

Kulongoski announces strategy to fight climate change

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Oregon will join Arizona, California, New Mexico and Washington to set specific targets and strategy for greenhouse emission reductions. Salem — This week Governor Ted Kulongoski announced that the states of Arizona, California, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington will take the lead in addressing climate change with a new western regional initiative that commits the states to set clear reduction targets for greenhouse emissions and a market-based strategy to achieve those reductions. “Today’s announcement shows how the West continues to lead the way in addressing the most pressing environmental challenge of our time,” said Governor Ted Kulongoski. “Together, we are putting ourselves on a path to reduce greenhouse emissions and create a sustainable energy future — a model and example for rest of the nation.” The agreement, the Western Regional Climate Action Initiative, commits the states to identify within the next six months specific greenhouse emission reductions levels and, within the next 18 months, a market-based approach, such as a load-based cap and trade system, for implementing those targets. Governors from the four partner states commemorated the announcement in a Washington D.C. signing ceremony that took place at the same time as Governor Kulongoski’s remarks. Governor Kulongoski had been scheduled to join them at the winter meeting of the National Governors Association, but was unable due to weather related travel delays. “As I stand here, my fellow governors are signing the same agreement in D.C., committing our five states to within the next six months set state specific reduction targets and develop regional greenhouse gas reduction targets,” said Governor Kulongoski. “Our regional strategy will deliver a cleaner environment and healthier economy. It also sends a message to Congress and the White House that if they fail to enact policies at the national level to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and do our nation’s part to combat global warming — that states will do it on our own.” The new initiative builds on existing greenhouse gas reduction efforts in the individual states as well as two existing regional efforts. In 2003, California Governor Gray Davis and Washington Governor Gary Locke joined Governor Kulongoski in creating the West Coast Global Warming Initiative. That three-state effort led to the creation of a clean cars corridor along the entire west coast and has served as a model for the 2006 Southwest Climate Change Initiative between Arizona and New Mexico. In 2005, Governor Kulongoski was the first western governor to announce state greenhouse reduction targets of 10 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 and 75 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. And also in 2005, he appointed a task force to design a state cap and trade program. That task force delivered its proposal in January 2006 and the Governor has asked the Oregon legislature to begin examination of it this session. Under the Governor’s leadership, Oregon has already tripled the number of vehicles in the state fleet that run on flex and alternate fuels. He is also the first governor in the nation to commit state government to run completely on renewable energy by 2010. The Governor is also pursuing an aggressive course to achieving energy independence in Oregon. This legislative session he has proposed a comprehensive biofuels package to promote the development and production of sustainable fuels like biodiesel and ethanol. The Governor has also called for the adoption of a renewable portfolio standard that would require 25 percent of Oregon’s electricity to come from renewable sources by 2025. A full list of the Governor’s priorities is available here. “I look forward to continuing to work with other governors to advance our regional efforts and the Legislature to enact the ambitious agenda we’ve put forth,” said Governor Kulongoski. “Together, we can ensure a transition to new sources of energy, new technologies and cutting-edge policies that significantly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, grow our economies, and protect our environment for future generations.”

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