

Confronted with the Climate Crisis

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“Nothing diminishes anxiety faster than action” -Walter Anderson. Understanding global warming and the political crises that escalate with it is a knowledge that can taint hope with too many bleak outcomes. Although this change in climate is global, efforts to mitigate and adapt on the local and regional scales have shown to have the most effective results. The possible routes communities may take are numerous and can be dependent on many factors. As a local non-profit organization Thurston Climate Action Team addresses pressing environmental issues through leadership from its members with political jurisdiction along with citizen activists, collaborations with local partners, and cohesion with committees who strive for similar progress.

With members who are either part of local jurisdiction government or citizens active in the green movement, TCAT has been able to take the leadership role in the community they envision. Participation with other organizations has spread positive progress in education, climate adaptation within the county and available grant funding. The teaming up with several other organizations through Thurston Regional Planning Council provided the opportunity to educate the community on the project Sustainable Thurston, an in depth guide to a sustainable Thurston county. Their plan involves many adaptation methods that can be implemented with ease at little cost to the private and public sectors. Committee members came together and

wrote the one million dollar grant that was accepted to help start the Thurston Economic Development Council, which now leads the program.

Phase one of Sustainable Thurston was identifying stakeholders and initial engagement, today the program is in phase two which includes modeling scenarios and strategies to achieve goals. The council has presented the project as a community objective which encourages the participation and thoughts of locals in each phase. TCAT is the listed contact on the program's webpage for citizens looking to share ideas and provide feedback, and community meetings are held to update and collaborate on progress. The diversity in the program stems from the range in highly dedicated partners, political involvement, and its unique regionally inclusive public/private process. The partners consist of organizations who work together to discuss plans involving the social, economic, and environmental issues present in the region. These partners have a strong sense of political jurisdiction between their members and put involvement in politics high on the list of priorities. The program's inclusive public/private process is supported by this high-level political involvement as well as large resident participation.

Another major effort for The Thurston Climate Action Team is the audacious goal of compiling the most comprehensive greenhouse gas emission inventory for Thurston County to date. Still in the process of preparing the report, TCAT plans to make the inventory available later this year to policymakers and residents alike. The inventory draws from several smaller reports previously put out by the Thurston Regional Planning Council, and the cities of Olympia, Tumwater and Lacey. To expand the portrait TCAT is now incorporating Puget Sound Energy's

residential and commercial emission estimates, the TRPC's estimates on public transportation emission and Thurston County's landfill waste impact. The hope is that this annual report will be able to better guide policy makers in setting effective goals and identifying sectors that can reduce emissions.

In an effort to jumpstart energy reduction activities, TCAT and the Economic Development Council have partnered to create the Energy Advisory Committee, which brings elected officials from throughout Thurston County, staff from The Evergreen State College, Intercity transit, LOTT Clean Water Alliance, Olympia Master builders and many other organizations together in the hope that they can answer the question of "How far and how fast should we pursue energy efficiency and renewable energy in our community?" In conjunction with the program grant money has been made available for homeowners and businesses to have energy use assessments done for their property. Furthermore with the help on the EDC, TCAT provides businesses in the area with information on implementing solar power arrays on their buildings.

Abstract:

With the impacts of climate change nearing a boil the Thurston Climate Action Team has committed itself to enabling community members with comprehensive mitigation strategies and adaptive techniques to maintain a quality of life that is comfortable, affordable, and sustainable. This report strives to inform the reader of the goals, means and impacts the Thurston Climate Action Team has by consolidating a variety of online resources published either by TCAT or one of its partners.

Research has revealed that the Thurston Climate Action Team employs a variety of strategies ranging from facilitating conversation among key players in the energy industry to providing small businesses with the information they need to determine if generating solar power is a viable option. In addition TCAT attempts to optimize currently implemented programs such as public transportation efforts and the rollout of bicycle corridors in response to their shortfalls and successes. To top off their work the Thurston Climate Action Team has made compiling an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions a priority so as to better inform policymakers and community members on where emissions can be reduced.

While evidence of their efforts can be seen throughout Thurston County, quantitatively measuring the effectiveness of their work must be reserved for a later date. With two major efforts, Sustainable Thurston and the Emission Inventory slated for 2013, perhaps soon we will have the means by which we can assess their success.