Oregon adopts cornerstone climate program to drive transition to clean energy

*Mandatory greenhouse gas reductions will be required from oil and gas companies, and industry*

OREGON-- Climate disrupting pollution from burning fossil fuels-- responsible for deadly summer heat, explosive wildfires, and worsening drought-- will be significantly reduced in Oregon with the adoption of the Climate Protection Program.

Today, the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission adopted the Climate Protection Program, which will require many of Oregon’s largest fossil fuel polluters to begin reducing the greenhouse gas pollution they put into the air and spur a transition to a clean energy economy in the decades ahead. It takes effect January 1, 2022.

“We’re in the decisive decade for climate action; the Climate Protection Program lays a critical foundation for Oregon. This is a win for our climate and for the people. Decision-makers responded to the thousands of Oregonians who weighed in during this process, demanding a Climate Protection Program that meets the ambition that science demands and that our children deserve,” said Nora Apter, Climate Program Director for Oregon Environmental Council. “In adopting the CPP, Oregon has set the path to help meet our climate goals and spur job growth and technological innovation, improve community health, and create cleaner, cheaper, healthier energy and transportation options. Today is a day to celebrate much-needed progress in the fight for a healthy climate future.”

The Climate Protection Program (CPP), a cornerstone policy from the sweeping Oregon Climate Action Plan executive order issued by Governor Kate Brown in 2020, will require oil companies, methane gas utilities, and large, industrial polluters to reduce climate pollution by at least 50% by 2035 and at least 90% by 2050-- from roughly today’s levels (the starting “cap” is an average of emissions from 2017 through 2019).

IN CONTEXT:

- With the CPP, the 100% Clean Energy for All Act (HB 2021), and the Clean Fuels Standard in effect, a majority of Oregon’s greenhouse gas pollution is now on track for significant reduction. These programs address emissions from transportation, electricity, natural gas, and industry. However, many additional actions will be needed to guide Oregon to a clean economy and ensure an equitable transition that leaves no one behind.
• The CPP is the first rule in Oregon history to require methane gas utilities to reduce their fossil fuel pollution, a fast growing source of climate pollution in our state.

• One large omission from regulation by CPP that must be fixed is power plants that burn fossil fuels in Oregon and export electricity to other states.

• Along with our West Coast neighbors, Washington and California, Oregon is among the first states with a mandatory program for reducing the pollution from burning fossil fuels like oil and gas products.

“To preserve our climate, air quality and precious places, Oregon must accelerate the transition from polluting fossil fuels like oil, coal, and gas to clean, affordable, reliable energy sources, like wind and solar. This program will lead to concrete benefits like renewable energy; healthier, energy efficient buildings; and electric cars and trucks,” said Meredith Connolly, Oregon Director of Climate Solutions.

“With each passing year Oregonians more deeply understand the urgent need to protect our health and climate. At the same time, there’s more awareness of the benefits of making this switch quickly-- like good-paying, local jobs in construction, engineering, sales, and service-- and improved health from cleaner air.”

Oregonians have long demanded this kind of bold action to reduce climate pollution and make a transition to a clean energy economy. Many of us do our part already, and the Climate Protection Program will now hold some of the state’s largest polluters to the same level of responsibility,” Doug Moore, Executive Director of Oregon League of Conservation Voters. “Governor Brown has overseen an unprecedented era of climate protection progress in the legislature and through her executive action. Recognizing there’s still a lot of progress to make, today we see the results of electing climate and environmental justice champions.”

Over a more than 18 month process, the Department of Environmental Quality developed the Climate Protection Program with an advisory committee made up of environmental justice, public health, Tribal, local government, labor, rural development, and business advocates, as well as the oil and gas industry and other large emitters.

“The Climate Protection Program is a big down payment on Oregon’s commitment to people most affected by burning fossil fuels and the climate crisis. The next few years are critical in determining what kind of world we leave our children and the seven generations to come,” said Don Sampson of Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, a member of the Rulemaking Advisory Committee. “Oregon's Tribes will continue to work with the state government and nonprofits who will oversee Community Climate Investments from this program to make sure tribal communities, who are on the front lines of climate change, will receive project funds to reduce pollution and help build our resilience to climate impacts like extreme heat and wildfire.”

Oregonians took an astounding level of interest in the program, submitting more than 7,600 public comments during the process, which DEQ staff characterized as overwhelmingly in support of a stronger program than the initial draft rules, with a clear call for climate action. More than 7 out of 10 comments favored the program, according to DEQ.
With approval of the Climate Protection Program, Oregon has implemented another pillar of our states’ long-term decarbonization pathways. The 100% Clean Energy for All Act will decarbonize our electricity consumption and the CPP will drive transportation, buildings and industry toward zero-emissions energy,” said Dr. Pat DeLaquil, an energy system policy analyst and volunteer leader with the Metro Climate Action Team. “To support these policies, we’ll need near-term incentives for electrifying transportation and buildings, especially for low- and middle-income communities. In the longer term, we will need to develop long-duration carbon-free energy storage technologies along with smart-grid technology to ensure system reliability and resilience.”

A non-partisan study by DEQ found a program like CPP (pg 9, scenario 3) will conservatively:

- Cut **309 million metric tons of climate pollution** cumulatively by 2050, the same as avoiding burning more than 1.7 million train cars full of coal. ([EPA calculator](https://www.epa.gov/energy/energy-information-purpose))
- Avoid nearly **$2 billion in health impacts** to Oregonians by 2050.¹
- And create a net of **14,100 jobs a year by 2050** and add **$1.35 billion to the state’s annual GDP**, while **returning $820 million a year to Oregonians’ pockets** because of savings on fuel, utilities, and more.

###

Renew Oregon is a clean energy advocacy [coalition](https://www.reneworegon.org) of businesses and workers, healthcare professionals and parents, farmers and ranchers, faith and community organizations, and individuals coming together to move our state away from polluting energy to a clean energy economy. We are working to create good-paying jobs for all Oregonians, protect air and water from pollution, and help families stay healthy.

---

¹ Monetized health benefits represent a range of avoided adverse outcomes, from lost workdays to asthma and respiratory effects, to heart attacks and hospital visits, to fatal outcomes.