

Climate Change Action Plan

September 16, 2003

WHEREAS, the scientific evidence, reviewed by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and an overwhelming majority of the world's climate scientists, indicates greenhouse gases are accumulating in the Earth's atmosphere as a result of human activities; and

WHEREAS, these scientists also contend that the increases in greenhouse gases are causing the global climate to change at a greater rate and magnitude than would otherwise be expected, projecting an increase in globally-averaged surface temperatures of 2.5 to 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the century; and

WHEREAS, even small changes in surface temperatures are projected to cause significant changes in our regional climate and Vermont's environment; and

WHEREAS, the United States, with only 5 percent of the world's population produces 20 to 25 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions from human activities and is, therefore, a significant factor affecting the global climate; and

WHEREAS, Vermont, although it plays a small role, contributes to greenhouse gas emissions via car and truck traffic, with Vermonters driving more miles per person than the national average, and the burning of fossil fuels for home heating and power generation; and

WHEREAS, the federal government and numerous private sector businesses in the United States and abroad are discovering that it is a sound business decision, both financially and environmentally, to decrease their greenhouse gas emissions - simultaneously increasing productivity and employment; and

WHEREAS, ambitious energy efficiency and conservation efforts will not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but will also reduce a host of other pollutant emissions (including toxic chemicals) associated with fossil fuel combustion for electricity generation and transportation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT I, James H. Douglas, by virtue of the power vested in me as Governor of the State of Vermont, do hereby direct state government agencies and departments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from state government buildings and operations. Vermont's goal is to reduce emissions by an amount consistent with the recommendations of The Conference of the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers Climate Change Action Plan. The goals established by the Conference are to reduce region-wide greenhouse gas emissions from the 1990 baseline by: twenty-five percent by 2012; fifty percent by 2028; and, if practicable using reasonable efforts, seventy-five percent by 2050.

To promote these goals I hereby order as follows:

(1) A Climate Neutral Working Group is established to be jointly chaired by the Commissioners of the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Department of Buildings and General Services, and the Department of Public Service, and to include Secretaries, Commissioners, and technical representatives from the Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Public Service, Agency of Administration, Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Agency of Transportation, Department of Buildings and General Services, Vermont Energy Investment Corporation, and other agencies as interested. The working group is tasked with coordinating, documenting, and encouraging efforts to meet Vermont's greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. It will prepare a biennial report documenting efforts to meet the goals, identifying future planned steps and their anticipated impacts, and highlighting any challenges for meeting those goals, as well as opportunities for expediting greenhouse gas emission reductions.

(2) The report shall include the state of the science for responding to climate change, including the status of methods and measures available to meet the goals. In addition, the working group will identify opportunities to share lessons learned with Vermont businesses, other state and provincial governments, and the federal government.

(3) All state government agencies, offices, and departments are hereby directed to:

(i) Purchase only energy-consuming devices that meet or exceed the Energy Star® or comparable standards established by the U.S. federal government, and to operate these devices in a manner that maximizes their energy efficiency features.

(ii) Purchase vehicles that have the highest available fuel efficiency in each respective vehicle class (e.g., passenger cars, light duty trucks, etc.), pursuant to performance specifications approved by the Climate Neutral Working Group. In setting these performance specifications, the Working Group shall consider vehicles that not only meet high fuel economy standards but that also provide lower total overall emissions of greenhouse gases, criteria pollutants, and hazardous air contaminants.

(iii) Develop programs to encourage state employees, through the use of incentives, to use transportation alternatives to a single person in a single motor vehicle for commuting and business travel, including incentives as may be bargained with the collective bargaining units.

(4) The Department of Buildings and General Services shall work with the Climate Neutral Working Group and all state facilities to ensure that every state building reduces its energy consumption to meet the outlined greenhouse gas reductions.

(5) The Department of Buildings and General Services shall investigate cost-effective opportunities to purchase renewable energy to reduce the State of Vermont's reliance on fossil fuels. Renewable energy includes electricity derived from sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, landfill methane gas, or small scale (less than 30 megawatts) hydroelectric projects.

(6) The Climate Neutral Working Group shall prepare a report to the Governor and the General Assembly describing opportunities to initiate a statewide voluntary greenhouse gas emissions registry, and investigate the feasibility of a carbon emissions cap and trading program for the state as a strategy for further reducing region-wide greenhouse gas emissions. The Agency shall identify the effort required to establish sector-specific baselines, develop an emissions tracking protocol, and institute an emissions trading mechanism. It should also recommend greenhouse gas reduction targets and identify activities to help meet those targets.

(7) The Climate Neutral Working Group shall request input from representatives of the business, environmental, forestry and transportation sectors regarding opportunities for the private sector to reduce emissions and conserve energy.

(8) The chairs of the Climate Neutral Working Group shall consult with representatives from the other New England states to establish a broad-based approach to these environmental issues.

Administrative support shall be provided by the Agency of Natural Resources.

This Executive Order shall take effect upon signing and supersedes and replaces Executive Order #11-02 (renumbered Executive Order #10-28) dated August 22, 2002.

This Executive Order shall sunset on July 1, 2020.

Witness my name hereunto subscribed and the Great Seal of the State of Vermont hereunto affixed at Montpelier this 16th day of September, 2003.

James H. Douglas, Governor

By the Governor:

Neale F. Lunderville, Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs