

Climate Impact Advisory Committee
APPROVED Meeting Minutes



Date: March 4th, 2021
Location: Zoom

QUORUM	Y
Members Present	
William Bethel	X
Ginny Broadhurst	X
Kaylee Galloway	X
Sue Gunn	X
Steve Harrell	X
David Kershner	X
Katherine Kissinger	X
Ellyn Murphy	X
Imran Sheikh	X
Phil Thompson	X
Eddy Ury	X
STAFF Chris Elder	X

1) Call to Order

- Meeting started at 5:26pm

2) Review and approval of minutes from February Meeting

Dave motioned to approve the minutes with two suggestions

He suggested to add that Mark Buford is the head of the Northwest Clean Air Agency, since he only introduced himself as a Lummi Island resident.

He also suggested to fix the spelling of Alex Ramel's name on page 3.

Sue seconded the motion

Motion passed

3) Public Comment

Ray Kamada: Knowledgeable in the topic of decarbonization.

Brad Brown: A Whatcom County resident, just here to observe and listen to the meeting

Kelsie Blanthorn: Bellingham resident just listening in.

Carryn Vande Griend: Local government affairs for PSE, mentioned that there is a webinar for the PSE Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) preferred portfolio and clean energy action plan on March 5th

Atul Deshmane: PUD, asked Carryn to post the zoom link in the chat for the PSE Meeting

Carryn in Zoom Chat: <https://pse-irp.participate.online/meeting/march-5-2021-stochastic-analysis>

4) Natural Resources Strategies and Actions – Chris Elder

This presentation primarily focused on the Agriculture and Forestry chapters in the Natural Resources section.

(slide 2) overarching goals for the Land Use and Natural Resource section

Agriculture

(slide 3) 6 strategies for agriculture including, education, resilience, preventing land conversion, water conservation, emissions, and food systems

(slide 4) Education actions: educating the public, engaging farmers in the process, demonstration projects that increase carbon sequestration, there are some projects already underway.

(slide 5) Resilience actions: develop and implement carbon programs for farms like offsets etc. increase incentives for farmers. Protecting existing wetlands on farmlands. Introduce the concept of agroforestry in Whatcom County

(slide 6) Avoiding land conversion: this focuses on protecting established agricultural lands,

Water conservation: updating irrigation technologies.

(slide 7) map from the PDR program that denotes which lands should be prioritized for conservation

Ginny asked about the actions and the fact that they are primarily focused on techniques. She asked if there were any incentives available for farmers who want to switch to using their land for something more sustainable than what they are currently doing?

(slide 8) reducing emissions: incentives for farmers, switching to more sustainable technologies, allowing parts of their land to be used for renewable energy such as wind and solar.

Chris mentioned some mixed strategies and existing incentive programs such as expedited permitting for farmers who want to utilize modern farm management technology such as anaerobic digesters, as well as incentives for farmers who want to have solar or wind farms on their land in addition to their agricultural use

Ellyn asked about removing farms from the floodplains and mentioned that Paula Harris from the county, was trying to buy farm land that was along flood zones

Chris said that agriculture is considered a preferred use for floodplains, but it needs to be done correctly to avoid property damage, and he said he would like to see more riparian planting initiatives along the river corridor.

(slide 9) food system actions: prioritizing sale and distribution of locally produced items to facilities, stores, and schools in the county.

Eddy asked about incentivizing and pointed out that there are several barriers to implementing these technologies, and suggested editing this action and removing the part about streamlining permitting and that we need to have rigorous processes for ensuring ecosystem health.

Chris said that this action came from the community research project, and that he will update the language of the action to better reflect that.

Sonja Lyons in Zoom Chat: do these meetings get recorded and posted to the Whatcom YouTube?

Katie Kissinger in Zoom Chat: Meetings are recorded but I don't believe they are currently posted to the YouTube Channel. you can email Chris Elder after the meeting and he can send you a link to the recording.

Sue asked about zoning vs purchasing easements, and if our expensive land prices would incentivize industrial planning because larger farms would be more likely to buy land.

