



POLICY AGENDA FOR 2016–2017

Colorado Communities for Climate Action is a coalition of local governments advocating for policies that protect Colorado’s climate for current and future generations. The initial members of CC4CA are Boulder County, the City of Fort Collins, the City of Boulder, Eagle County, Summit County, the City of Lafayette, the City of Golden, Pitkin County, San Miguel County, the City of Aspen, the Town of Vail, the Town of Telluride, and the Town of Mountain Village. Already, the coalition represents one-ninth of all Coloradans, and its membership is expected to continue growing.

CC4CA’s initial policy priorities for 2016–2017 reflect unanimous agreement among the coalition members on steps that should be taken at the state level, often in partnership with local governments, to enable Colorado and its communities to lead in protecting the climate. These steps would complement the strong local climate actions CC4CA members already have underway. The policy agenda currently includes specific policies to be undertaken only by the state government, but CC4CA will also be active in 2016–2017 in advocating for federal actions.

General Policy Priorities

The following general principles guide the specific policies for which Colorado Communities for Climate Action advocates. CC4CA:

- Supports state and federal government collaboration with Colorado’s local governments to advance local climate protection action through the provision of information, technical assistance, funding, and other resources.
- Supports continued and adequate state and federal funding of programs directly and indirectly related to achieving reductions in heat-trapping emissions.
- Supports analyses, financial incentives, and enabling policies for the development and deployment of clean energy technologies.
- Supports state and federal impact assistance programs requested by affected communities that are impacted by the reduced use of fossil fuels for power production.

Specific Policy Positions

Colorado Communities for Climate Action supports the following policy positions:

Local Climate Programs

1. Supports state-level actions to remove barriers and promote opportunities that allow counties and statutory cities and towns to maximize the deployment of local clean energy options.

The deployment of local energy generation and technology will continue to be a critical component of Colorado communities’ climate efforts. In many cases, regulatory or legislative

limitations exist that will need to be removed for communities to fully explore new local program options and technologies that can effectively reduce fossil fuel use, increase energy resilience, and support community values related to climate protection. For example, the integration of local renewable energy, storage technologies, and microgrids all support a local jurisdiction's ability to address the supply side of energy-related emissions.

2. Supports state government actions to enable local governments to obtain the energy use and other data they need to effectively address climate change.

Local governments need convenient and consistent access to data that is essential for developing and administering local programs that address clean and efficient energy and reductions in heat-trapping emissions. For example, access to uniform data from electric and gas utilities is critical for implementing building energy use disclosure and benchmarking programs designed to make sure building owners, tenants, and others can be fully informed about energy performance. Local governments also struggle to get consistent data regarding waste collection and disposal, oil and gas operations, and other sources of heat-trapping emissions. CC4CA supports state government actions and policies that lead to uniform systems for collection and distribution of data from investor-owned and public utilities that is easily accessible to local governments, while still protective of data privacy for residents and businesses.

State Climate-Specific Programs

3. Supports the establishment by the Colorado state government of new goals for reductions in statewide heat-trapping emissions, to be no less stringent than adopted national goals and those set by Governor Bill Ritter, Jr.

In 2007, Governor Bill Ritter, Jr. included in his Colorado Climate Action Plan goals for reductions in statewide heat-trapping emissions of 20 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050, compared to 2005 levels. In 2008, Governor Ritter also included these goals in Executive Order D 004 08. While that executive order has not been amended or superseded, and so remains official state policy, the goals are not being given the attention necessary to drive action aimed at achieving them. CC4CA supports the establishment of new state goals to guide state emissions reduction policies, with the new goals to be at least as strict as those established by Governor Ritter and as those set by the federal government as a national target in its official submission to the United Nations under the Paris Agreement, which are to reduce national net heat-trapping emissions by 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2025, and to make best efforts to reduce them by 28%.

4. Supports development by the Colorado state government of administrative, legislative, and other actions to implement the Colorado Climate Plan and achieve the state's emission reduction goals, and requests an opportunity for meaningful, sustained engagement by CC4CA in developing those specific steps.

Released in 2015 by Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper, the Colorado Climate Plan is a high-level overview document of state actions for adapting to future climate change impacts and reducing heat-trapping emissions. The governor and other state officials are now considering a new series of steps to develop concrete policy actions to meet the general goals described in the plan. CC4CA believes it essential that the state government provide an opportunity for meaningful, sustained collaboration with local governments in developing specific climate actions, and proposes

that representatives of CC4CA be included in that process.

