



Climate Change

Climate change issues and challenges are being earnestly discussed and debated in Olympia and beyond. How cities fit in both as impacted by and contributors to climate change are topics that will likely be on the legislative radar screen for years to come.

AWC Priority

AWC's 2008 Legislative Priorities include the following position for addressing climate change:

“Support proposals that provide cities with additional flexible tools to continue creating sustainable communities; engage in discussions about the most effective means to meet Greenhouse Gas Emission goals established in 2007; oppose new unfunded mandates and “one size fits all” solutions to sustainability challenges, and; provide outreach and education to cities.”

AWC Climate Change Task Force

AWC has also convened a Climate Change Task Force that will: share and discuss views on how cities can best respond; evaluate legislative and state agency proposals impacting cities; and provide guidance to AWC's Board and staff on how to assist cities to better understand their opportunities to address this important issue. A list of task force members and more information can be found at www.awcnet.org/climatechange.

AWC Climate Change Policy Brief

At the direction of the task force, AWC developed a climate change policy brief to identify activities of cities in response to climate change and articulate city recommendations for addressing and mitigating climate change. This policy brief and an executive summary can be found online at www.awcnet.org/climatechange.

Current Legislation

Climate change legislation this session is being developed primarily in three areas:

1. New GMA/planning requirements;
2. Urban forestry;
3. Emissions reporting.

Interested cities are encouraged to discuss these bills with your legislators. AWC is continuing to work with stakeholders – both proponents and opponents, in an attempt to move this important issue forward in 2008.

Local Solutions to Climate Change/GMA (HB 2797/SB 6580)

These identical high priority bills from the environmental community were introduced containing new mandates for larger GMA-planning cities and counties to address climate change in local plans and regulations, appealable to Growth Management Hearings Boards. These bills were met with a range of reactions from local government and other interests and after numerous constructive meetings with proponents, AWC staff has helped retool the bill so that we may be close to giving it our full support.

As currently proposed, both bills would:

- Declare legislative intent that this is an important issue that can, in part, be impacted by actions taken in local communities;
- Establish a new 14th goal in the GMA that, balanced among the other 13 now in statute, would guide local GMA plan implementation and updates;
- Direct the state's Community, Trade and Economic Development Department (CTED) to work with cities, other governments and stakeholders to evaluate what cities and counties are now doing in response to this issue, develop models and tools to help interested jurisdictions, and report back to the Governor and Legislature on findings and make any needed state legislative recommendations; and
- If funding is provided, allow CTED to fund a series of "pilot projects" in support of up to six cities and three counties to develop or enhance local climate change responses.

The most controversial piece of this new approach is whether or not to legislate a new 14th GMA goal. Some argue that one of the existing GMA goals addressing environmental protection already directs cities to look at

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climate change when updating local plans and regulations. Others say a new one – to be balanced among the others and not "trump" them - should be included. AWC is seeking input from interested cities on this topic and has not yet indicated either support for or opposition to this component of the bill.

A panel of city officials from Tacoma, Everett and Kennewick testified on this bill in the House Local Government Committee on January 24 and provided a range of views. An Olympia Councilmember also testified.

Evergreen Cities/Urban Forestry (HB 2844/SB 6469, HB 2468/SB 6249)

Bill proponents want cities to increase inventory, assessment, and protection efforts for existing trees and increase the number of tree plantings. AWC has reached an agreement with proponents that eliminates the mandatory and regulatory approaches contained in both **HB 2844/SB 6469**. AWC is supportive of reworking both bills to include provisions also contained in **HB 2468/SB 6249** that require the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to, at no cost to cities:

1. Inventory trees in all cities around the state (taking up to seven years to complete);
2. Assess tree health; and
3. Provide assistance to interested cities on managing trees.

In addition, at least **HB 2844** is being reworked to require DNR to work with CTED to develop suggestions and models for cities interested in doing more than is now required to be designated a "Tree City USA" community (there are currently 66 cities voluntarily choosing to be a "Tree City USA"). In the reworked bill, funds would be provided to help cities achieve additional status as an "Evergreen City" and, as an incentive, would provide "extra" points when seeking grants from sources like the Public Works Trust Fund and Centennial Clean Water Fund.

AWC supports these bills in this form and will so testify during upcoming hearings. **SB 6469** is scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Committee on Natural Resource, Ocean & Recreation on Wednesday, January 30 at 8 am. **HB 2468** is scheduled for a hearing in the House Committee on Appropriations on Monday, January 28 at 3:30 pm. To be successful, all of these bills require state funding, which we are not sure will be available.

Green House Gas Emissions and Green Collar Jobs

The Governor has requested major climate change legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create clean energy jobs. **SB 6516/HB 2815** has the following major purposes:

1. Begin a process to ensure the emission reduction goals established by the Governor's Executive Order 07-02 are achieved;
2. Direct the state to continue to develop a regional process to design a multisector, market-based system for regulating green house gas emissions (i.e. cap and trade system);
3. Authorize a reporting system to monitor greenhouse gas emissions;
4. Establish a process for maintaining a comprehensive inventory of green house gas emissions to track the state's progress in achieving its greenhouse gas emission reductions;
5. Create a "green collar" job training account to train and transition workers to clean energy jobs.

The cities of Seattle and Tacoma both testified on the bills and noted that the design of a cap and trade system is a very complex issue and will need to be paid close attention.

AWC believes that climate change will be a multi-year issue in which we need to be closely involved. In addition to the bills described above, we expect many more bills in 2009, after the Governor's Climate Action Team (CAT) and the Western Climate Initiative (WCI) both finish their work. The CAT is expected to produce a report in February and the WCI is expected to produce a report in August. Information about these efforts can be found at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/climatechange/index.htm>.

Updates on these issues from AWC can be found in the AWC **Legislative Bulletin** and at www.awcnet.org/climatechange.

For More Information

A number of staff at AWC are following these issues closely. If you have questions or comments, please contact the following AWC staff for questions in the following areas:

- Land Use/Planning – Dave Williams, davew@awcnet.org
- Energy & Emissions Reporting–Victoria Lincoln, victorial@awcnet.org
- Transportation – Ashley Probart, ashleyp@awcnet.org