Atul in Zoom Chat: cold stream project on south fork is developing our template.

Chris: said that our recommendations are going to have more of a policy implication to really be able to have an impact on making Whatcom more climate friendly

Stevan Harrell in Zoom Chat: I visited them and was impressed by the rigor of the engineering and experimentation.

Atul Deshmane in Zoom Chat: the concerns on direct erase of water have led to a plan for indirect discharge through a buffer

Steve said that smaller plots around 20-40 acres would not be ideal for large industrial farms to buy. He asked about regenerative agriculture and if we could add in some kind of incentive for farmers who are interested in pursuing that.

Chris said that he was open to Steve adding a section on that into his current draft agricultural chapter.

Phil asked about rezoning strategies from slide 6

Chris said that rural land being rezoned to agriculture would help land be zoned to its preferred use.

Phil also asked about how the water strategies tie into issues surrounding fisheries

Chris said that fisheries and water are in their own chapter, Water Management within the Natural Resources section.

Forestry

Agriculture and Forestry are considered separate categories for now but that there has been some discussion within the Natural Resources group about combining the categories into one titled "Working Lands."

(slide 10) Forestry strategies: education, resilience, preventing conversion of lands, improving forest management, emissions, strengthen the forestry industry.

(slide 11) Education actions: focus on the public, engage foresters, demonstration projects, similar to the Agriculture section.

Eddy asked for clarification on what is included in the term non-timber forest products

Chris said it would include anything that does not come from trees, things like mushrooms, wildlife, etc.

(slide 12) resilience actions: develop carbon programs like offsets or trading etc. increasing sequestration, promoting reforestation, Exec. Sidhu's 1 million trees initiative.

Sue asked about kelp forests and for sequestration benefits

Chris said that he had not looked into kelp for the purposes of this report, he mentioned that the waters in the bay might not be within the jurisdiction of the county, and would more likely be controlled by DNR.

Katie said that in Washington state it is illegal to commercially harvest kelp which disincentivizes people from going through the effort to grow kelp.

Sue asked about growing kelp strictly for the purposes of sequestration

Katie mentioned that there has been some research done on kelp in conjunction with shellfish farms serving as a buffer for shellfish farms because kelp can reduce the effects of acidification making it easier for the oysters to grow.

Ginny Broadhurst in Zoom Chat: big permitting challenge with Corps of Engineers for kelp farming but is a great thing to pursue

William Bethel in Zoom Chat: Out of curiosity, why does the Corps of engineers make that permitting difficult?

*Response to William's question because it was not answered in the meeting. After looking it up it appears that there is not a national level permit that currently exists for seaweed, only shellfish. This makes it difficult for people in a state like Washington to open a kelp farm because they would need to go to a state that currently has a permitting process for seaweed. As of August 2020, the USACE has submitted a draft proposal to include a national permit to authorize seaweed aquaculture. Here's a link to an article with more information. – *Katie Kissinger*

<https://www.klgates.com/US-Army-Corps-Proposes-New-Nationwide-Permits-for-Seaweed-and-Finfish-Aquaculture-in-Coastal-Waters-and-Updates-the-Existing-Nationwide-Permit-for-Shellfish-Aquaculture-8-21-2020>

Ginny Broadhurst in Zoom Chat: a lot can be learned from the experience of Puget Sound Restoration Fund's work elsewhere in Puget Sound. I can't remember all the specifics.

Imran Sheikh in Zoom Chat: "Blue Carbon" is the term related to carbon sequestration in ocean ecosystems. John Rybczyk at WWU is an expert on it. The idea of Carbon Farming might also be applicable here. <https://www.marincarbonproject.org/>

(slide 13) actions to prevent conversion of forestry lands: increase the purchase of forestry conservation easements, PDR program. Remove the development potential from rural forest lands by re-zoning them to commercial forest lands.

(slide 14) PDR map of forests in Western Whatcom County

(slide 15) Actions relating to forest management techniques: preserving old growth forests, increase no harvest buffers near wetlands, fish bearing streams and sensitive areas, incorporating both regulatory and incentive-based actions.

