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DIRECTOR**

**Climate Action Program Briefing-
Climate Action and Natural Resources Committee 10-8 Meeting**

The following memo serves as an update to Council regarding Whatcom County initiatives led and supported by the Climate Action Program.

WA State Climate Regulations & Impacts to Whatcom County

WA State Code/ Regulation	Description	Impact to Whatcom County
WA Energy Code (SB 5854)	SB 5854 requires residential and nonresidential construction permitted under the 2031 state energy code to achieve a 70% reduction in annual net energy consumption. State energy codes will be adopted from 2013-2031 to incrementally move towards achieving the 70% reduction by 2031.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New County facility construction requirements for solar ready and electric vehicle infrastructure. • Anticipated additional technical support for C-PACER financing to meet energy code.
WA Clean Buildings Act (HB 1257)	<p>Requires all new and existing commercial buildings over 50,000 square feet to reduce their energy use intensity by 15%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Buildings greater than 220,000 square feet must comply by 2026 > Buildings greater than 90,000 square feet must comply by 2027 > Buildings greater than 50,000 square feet must comply by 2028 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing County facilities must meet energy use targets or pay compliance fees to Commerce: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Phase 1 (2026) includes Courthouse/ Jail ○ Phase 2 (2027) includes additional facilities, including Northwest Annex, Jail Work Center, Crisis Stabilization Center
WA Internal Combustion Engine Ban (SB 5974)	Establishes a target that, "all publicly owned and privately owned passenger and light duty vehicles of model year 2030 or later that are sold, purchased, or registered in Washington state be electric vehicles."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All light-duty vehicles purchased by Public Works Operations and Maintenance must be electric by 2030. • Increased capital costs for installation of electric vehicle infrastructure for fleet charging.

<p>WA Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA)</p>	<p>CETA applies to all electric utilities serving retail customers in Washington and sets specific milestones. By 2025, utilities must eliminate coal-fired electricity from their state portfolios; By 2030, utilities must be greenhouse gas neutral, with flexibility to use limited amounts of electricity from natural gas if it is offset by other actions. By 2045, utilities must supply Washington customers with electricity that is 100% renewable or non-emitting, with no provision for offsets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whatcom County has a Voluntary Long-Term Renewable Energy Service Agreement with Puget Sound Energy until 2030. Rates to the County have decreased due to PSE's completion of additional utility wind and solar projects
<p>WA Climate Commitment Act- CCA (E2SSB 5126)</p>	<p>The Climate Commitment Act (known as Cap and Invest) places an economy-wide cap on carbon to meet state GHG reduction targets. Based on an environmental justice review, 35-40% of investments by the state must be made in overburdened communities to reduce health disparities and create environmental benefits, with an additional 10% allocated for tribal programs and projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industries in Whatcom County regulated under the CCA include Northwest Pipeline, Puget Sound Energy, Darigold, bp Cherry Point, Philips 66, and Western Washington University. • CCA funding is the primary source of funding for local climate programs with \$92 million in grants awarded to organizations across the County
<p>WA Climate Planning (HB 1181)</p>	<p>Requires Washington's cities and counties to use the comprehensive plan to build community resilience and reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global climate change. The new law integrates climate planning into Washington's landmark Growth Management Act (GMA).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires development of a climate chapter with associated greenhouse gas reduction and resilience policies within chapter and across Comprehensive Plan by December 2025

Climate Action Program Technical Assistance- County Departments

County Department	Project Descriptions
<p>Facilities</p>	<p>Clean Buildings Act Compliance & Energy Audit Grant- compliance requirements for meeting Clean Building Act energy targets, including supporting Facilities’ application to Washington Association of Counties Energy Audit Grant.</p> <p>Facility Decarbonization Grant Applications- evaluation and application support for public agency and utility funding for electric vehicle charging infrastructure and solar funding to supplement available County EDI/ REET funds.</p>
<p>Public Works- Administration Division</p>	<p>Whatcom County Ferry Electrification- project management of Puget Sound Energy contract for evaluation of the existing electric distribution system surrounding the proposed Lummi Island Ferry charging sites and identification of planning level system improvement alternatives required to serve the estimated load.</p>
<p>Public Works- Maintenance and Operations</p>	<p>Whatcom County Fleet Electrification- project management of contract to determine funding strategy for light-duty fleet electric vehicle procurement and charging station opportunities at Central Shop, Girard, Parks & Recreation Main Office, and Civic Annex. Estimated costs and ownership model for fleet vehicles will be presented to Council for long term capital planning.</p>
<p>Public Works- Natural Resources</p>	<p>Lake Whatcom Management Program- provided strategic direction for new climate action policies. Planned coordination with City of Bellingham on future climate vulnerability assessments for the Lake Whatcom Watershed.</p>
<p>Public Works- Flood Division</p>	<p>Sea Level Rise/ Riverine Flooding- Multi-jurisdictional coordination to evaluate assets and ecosystems along Whatcom County’s marine shoreline and along the Nooksack River shoreline upstream to Deming at risk due to climate change scenarios. The assessment will inform and support development of needed improvements to shoreline and land use codes and initiate adaptation planning efforts in vulnerable communities.</p>

