously, or before or after the planning described herein.

Although there are various resources that communities can draw upon to develop a mitigation planning process, inventory greenhouse gases, and build capacity for implementation, state agencies and possibly other climate services should assist communities in this process, providing expertise, guidance, support and funding.

This paper will focus on local mitigation planning *processes* – what to consider and how best to do it. We also include a list of strategies and actions that can be done under local jurisdiction. These actions should be connected to other GHG emission reduction efforts described in the other recommendation papers in this Climate Action Plan.

Different communities in Montana will proceed and prioritize in ways that respond to local strengths and needs, recognizing their unique opportunities. Local climate action planning processes will vary depending on the size of the community, and whether they are municipalities, tribal jurisdictions, or counties. Effective mitigation planning requires meaningful involvement and buy-in from a diverse group of relevant decision-makers, stakeholders, and community members.

Planning efforts should start by bringing community leaders, including local government staff or elected officials, and interested parties together to determine the scope and basic path forward. Efforts should focus on actions that fit with local needs and opportunities and can either be implemented locally or by working with other communities and the state of Montana. In turn communities can inform state policies that reduce GHG emissions.

Communities need support to understand how best to:

- 1) develop and implement local climate action plans that reduce GHG emissions.
- 2) measure GHG emissions, set goals, track over time and prioritize actions.
- 3) coordinate among local, tribal, and state entities so plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions can be shared, coordinated and scaled up.

We recommend communities, tribes and counties develop a mitigation plan and process that tackles community-wide emissions, including both municipal operations together with the larger community (residential, business and industrial).

PROGRESS TO DATE

In Montana, there are a number of mitigation-focused climate action plans that have been completed or are in development. Some plans are for municipal operations and some are community-wide (see Bozeman, Missoula, Red Lodge, Whitefish). Additionally, Universities and at least one school system have developed plans (University of Montana Climate Action Plan, Montana State University Sustainability Plan, Whitefish School District Plan).

Three communities have recently made commitments to transition to 100% clean electricity (Missoula, Helena, Bozeman).

Plans: Bozeman's Climate Action Plan, Missoula's Conservation and Climate Action Plan (municipal operations), Missoula's Climate Smart Action Plan, and 100% Clean Electricity Options Report, Red Lodge Energy Conservation Plan, Whitefish Climate Action Plan.

Other planning efforts in process: Billings Energy Conservation Commission, Bozeman Climate Action Plan, CSKT Climate Plan, Helena Climate Change Task Force.

A map of known community and tribal plans, both adaptation and mitigation is here:
<http://www.msucommunitydevelopment.org/plans.html>

GAPS

Greenhouse gas emissions reductions at the scale and time-frame needed will only be truly impactful if done across jurisdictions. State leadership, updated regulatory efforts and new legislation will be key.

There is a need for:

- A straightforward and publicly available process for climate action planning to reduce emissions and that can be adapted to local needs yet scaled up, and that includes funding resources.
- Technical and financial resources to measure GHG emissions, track over time, and report.
- Technical and financial resources that communities can use to develop and implement plans.
- Community learning network for resource sharing and connections of goals and strategies between Montana communities.
- Coordination with state, regional, and federal entities.

STAKEHOLDERS

- Elected officials, local government staff, tribal officials
- Community leaders and energy and climate experts
- Local businesses including financial institutions
- Representatives from specific sectors: social service organizations, non-profit organizations, and low-income groups
- University, state or federal agency representatives, ideally based in or near the community/county.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: OUTLINE AND SUPPORT PROCESS FOR COMMUNITY MITIGATION PLANNING AND ENGAGE AND CONNECT COMMUNITIES

EVERY COMMUNITY IN MONTANA IS UNIQUE AND WILL ADDRESS CLIMATE MITIGATION IN WAYS THAT RECOGNIZE ITS OWN OPPORTUNITIES. WHILE THERE ARE SOME SIMILARITIES, COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION PROCESSES AND PLANS WILL VARY DEPENDING ON COMMUNITY SIZE AND RESOURCES, WHETHER THEY ARE MUNICIPALITIES, TRIBAL NATIONS, OR COUNTIES AND WHETHER THEY ARE PRIMARILY SERVED BY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES OR AN INVESTOR OWNED UTILITY. MITIGATION PROCESSES SHOULD SECURE BUY-IN FROM KEY COMMUNITY MEMBERS, BUILD ON EXISTING PROGRAMS, AND BE DATA-DRIVEN WHEREEVER POSSIBLE.

RECOMMENDATIONS SHOULD FOLLOW BEST PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS REDUCTION STRATEGIES, WITH STRONG CONSIDERATION FOR EQUITY AND CO-BENEFITS, INCLUDING STRATEGIES THAT ALSO BUILD RESILIENCE AND HELP PREPARE FOR FUTURE CLIMATE IMPACTS. FOR EXAMPLE, IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY OF BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPING DISTRIBUTED RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEMS CAN HELP BUFFER THE IMPACTS AND UNCERTAINTIES TIED TO MORE VOLATILE WEATHER EVENTS, TEMPERATURE EXTREMES, AND GRID DISRUPTION. WHEREVER POSSIBLE OTHER MONTANA COMMUNITIES CAN BE USED AS MODELS OR REFERENCE.

TO ENABLE LOCAL-LEVEL MITIGATION PLANNING, WE NEED TO OUTLINE A PROCESS THAT IS SPECIFIC, STRAIGHTFORWARD, AND ADAPTABLE TO DIFFERENT COMMUNITY CONTEXTS.

SOME COMMUNITIES MAY CHOOSE TO INITIATE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION AND SIMULTANEOUSLY. NOTE THAT THE STAKEHOLDERS, EXPERTS, AND PLAYERS MAY BE DIFFERENT BETWEEN THESE TWO REALMS.