5. Supports the development of a new forecast of future heat-trapping emissions reflecting Colorado laws and Colorado-specific information by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, with input from local government and other stakeholders.

The “Colorado Greenhouse Gas Inventory—2014 Update Including Projections to 2020 & 2030,” prepared by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), includes a forecast of statewide emissions that utilizes federal Environmental Protection Agency nationwide assumptions about future emissions policies. As such, the inventory does not reflect currently adopted Colorado laws and policies, such as our Renewable Energy Standard. Without this information, it is impossible to tell what progress Colorado is already on track to make – or not make – in reducing heat-trapping emissions. CC4CA supports development of a new Colorado inventory of heat-trapping emissions that incorporates existing Colorado law and policy in order to more accurately track the state’s progress in achieving its emissions reduction goals.

Electricity Generation

6. Supports state government actions to reduce emissions from electricity generation and consumption in Colorado at least equivalent to the levels required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Power Plan.

Under Governor Hickenlooper’s leadership, Colorado state government has consistently stated that it will develop a rule to comply with EPA’s Clean Power Plan (CPP), and has reiterated its intent to proceed even in light of the current judicial stay on the federal rule. Governor Hickenlooper and other state officials are now considering the best way to proceed, without delay, in the development of state actions that would bring about reductions in heat-trapping emissions that may exceed the level that would be required by the CPP. CC4CA supports the state government moving forward in this way, without waiting for resolution of the legal challenges currently pending to the federal rule.

7. Supports state legislation to incrementally increase the Renewable Energy Standard.

Colorado’s current Renewable Energy Standard requires electricity providers to obtain a minimum percentage of their power from renewable energy sources:

- Investor-owned utilities: 30% by 2020, of which 3% must come from distributed energy resources.
- Large rural electric cooperatives: 20% by 2020.
- Municipal utilities and small rural electric cooperatives: 10% by 2020.

This standard has been one of the most effective state policies in facilitating the transition from carbon intensive fossil fuel electricity sources to renewable sources, and CC4CA supports giving consideration to incrementally increasing the standard for all three types of utilities.

8. Supports state legislation to require the Public Utilities Commission to consider all environmental and health costs of the fuels used by investor-owned utilities to generate electricity.

Electric utilities should be required to include a “cost of carbon” when developing their long-term integrated resource plans, as would have been required under a bill considered in the 2016 session

of the Colorado General Assembly. The “social cost of carbon” calculates the financial costs of the externalities generated by one ton of carbon dioxide emissions and can be used to assess the costs and benefits of regulations or measures designed to reduce carbon dioxide. By requiring utilities to generate at least one scenario that assesses and recognizes the social cost of carbon, ratepayers and decision-makers will be better able to understand the true costs to society associated with energy generation.

9. Supports state net metering policies that incentivize distributed generation installations, in ways that are consistent with current net metering policies.

Participation and customer survey data demonstrate that metering, billing, and rate policies are important to utility customers who invest in distributed energy technologies. Colorado’s current net metering policies allow electric customers who make such investments, primarily in the form of rooftop solar systems, to net their solar energy production against their consumption. Available in 43 states, this simple billing arrangement is one of the most important policies for encouraging rooftop solar and other on-site clean energy options. Net metering also helps foster the voluntary reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, contributes to the reliability of the electricity supply and distribution systems, supports the residential and small-commercial renewable energy industry, and helps to more quickly replace coal-fired power plants with cleaner sources of energy. CC4CA supports Colorado’s existing net-metering protocols, and opposes efforts to weaken or eliminate this important clean energy incentive.

Energy Efficiency

10. Supports ongoing and sustainable funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program.

Low-income and vulnerable households spend a disproportionately large percentage of their income on energy utility bills. The federal Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) was created in 1976 to address this problem. WAP provides funding to locally-administered home weatherization programs to provide free weatherization services to Colorado’s low-income residents in order to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. Colorado supplements its annual federal WAP allocation with state severance tax dollars, both of which can be volatile sources of revenue. A stable revenue stream for Colorado’s eight WAP programs would support the dual goals of assisting families in reducing their energy bills while promoting safe, comfortable, and energy-efficient housing.