<p>Planning and Development Services-PDS</p>	<p>Comprehensive Plan- Climate Planning- Climate Action Manager lead for Commerce Climate Planning Grant to create climate chapter and meet state climate planning mandate for Comprehensive Plan update. Requirements include resilience policies to address every relevant climate-exacerbated hazard and greenhouse gas emissions policies address reducing emissions across all sources to reach net zero emissions by 2050.</p> <p>Code/ Regulatory Revisions- Public Works and PDS continue to coordinate work groups with technical experts to recommend amendments to codes to address climate policies. Additional regulatory amendments to meet climate requirements are anticipated in 2025 in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan.</p> <p>Conservation Easement Program/ Rural Lands Study- Public Works staff working with PDS to align goals of the Conservation Easement program and ongoing Rural Lands Study with carbon sequestration outcomes.</p>
<p>Parks and Recreation</p>	<p>Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Grants- recent work with Parks and Recreation staff to develop climate criteria for the Reconnecting Communities Pilot grant program application to fund preliminary engineering for Marine Drive Bridge Barrier Mitigation Study.</p> <p>Forest Management Planning- Public Works coordination with Parks on consultant contract for professional forest planning services to develop a comprehensive forest management plan for 9,600 acres of forested parklands in and adjoining the Lake Whatcom Watershed.</p> <p>Community Center Resilience- management of Commerce agreement to study Whatcom County owned and supported community centers for solar and microgrid feasibility. Supported four solar feasibility studies for: East Whatcom Regional Resource Center and Food Bank, Blaine Senior Center, Ferndale Senior Activity Center, and Lynden Community Center.</p>
<p>Health and Community Services</p>	<p>Wildfire Smoke & Heat Vulnerability Assessment- technical assistance for environmental health team to develop and identify public health impacts and risks associated with wildfire smoke and extreme heat events, to evaluate potential public health interventions, and to develop recommendations to reduce vulnerability to climate impacts. Further work is planned to organize climate summit with County departments and external partners.</p> <p>Environmental Justice and Health Disparities Assessment- working with Health to meet state requirements under HEAL Act and climate planning law (HB 1181) to identify climate exacerbated environmental health disparities in overburdened communities and for vulnerable populations.</p>

<p>Sheriff's Office- Division of Emergency Management</p>	<p>Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan- Climate Update- FEMA now requires that all updated local hazard mitigation plans assess the effects of climate change and other future conditions in the document's required risk assessment to maintain eligibility for funding. Staff has been working with the Sheriff's Office to evaluate existing plans against new climate requirements to identify gaps for the update.</p>
<p>Council</p>	<p>Forest Resilience Task Force- staff support for development of a comprehensive Whatcom County Forest Resilience Plan, which will include a framework for engagement with local, state, federal, and tribal governments and relevant stakeholders on issues relating to forest management and resilience.</p>

Climate Action Program Support- Communitywide Initiatives

<p>External Partner</p>	<p>Initiative Description</p>
<p>City of Bellingham, Opportunity Council, Sustainable Connections</p>	<p>Residential and Commercial Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates- funding agreement pending with Department of Commerce for \$1 million in Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates to install heat pumps and electrification upgrades for qualified residential and commercial facilities. Opportunity Council and Sustainable Connections will work with contractors to install equipment funded by CCA funded local government grants via the Community Energy Challenge.</p> <p>Electrification Campaign- City of Bellingham and Whatcom County are partnering to combine Department of Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Funds to help homeowners access available federal and utility rebates for residential electrification services. NW Clean Air Agency has pledged funding for Sustainable Connections to expand the program to Skagit and Island County.</p>
<p>Whatcom Council of Governments</p>	<p>Whatcom County Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Study- joint plan with Whatcom Council of Governments to evaluate existing electric vehicle infrastructure, analyze existing and upcoming financial incentives, review policies and codes impacting installation, identify charging sites needed to support countywide electric vehicle charging demand based on existing and anticipated infrastructure needs and provide order of magnitude estimates for expected installation costs.</p>
<p>King County & Puget Sound Climate Collaborative</p>	<p>Regional Collaboration for Better Outcomes in the Puget Sound Basin- Whatcom County is a member of the Puget Sound Climate Preparedness Collaborative, a network of local and county governments, Tribes, regional agencies, and other organizations in the Puget Sound basin working together to build resilience to the impacts of climate change. The grant to King County, with Whatcom County as a partner, will align climate preparedness programs regionally.</p>

<p>Whatcom County Climate Coordination Committee</p>	<p>Whatcom County Climate Coordination Committee- monthly staff group for staff of agencies working on climate related activities or developing climate related programs or projects. Facilitated by the Climate Action Manager and includes staff from City of Bellingham, Port of Bellingham, Bellingham School District, Nooksack Tribe, Lummi Nation, Western Washington University, Whatcom Council of Governments and other agencies.</p>
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Climate Action Program- State Advisory Committees

State Agency	State Advisory Committee
<p>Department of Commerce/ Department of Ecology</p>	<p>Washington State Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP)- as one of three local government members of the state CCAP advisory committee, the Climate Action Manager will advise the work of the Washington State Climate Action Partnership, advising lead agencies (Department of Commerce and Department of Ecology) on the development, engagement, and content of the CCAP.</p>
<p>Department of Ecology</p>	<p>Shoreline Management Act- Local Government Sounding Board- advise Ecology’s rulemaking process to amend chapters under the Shoreline Management Act and add requirements for local governments to address the impact of sea level rise and increased storm severity on people, property, and shoreline natural resources and the environment.</p>