More specifically, we recommend:

- ✓ Supporting locally led mitigation planning processes that convene diverse interests and expertise, leverage resources to engage community leaders and decision makers and that include GHG emissions reduction goal setting, GHG emissions inventory to understand

energy use, and plan development to reduce emissions across various sectors (see recommendation #2).

- ✓ Identifying useful mitigation and climate action planning resources, toolkits and funding mechanisms (e.g., [EPA's guidance](#); resources available through Local Government for Sustainability - [ICLEI](#)). [*more examples would be helpful!*]
- ✓ Building a network to strengthen mitigation plans especially as they relate to energy procurement, policies and mandates that need statewide enabling or other legislation.
- ✓ Investing in a formal State Office or network as a platform for communities to share ideas, processes, lessons learned, and mitigation plans, so that no community needs to reinvent the wheel. This will enable planning that is specific to local contexts that also builds on what has been done elsewhere, thus leveraging existing experience and plans.
- ✓ Promoting planning that, where possible, encompasses both climate adaptation and mitigation to help communities anticipate and bounce forward from stresses and shocks while seizing opportunities to strengthen local and regional economic independence and pursue economic development tied to the clean energy transition. These may or may not be done concurrently (see Exec Summary or intro section)
- ✓ Depending on the community, consult with tribal nations in development and implementation of recommendations. Recognize tribal sovereignty and right to self-determination.

RECOMMENDATION 2: SET QUANTITATIVE GOALS AND TIMELINES FOR GHG REDUCTIONS AND DEVELOP MITIGATION STRATEGIES WITHIN A LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

Supported by the planning process (#1), we recommend three main components for community mitigation coalitions/groups/teams. Goals and timelines are keys to making sustained progress. These do not need to be done chronologically; they will depend on community capacity and buy-in. Regardless of whether all three steps are done concurrently or not, these will need to be iterative and findings from each step will inform the others.

1. Determine mitigation target—goals and clear timelines (E.g., reduce emissions by XX amount and by XX year, or a transition to 100% clean or renewable electricity or energy by XX year). We recommend these goals align and support the goals of the Governor's Executive Order and this plan. Interim goals are recommended.
2. Conduct community-wide Greenhouse Gas Inventory, including energy use for residents, commercial, industrial and including government. Encourage voluntary energy disclosure and data tracking (see *ClearPath*, a program of [ICLEI](#))

3. Determine actionable goals and prioritized strategies to reduce emissions, including who needs to be involved and timelines. Develop communications plan, assess resources needed to support mitigation, including funding, staff time, technical expertise, and buy-in.

Topics that will drive local emissions reduction include:

- Clean, renewable energy (electricity and all energy sources)
- Energy efficiency and energy savings/conservation
- Transportation, including the electrification of the transportation system
- Buildings, the built environment and land use planning
- Local Food and Agriculture
- Consumption and waste reductions or diversion

Strategies may include recommended voluntary actions and programs, local incentives, mandates, policies, and more.

Sectors include, and strategies may be different among, residential (home owners and renters), commercial, industrial and include government buildings and operations, including schools, and Universities.

Given the climate urgency, we recommend communities develop a climate action plan for the community as a whole, and include municipal operations herein. This can save time and capacity and encourages local government and community members to get started as soon as possible.

RECOMMENDATION 3: CONNECT MITIGATION STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS ACROSS MONTANA

This is essential to make real progress. The “math problem” cannot be addressed in isolation...

Communication, coordination, and planning on the state-wide level:

- Create a long-term coordinating structure for consultation, communication, and implementation of climate solutions that includes representatives from all Montanan tribes, as well as representatives from frontline communities.
- Establish a mechanism for regular communication and coordination between the state of Montana and local and tribal governments aiming to reduce GHG emissions
- Establish state recommendations in line with the most ambitious existing local energy and climate mitigation targets in Montana (i.e. 100% clean electricity by 2030).

AS APPROPRIATE, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING RELEVANT TO ALL THREE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Who could implement the recommendation (legislature, Governor, local government, utility/co-ops, homeowners, businesses, agriculture, landowners, industry etc.)?** Local municipalities, tribal government, county government, etc., working with non-profit partners and community leaders
- **Describe the pros and cons of the recommendation, including any co-benefits for mitigation and adaptation to climate change.** Actions will enable communities to leverage existing resources and experience, make meaningful contributions to emissions reductions and build on ongoing efforts (rather than reinvent the wheel). Identifying adaptation co-benefits is part of this process.
- **Identify whether this recommendation would likely have a high, medium or low effectiveness or impact in addressing the issue and why. How does the recommendation advance the guiding principles or theory of change identified by the committee?** These planning efforts would have a high impact in mitigating climate change, if applied to ambitious solutions and implemented over the long term.
- **Identify whether this recommendation would have any significant adverse impacts on specific groups of people, industries, businesses or others. If there are significant adverse impacts, what mitigation strategies could be used to reduce those impacts? Similarly, are there adverse impacts to the environment to consider?** Any action that reduces emissions will affect local fossil fuel businesses and workers. See Transitions group recommendations and other GHG mitigation white papers for more.
- **What are the estimated costs or resources (both public and private) needed to implement this recommendation (if possible)?** Cannot estimate at this time. Sustained funding and resources will be needed.
- **Provide an estimate of a reasonable timeframe to implement this recommendation.**
 - 1-2 years. Planning processes address short to long-term goals.
- **What needs to happen to determine whether this recommendation, if implemented, is successful in achieving its goals? Does this recommendation address short, medium, or long-term goals?** If this recommendation is successful, communities and counties will have access to effective, relevant planning processes to reduce emissions and be able to easily share expertise across the state. They will be inspired to initiate climate planning efforts, understanding the necessity and opportunities.