

HB2020 The Oregon Climate Action Program; A SOCAN Perspective

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In 2007, Oregon's legislature passed HB3543 which was signed into law. It established what was, at the time, a meaningful Oregon Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions reduction goal of 75% below 1990 emissions by 2050. When it became clear that the state was not on a trajectory to achieve these emissions reductions, a coalition comprising grassroots climate concerned activists, representatives of labor and social justice/equity organizations, and aware legislators began working to establish a program that would place the state on the designated trajectory. Unfortunately, since 2007, it has become evident that the HB3543 goal is inadequate if we wish Oregon to achieve a GHG reduction trajectory consistent with the global trajectory needed to protect our planet from experiencing the sixth mass extinction. Indeed, the 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change assessment is that to limit global warming to 1.5°C (2.7°F) above pre-industrial conditions, we need to achieve a 45% reduction in emission from the 2010 global total by 2030 (12 years hence), and 100% reduction by 2050. This means net zero emissions by 2050.

The reality of an absence of any national action places a huge requirement on sub-national jurisdictions to establish programs that will lead to a substantial reduction in emissions over the next three plus decades. It is absolutely essential that we embark on a reduction program as soon as possible since each year that we delay will result in the need for a steeper and potentially more disruptive reductions trajectory. We need to start now!

Currently, thirty-seven Gigatons (GT) of Greenhouse Gases are emitted globally each year. Of these, 11 GT (approximately 30%) are from regions that either have already implemented programs to reduce emissions or are considering doing so. Oregon is among these.

The coalition of organizations and legislators referenced above has been collaborating to develop a proposal that would replace Oregon's ineffective 2007 voluntary program with a policy that has a real chance of achieving substantial greenhouse gas emissions reductions statewide. The latest iteration of these efforts is HB2020 which would establish the Oregon Climate Action Program. In the most basic terms, this program places a reducing cap on emissions, with a reducing number of allowances-to-emit issued and auctioned to major polluters annually. Those who pollute in excess of the obtained allowances would be penalized. The goal is an emissions reduction to at least 80% below the 1990 level by 2050. It is anticipated that incentives in the program will achieve reductions greater than the stated 80% minimum reduction.

While the Devil is always in the details, and there is no doubt that HB2020 is not perfect, it will result in meaningful GHG emissions reductions, promote renewable energy, increase energy efficiency and conservation, encourage carbon capture and sequestration, and serve social justice. It is the position of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now that urgency is such that we are better served by passing HB2020 now, than holding out for a bill that is perfect.

Certainly, SOCAN would like to see the program that is implemented to: achieve net zero emissions by 2050; require all polluters to engage in an auction to obtain allowances; and assess emissions of all

GHGs throughout the full life cycle of fossil fuel use while assessing emissions throughout industrial production processes. Additionally, we'd like the bill text to reflect the reality that it targets GHG emissions not just carbon. However, we also recognize that the greater urgency is associated with establishing a program that starts us on a trajectory substantially appropriate to the need, a program that can be amended to enhance its effectiveness as public awareness of that need becomes evident and thus political will develops.

With these considerations in mind, and recognizing the hope that HB2020 will be strengthened as indicated, Southern Oregon Climate Action Now registers its support for HB2020. It is the judgment of SOCAN leadership that The Oregon Climate Action Program, if enacted, would elevate Oregon to a clear leadership role in terms of its economy-wide efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and assign funds raised from this effort to promoting renewable energy, greenhouse gas emissions reductions, while simultaneously addressing the needs of dislocated workers and the decades of social injustice that have compromised the lives of disadvantaged Oregonians.