11. Supports state enabling legislation to provide counties and statutory cities and towns with the same authority held by home rule cities to implement local energy conservation policies and programs.

Unlike their home rule municipal peers, Colorado counties and statutory cities and towns in many cases lack authority to adopt and implement energy conservation policies and programs. For example, energy conservation ordinances are proven policy tools for improving the energy efficiency and performance of the existing residential and commercial building stock, but only Colorado home rule cities have statutory authorization to enact such ordinances. Enabling legislation is needed to provide Colorado’s counties and statutory cities and towns with the authority necessary to enact policies and programs that can support and promote energy conservation within their jurisdictions.

12. Supports the extension of the Colorado Energy Efficiency Resource Standard law beyond 2018.

The Colorado legislature enacted H.B. 1037 in 2007, requiring the Colorado Public Utilities Commission to establish energy savings goals for investor-owned electric and gas utilities. The statute sets an overall multi-year statewide goal for investor-owned electric utilities of at least five percent of the utility's retail sales in the base year (2006), to be met by the end of 2018. Legislation is needed to provide standards for subsequent years. As investor-owned utilities have achieved greater energy savings than the current goals require, new legislative benchmarks for the goals may be appropriate.

Transportation

13. Supports an extension of existing state enabling legislation that provides authority for Regional Transportation Authorities to collect property taxes for transit programs.

The formation of Regional Transportation Authorities (RTAs) is enabled by state statute. RTAs are formed by two or more local governments to finance, construct, operate, and maintain regional transportation systems. Under the current state enabling legislation, RTAs are authorized to derive funding from several types of fees and taxes, subject to voter approval. The authority RTAs currently hold to collect a property tax up to a maximum levy of five mills on property within the RTA territory expires at the end of 2018. CC4CA supports extending this authority for RTAs to collect property taxes for regional transit programs.

14. Supports new state government incentives for the purchase and use of zero emission vehicles, and the development of the infrastructure needed to support the use of those vehicles across Colorado.

According to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's 2014 inventory and forecast of heat-trapping emissions, the transportation sector is Colorado's second largest source of heat-trapping pollutants. Colorado's recent population growth has led to a commensurate increase in vehicle miles traveled, which has overtaken the emissions reductions made possible through the increasing fuel efficiency of the statewide vehicle fleet. Electrification of light and heavy duty vehicles, as well as other emerging zero-emissions technologies, holds perhaps the greatest promise for emissions reductions in this sector. CC4CA supports legislative, regulatory, and administrative action to increase the adoption of electric vehicles by investing in electric vehicle charging stations, educating customers about EVs, and providing customer incentives. CC4CA also supports committing a portion of Colorado's share of the Volkswagen emissions control violations settlement to the construction of electric vehicle charging infrastructure across Colorado, an expressly approved use of these funds.

Waste Management

15. Supports the establishment of a statewide target for diversion of solid waste from landfills, and the development and implementation of state policies and programs to achieve that target.

Recycling and composting reduce carbon dioxide and methane emissions, but Colorado has a low waste diversion rate (the combination of recycling and organics diversion as a proportion of the solid waste stream) of 23 percent compared with the national average of 35 percent. According to the

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's draft Integrated Solid Waste & Materials Management Plan (2016), in Colorado approximately 30 percent of the total materials currently sent to landfills are recyclable (with an annualized value of about \$267 million), and another 30 percent is organic material. The CDPHE draft plan notes that while there is widespread support for a statewide diversion target among the stakeholders engaged in drafting the plan, CDPHE's legislatively-granted waste management authorities lie almost entirely within the landfill disposal category, so the agency has little authority over diversion policies. It also notes the wide disparity of challenges and gaps among regions of the state, with large areas of the state facing barriers such as transportation logistics, lack of processing facilities, and other costs. CC4CA recommends legislation that sets a statewide diversion goal and that grants CDPHE the authorities needed to administer diversion programs, including but not limited to economic and technical assistance for local and regional waste diversion programs and facilities. CC4CA also supports consideration of statewide bans of specific materials from landfills, such as the ban on electronic devices passed in 2013, and advanced disposal fee policies for certain products, such as those already enacted for paints and waste tires.

For more information:

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