

County News

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NACo launches County Climate Protection Program

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With escalating attention given to climate change, one thing is apparent — counties are assuming a role as “agents of change” in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In March 2007, the NACo Board of Directors adopted a resolution calling on NACo to urge Congress to address global warming, regardless of its source. The resolution also called on NACo to provide a leadership role in the education, discussion, evaluation and decision-making processes regarding issues of global climate change affecting counties.

It can be challenging for a county to navigate the world of climate change while remaining mindful of local and regional conditions. NACo is working to make that process easier. The NACo County Climate Protection Program will support counties as they work to have a positive impact in their communities — reducing emissions, benefiting the environment and public health, and saving taxpayer dollars.

This new program will provide counties with best practices, tools and resources to assist them in developing and implementing successful climate change programs at home.

The first step for a county to participate in the program is to adopt a pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a numerical target. Because one size does not fit all, NACo offers counties a pledge template allowing them to select from existing national campaigns with quantifiable targets to reduce global warming, or to establish their own appropriate goal.

King County, Wash. has been a leader in addressing global warming. As the first county in the country to join the Chicago Climate Exchange, the county will work to



While there still appears to be lots of ice in this Antarctic summer landscape, a NASA survey done between 1992 and 2002 shows the continent as having lost much more ice to the sea than gained from snowfall.

have emissions in 2010 be 6 percent below average emissions from 1998 to 2001. The county is also currently working on a guidebook to help communities prepare for climate change impacts (see story page 7).

The guidebook will become part of ICLEI's (International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives) Climate Resilient Communities program, which is administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

ICLEI's Climate Resilient Communities program is also helping Miami-Dade County to concoct its own strategies for climate change adaptation (see story page 7).

In Arlington County, Va. the Fresh AIRE

(Arlington Initiative to Reduce Emissions) Campaign includes a goal that the Arlington County government will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 10 percent from 2000 to 2012.

Sarasota County, Fla. recently became the nation's first county to adopt the American Institute of Architects' 2030 Challenge. The challenge calls for the reduction of fossil fuel use in renovated and new buildings by 60 percent in 2010, 70 percent in 2015, 80 percent in 2020 and 90 percent in 2025. The ultimate goal is to design county buildings to be carbon-neutral by the year 2030 — that is,

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using no fossil-fuel energy and producing no greenhouse gases.

Other counties across the country have been reducing greenhouse gas emissions through improvements in their own county operations, especially the energy performance of county facilities. For example, the energy efficiency improvements that Story County, Iowa has made over the past several years have helped the county reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by more than 4,200 pounds a year.

Marinette County, Wis., a 2006 County ENERGY STAR Change a Light Campaign winner, encouraged individuals to change a light in their home to an energy-efficient one. The estimated savings was nearly 47,000 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions reduced.

While goals will differ, each step towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions, regardless of the source, can be a move in the right direction. And, counties will renew their pledge in order to maintain their participation in the program—providing a timetable to re-examine and establish new goals.

NACo believes the program will provide counties at any stage in addressing climate protection an opportunity to learn how they can play an active role, implement strategies, evaluate results and determine realistic adjustments for future targets.

Committed to peer-to-peer networking so as not to reinvent the wheel, NACo is building on work by Fairfax County, Va. to develop a searchable clearinghouse of policies and programs within areas including: energy efficiency, renewable energy options, land use planning, water quality, fleets, buildings, transportation, purchasing and education.

As each county works to develop a comprehensive climate protection plan—which will map steps to achieve the goal with necessary policy, program and budget commitments—they will submit pieces of their plan to an online, searchable clearinghouse as a resource for other counties.

(To obtain a copy of the pledge template in order to join the NACo County Climate Protection program, contact Kelly Zonderwyk at kzonderwyk@naco.org or 202/942-4224)

First NACo County Climate Protection Forum

For the first time, NACo is convening counties from across the nation to discuss climate change. This two-day dialogue and peer-to-peer networking opportunity will provide counties with best practices, tools and resources to assist them in developing and implementing a successful climate change program at home.

Elected county officials and staff will come from counties of all sizes and locations. Counties advanced in their climate efforts, those just beginning and those looking for more ideas and resources will all have something to learn.

Be sure to register early, this event is limited to the first 100 individuals!

The forum will:

- assist counties in understanding the role they may play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- provide an extensive opportunity to discuss current strategies, future goals and new methods to address climate change, especially regional collaboration
- demonstrate counties are engaged on this issue, and
- establish a future date for counties to individually host regional dialogues with key stakeholders on climate change.

For more information contact Kelly Zonderwyk at kzonderwyk@naco.org or 202/942-4224.

Register Today!

www.naco.org/climateforum

September 20 – 21, 2007

Washington, D.C.

ENERGY STAR Challenge for Counties

NACo and the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) ENERGY STAR program have partnered to bring counties across the country the new ENERGY STAR Challenge.

The ENERGY STAR Challenge encourages Americans to improve their energy efficiency by 10 percent or more. Counties play a vital dual role in the challenge: they lead by example by improving their own buildings—by participating in efforts such as the NACo ENERGY STAR Courthouse Campaign—and they leverage their relationships with private-sector organizations to motivate them to make energy-efficiency improvements.

Counties joining the ENERGY STAR Challenge have access to a wide variety of ENERGY STAR tools and resources to assist in their efforts to reduce the energy use of all buildings. Resources are already available to help counties learn how they can save energy in their own buildings.

A comprehensive ENERGY STAR Challenge Toolkit will be available at the upcoming NACo Annual Conference to help counties promote energy efficiency to their broader community, including commercial offices, retailers, healthcare organizations, schools, small businesses, congregations and others.

The ENERGY STAR Challenge can also help counties meet their communities' climate change goals, and other green and sustainable efforts. More than 65 percent of Americans recognize ENERGY STAR as a national symbol of energy efficiency. In 2006 alone, Americans, with the help of ENERGY STAR, saved \$14 billion on their energy bills and prevented the release of greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 25 million vehicles.

There is no need to wait to get involved. Join with counties such as Arlington County, Va.; Blue Earth County, Minn.; Calhoun County, Ala.; Story County, Iowa; and Arapahoe County, Colo., who have already joined and will be recognized as early participants.

(For more information visit www.energystar.gov/challenge or contact Kelly Zonderwyk at kzonderwyk@naco.org or 202/942-4224.)