(slide 16) Emissions actions: eliminate burning of waste, maximize carbon sequestration

(slide 17) Actions to strengthen the forest industry: developing innovative products to help with carbon storage and reduce emissions. Use locally sourced lumber for construction projects in the county.

Imran Sheikh in Zoom Chat: There is some evidence that application of compost increases carbon uptake in soils.

Atul Deshmane in Zoom Chat: Imran, soil can almost be its own section?

Steve asked about programs that turn forestry waste into energy and jet fuel. He asked if it would be possible to include recommendations for a similar program in Whatcom County.

Chris said that proposing a biofuel incentive could have the unintended consequence of increasing the rate of deforestation, and degrading the landscape.

Steve clarified that the program he mentioned was using waste from slag piles and routine thinning to help larger trees grow and not specifically growing forests to use for biofuels.

Ellyn said that the problem with programs like that is that it is very expensive to retrieve that waste because it is often not easy to access by road. Ellyn also suggested that Chris add fire breaks to his recommended strategies.

Atul asked about adaptation and the connection between logging and water quality. He asked if there was a way we could include that information in the forestry chapter.

Chris said that he has been considering how to best include that in the plan.

Ellyn asked if we should have a second interim meeting to discuss and review the strategies and actions for the Water Resources and Ecosystems sections.

Steve motioned to have another meeting

Sue seconded that opinion

Motion passed, date is TBD, March 18th was suggested.

Kaylee in Zoom Chat: I just can't do next Thursday.

William said he has a meeting until 6:30pm on Thursdays.

Eddy said he couldn't do the 25th.

Steve suggested we have the meeting at 6:30pm and just go for one hour since there is only one agenda item.

5) GHG Inventory Presentation to Council; Prioritizing Key Actions – Ellyn Murphy

(slide 2) graphics of the county emissions from the Cascadia report vs the version that will go in the finished report based on the sections we are writing.

(slide 3) graphic of the fuel mix used to generate electricity in Whatcom County.

(slide 4) graphic from the Cascadia report that we will use in our CAP to illustrate emissions targets for the County.

Imran Sheikh in Zoom Chat: How much of those industrial emissions were Alcoa?

Katie Kissinger in Zoom Chat: I think it was about 26% of industrial emissions were from Alcoa. Sue could probably confirm.

Eddy Ury in Zoom Chat: Imran, Intalco averaged 1.2 million tpy CO2e direct emissions (2012-2018); (slide 5) a proposed framework for what might be included in our proposed mitigation actions based on recommendations from Bill Gates' book *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster*.

1. Provide motivation to move to a green economy.
2. Community wide programs sponsored by county staff.
3. Promoting policies that will have a major impact on decarbonization by 2050.

(slide 6) examples of intermediate goals, and ensuring that we don't let them get in the way of long term decarbonization.

(slide 7) Exec. Sidhu advised that we should try to express action items in terms of policies. This will make council more likely to act on our recommendations.

(slide 8) Proposed categories for recommended policies

1. *Code/ Regulations* (at both the county and municipal levels)
2. *Incentives and finance tools* (funding can come from multiple sources, gov. grants, private etc.)
3. *County leadership in program implementation, collaboration and advocacy*

(slide 9) Proposed timeline for implementation roadmap based on key actions and policy categories.

Ellyn asked for feedback on the proposed timeline and the policy categories, and opened up the floor for committee discussion.

Phil said that in writing his chapter they have been thinking about what the county's role in implementation is and how specific we should be in our recommendations. Phil mentioned that they are working on prioritizing their actions by order of importance. He suggested adding in a graphic that could clearly illustrate the top priority actions.

Ellyn said that she was considering how the actions should be worded and if the wording should include what the end goal would look like. She said that the purpose of this graphic is to simplify things

Steve: asked about using a chart for goals as opposed to actions and if it would be too much information to add to one graphic to add the actions and goals in one graphic.

Ellyn said that the key actions should be further discussed in your chapter so it wouldn't be necessary to include the description of the actions in the graphic.

