

A State Climate Plan for Florida A Roadmap to Carbon Emissions Reductions

Background

In the absence of federal action, states across the country are taking the initiative to combat global warming by implementing comprehensive plans as well as a variety of independent initiatives to significantly reduce their global warming pollution. States as diverse as Montana, Vermont, New Mexico, Arizona, South Carolina and North Carolina are working to develop specific policies to reduce global warming pollution in their states. Eleven states have even set targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

Many states are also pursuing more focused policies to cut their emissions and drive investment in new clean energy technologies, such as the twenty-two states and the District of Columbia that have set renewable portfolio standards that require utilities to generate a specific amount of energy from renewable sources by 2020 and the nineteen states and the District of Columbia that require utilities to support low cost energy efficiency.

Policy-makers in all of these states are convinced that they can develop smart policies that will reduce global warming pollution while lowering energy costs for businesses and consumers and attracting new clean energy businesses and jobs to their states. And they recognize the urgent need to start managing carbon risk as soon as possible.

Florida is noticeably absent from all of these lists. As the third largest consumer of electricity and as the state arguably the most vulnerable to the impacts of global warming, Florida must take action now to both meet the energy needs of its growing population and to address global warming pollution. Additionally, it is in the interests of Florida residents that the state's federal delegation takes a leadership position in advocating national control of global warming pollution. The longer Florida waits to act, the more aggressive and more costly those actions will have to be and the more severe the consequences to its homes and coastlines. Through a carefully constructed plan, Florida could embark on an energy future that saves money for consumers, brings jobs to the state, protects Florida's unique environment and makes the state part of the solution to global warming.

Overall Framework

Developing a comprehensive state climate plan that meaningfully reduces global warming pollution requires a foundation of knowledge about the state's emission profile, an assessment of the costs and benefits of a variety of pollution reduction policies and an evaluation of the costs of inaction. Though the individual needs of each state differ, the steps to acquire the information necessary to ascertain the best course of action is the same. A state climate plan is best accomplished through a rigorous planning process which includes the following key elements:

- *Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory and future emissions forecast* – Each state’s energy portfolio is unique. Florida must create its own emissions profile including a forecast of future energy needs and subsequent emissions forecasts in order to identify key sectors for the most cost effective emissions reductions to achieve the targeted levels.
- *Enforceable targets with a clearly defined reporting system* – The GHG inventory provides the benchmark by which targets can be set for Florida. The reduction targets must be enforceable requiring a clear and comprehensive reporting system. These elements should be agreed upon in concept and solidified in the final plan.
- *Diverse stakeholder process to develop a comprehensive plan* – A diverse stakeholder group including businesses, consumers and environmental groups can work together to develop specific policy recommendations to reduce pollution in Florida, taking into consideration the state’s industry and emissions profiles. The plan should aim to maximize energy efficiency in both the electricity and transportation sectors and should not focus exclusively on supply-side solutions. A clear mandate and timeline must be set for the stakeholder group to ensure the final product is completed in a timely manner.

Scope

The GHG inventory will provide direction for an effective plan. Listed below are key sectors to which every state should look to implement plans to reduce global warming pollution.

- Energy Efficiency and Conservation
- Renewable Energy Development
- Forestland and Farmland Preservation
- Waste Management
- Transportation and Land Use
- Improving Industrial Processes
- Inventories, Forecasting, Monitoring and Education

Mitigation Strategies

For any given state, the best and most cost effective reduction strategies will vary. Completing all of the aforementioned elements of a plan provides the necessary framework to determine which actions within these sectors will be most appropriate and effective for Florida. For example, California has targeted just eight GHG emission policies that,

combined with an overall cap, will meet the state's targets for 2020. In Florida, energy efficiency standards for appliances such as ceiling fans and air conditioning units could have large impacts on emissions. Florida is also well positioned to become a leader in solar energy technologies which would attract new industries and create jobs in the state. Overall, the key is to create opportunities for the state by playing to its natural strengths and becoming a leader in those areas.

Economic Opportunity

A well designed climate action plan would reduce Florida's emissions as well as provide numerous opportunities for economic growth in the state. Analyses from both California and the Northeast States Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) have shown that carbon reduction initiatives promote economic growth. The positive economic results come from two primary sources: savings from improvements in energy efficiency (reduced energy bills and reduced cost of compliance with an emissions cap) and an increase in in-state investments in labor for energy efficiency projects using funds previously sent out-of-state to purchase fossil fuel. Another plus are the benefits of investing in technological innovation.

Better energy efficiency can save consumers billions annually and encourage larger investments in cleaner, renewable technologies. These industries will generate more revenue in the state and create thousands of local jobs while diversifying Florida's energy supply. Being less dependent upon the often volatile fossil fuel market will help bring more stability to ratepayers, especially small businesses and homeowners.

Florida in particular, must also take into account the cost of continuing on a business as usual path, pumping millions of tons of global warming and other pollution into the environment. Florida's heavy reliance on fossil fuels generates many "hidden" costs to the state. Emissions from power plants contribute to global warming which in turn cause more intense hurricanes. Hurricane damage impacts property owners, farmers, reefs, pollutes water bodies and the fish in them, and poses a serious threat to public health.