Phil said that the goals and a summary of the action are listed in the graphic then the actions are further discussed in the body of the chapter.

Steve said that the timeline should be condensed when it is added to the roadmap section. He suggested adding page numbers to the graphic so readers can easily reference individual actions

Ellyn said that it had been previously proposed to have a description of the strategies in the text and then a detailed table in an appendix with the strategies and actions listed out. She asked if the page numbers on the graphic would refer to such an appendix.

Phil said that they are currently referencing to an appendix in the transportation chapter.

Dave asked about the specificity of the actions, and suggested that the more specific we are the more likely an action is to get done and it provides a way for us to hold the county accountable. He endorsed the previously proposed action of passing a resolution to fund a study.

Sue asked if there is a separate conclusion or if the roadmap is the conclusion?

Steve said that he has been drafting the roadmap to be the concluding chapter.

Sue asked about a resolution for Whatcom County to declare a climate emergency in order to make the process of implementing our proposed strategies and actions more attainable and that recommendations would be more likely to be taken more seriously if a declaration was made.

Eddy said that the timeline slide was a bit confusing and that we need clarification as to what we mean by actions, strategies, and goals etc. so it is consistent.

Katie in Zoom Chat: these are the definitions I have been using:

1. A *goal* is a high-level statement of a policy objective that can be tied to a need statement, generally described as an effort directed towards an end. Policy goals often specify the desired outcome (performance), the specific end date (time) and the assigned amount of resources (resources).
2. A *strategy* is the approach to achieve a goal, delineated into actionable measures.
3. A *measure* is a more discrete specification of a strategy.
4. An *action* item is a documented event, task, activity, or action that needs to take place, in discrete units.

Ellyn said that definitions were agreed upon last May and that she can send those definitions out to the committee again for the benefit of the new members. And that for this final section these are more “objectives” which require the implementation of multiple strategies and actions over a specified timeline.

Eddy suggested moving up the timeline for many of these proposed objectives to 2022.

Steve said, tying into Dave’s comment that in our specifics we should include dates and a timeframe. But to also do so in a way that preserves the flexibility and adaptability.

Ellyn said that those can be referred to as *objectives*, since we have existing definitions for goals, strategies and actions.

David Kershner in Zoom Chat: Thanks, Steve. I agree with your analysis.

Ginny Broadhurst in Zoom Chat: Out of sequence - but some additional info on kelp - it is specifically called out in the shoreline management act so the county does have authority for kelp protection through the shoreline master program. worth considering making a statement or goal to protect and restore kelp. It is one of the few direct things we can do to mitigate ocean acidification locally.

Katie Kissinger in Zoom Chat: Good to know Ginny! I will check that out for the Natural Resources section.

Ellyn said that she is currently looking for committee member that would like to volunteer to research potential funding sources for different areas. And to contact her if you are interested in

that. She is also looking for volunteers to review completed sections actions to better fit them to policy proposals.

Chris: said that we should strive to recommend the best path forward and that the more we design this plan around things the county has already approved, the more likely it is for the actions to get done. He suggested we think about our role in the future as a committee after the CAP is finished.

6) Section 4: Roadmap for County Implementation – Steve Harrell

Updates

Steve Mentioned that he could send his section out to the entire committee to review if there was interest.

Katie Kissinger in Zoom Chat: I like that idea Steve.

(slide 2) discussed some changes in the recommendations for the climate advisor position.

1. They should report directly to the County Exec.
2. They should not be located in a single department.

(slide 3) the role of CIAC post CAP: serve as advisors to the new County Climate Advisor (mitigation and adaptation, changes to county plan, budgetary priorities) , participate in media campaigns for the CAP suggested strategies and actions, developing and participating in a curriculum plan for multiple levels within the county (public, schools, stakeholders).

Steve suggested that in the future when positions on the committee open up that he would like to see people from more diverse backgrounds appointed to the committee such as, people with farming backgrounds as well as getting some tribal representation.

Katie pointed out from her experiences attending the previous council meetings in the last two years where members were appointed that there are not a lot of people with such backgrounds that apply to these positions. She Suggested that the committee positions should be better advertised as they are currently just listed on the county website where they don't get a lot of traffic. If they were listed in other forms of media like online or in the paper, we might have a better chance of attracting a people with more diverse backgrounds and expertise.

Ellyn said that having a senior climate advisor, would help because they could suggest specific people depending on the expertise and representation needed to fill the advisory roles.

(slide 4) added new sections to the roadmap:

1. Leadership
2. Data
3. Action

Steve discussed the community research project and how we can use those findings to help create a roadmap that is successfully implemented and fills the gaps in the community when it comes to climate solutions. The report determined that the county was missing leadership, data, and action.

(slide 5) Timetable sections added to the roadmap chapter: specific actions for the built and natural environments.

(slide 6) The proposed timeline layout. (same as Ellyn's presentation earlier)

7) Status of Draft Climate Action Plan Chapters & Reviews – All

Revised draft chapters are due by **March 19th**, so that the draft CAP can go to council by **April 13th** and then our presentation of the draft will be on **April 20th**

Phil asked about the assembly of the report and the presentation of the draft. He asked about if we are going to have a reviewer like we had previously discussed.

Chris said that there is an issue with the funding and that it has not yet been released, he is waiting on an update from the Exec.'s office and will report back by the next special meeting.

Eddy asked about the draft outline and schedule, he said that the timeline seems a bit rushed and that we shouldn't be afraid to take our time on this to get it right. Eddy also said that he has been assisting Sue in writing the Industry chapter.

Ellyn said that the timeline is rushed because it will be harder to get meetings scheduled in the summer but that it is flexible if push comes to shove.

Phil said that we could be utilizing the dropbox so that we can streamline the review process since the entire committee has access to that.

Sue said that she has gotten a lot of feedback from stakeholders, and she is having to make substantial edits to her recommendations.

Kaylee Galloway in Zoom Chat: Land use update: have received feedback from 2 county staff and working with Chris to incorporate. I have not sent to SMEs, so if you have feedback or interest to review, please let me know.

Stevan Harrell in Zoom Chat: Where is the natural resources group in terms of tribal feedback?

Katie Kissinger in Zoom Chat: Steve, we don't have a lot of tribal contacts for Natural Resources, I see that Lummi Island Heritage is on our list of stakeholders, but if you know of any other folks we could reach out to for review, we would definitely be interested.

Stevan Harrell in Zoom Chat: I'll email you, because I have talked to some folks in Lummi Natural Resources who are expecting the opportunity.

Stevan Harrell in Zoom Chat: I take it agriculture is covered, Kaylee?

Kaylee Galloway in Zoom Chat: Chris is leading Ag - I think his next step is to send to us :)

8) Update on State Legislation Impacting Climate Action – Kaylee Galloway & Eddy Ury

Eddy said that they can send an update out to the committee via email since the meeting has already run over time.

He mentioned that several bills have already passed the house, and are likely to pass the senate next week, and that the clean energy standard might face a hurdle in the Senate transportation committee. The Washington Strong proposal had a hearing this morning with a lot of support and the state oil industries have taken a neutral stance on the proposal.

Some bills that did not make the cutoff include 1084, a solar bill, a transportation bill, and a building materials bill.

Kaylee said many house bills that have not passed by March 9th will be considered dead. Unless they are not necessary to implement the budget. Budgets will be released by the end of the month.

Kaylee Galloway in Zoom Chat: LCFS is 1091

Stevan Harrell in Zoom Chat: You can look on the legislature website and search by topic—climate, fuel, electricity, etc.

9) Old/New Business, Adjourn

Eddy Shared some New Business: there is a state rule making for greenhouse gas assessment projects that have an open comment period. He mentioned that he could send that out.

- Meeting ended at 7:47 pm

Next meeting scheduled for April 1, 2021

Recorded By: Katherine Kissinger, contact kissinger.katherine@gmail.com for edits to the draft.
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