

GREENHOUSE GAS ACCOUNTING AND REPORTING NEWS

Helping Federal leaders track the world of GHG accounting.

National Developments

Suit Declares Atmosphere a Public Trust

Our Children's Trust, an Oregon-based nonprofit, led a recent series of state and federal lawsuits in hopes of using the judicial system to force stronger governmental intervention and regulation for GHG emissions. On May 4, 2011, a group of attorneys began filing legal action "on behalf of children and young adults" in favor of declaring the atmosphere a "public trust," a tactic that has been used before to force environmental regulation.

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Although the outcome of these lawsuits remains uncertain, the plaintiffs are hoping to challenge what they see as the failures of the government in addressing climate change.

New Bill Creates Energy Efficiency Reporting Standards for Federal Agencies

On May 11, Delaware Senator Tom Carper introduced the Reducing Federal Energy Dollars Act, which would require federal agencies to report energy use reductions for new federal buildings. Under the bill, agencies would be required to submit reports containing information on energy and water usage as well as emissions of GHGs. If the bill were to pass, federal agencies would need to include energy use data broken down into both individual buildings as well as individual systems such as lighting or heating.

[Read a breakdown of the bill by the U.S. Green Building Council Here.](#)

Improved Fuel Efficiency Standards will Soon Impact Agencies

Recently, Transportation secretary Ray La Hood announced that the Obama administration was on track to release new fuel economy standards for cars and light trucks beyond 2017. On May 25th, the DOT and EPA unveiled new fuel economy labels. The new labels offer a radical change to a fuel economy labeling program that has existed for more than 30 years. By providing more efficiency information, such as annual fuel costs and savings and environmental impact ratings for every vehicle, agencies will be better informed to make decisions when purchasing a new vehicle.

The new labels, which are part of the DOT and EPA's ongoing efforts to improve the fuel efficiency and environmental impact of vehicles, will be employed starting with 2013 vehicle models, although automakers can voluntarily adopt the labels for 2012 models.



New fuel economy labels such as this one, will be displayed on gasoline, gasoline-electric hybrid, and full electric vehicles.

Local, State, and Regional Developments

Ruling on GHG Permitting in Texas Gives Authority to the EPA

Last month, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a final Federal Implementation Plan (FIP) under section 110 of the Clean Air Act giving the EPA responsibility for authorizing and issuing Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) permits for GHG emissions in Texas. The final FIP was issued for Texas after it was determined by the EPA that although the State Implementation Plan (SIP) does and will continue to give Texas the authority to administer PSD permits for conventional pollutants, it did not authorize permitting responsibilities for GHG emissions. The EPA has had GHG permitting authority in the state under an interim FIP since January 2011.

A petition for review in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit has since been filed by the state of Texas in reaction to the [EPA ruling](#).

Changes in RGGI Membership

New Hampshire chooses to continue its allegiance to the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) while [New Jersey pulls out of the program](#). The New Hampshire Senate voted 16-8 to remain engaged with RGGI, a program for Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states that sets a cap on carbon emissions for power plants.

According to New Jersey Governor Christie the state is leaving RGGI because, "after extensive review with the DEP [Department of Environmental Protection] and others in my administration, our analysis of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative or RGGI reveals that this program is not effective in reducing greenhouse gases and is unlikely to be in the future". In response, several RGGI states

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have offered [official statements](#) reaffirming their commitment to the program. CO₂ Allowance Auctions are slated to continue as previously scheduled.

International Developments

Proposal to Reduce HFCs in Addition to Montreal Protocol

A joint proposal submitted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico calls for an 85% reduction of hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) use by 2033. This proposal follows suit with the 1987 *Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer*, which phased out chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons. These substances were replaced with HFCs, which, though not ozone depleting, have a significantly higher global warming potential than carbon. The impetus behind this proposal is the acknowledgment of the challenge to meet the Montreal Protocol while not harming the world's climate. This is the first step in following through on the Meeting of the Parties held last year, where 90 countries declared that they would look to convert to environmentally friendly, non-ozone depleting substances.

Reducing the use of HFCs could affect mitigation strategies agencies are pursuing as they reduce GHG emissions in compliance with E.O. 13514.

US and China to work together on Climate Change

At the 3rd round of US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, the US and China [agreed to work together](#) on greenhouse



gas monitoring. This cooperation brings together resources from both the Chinese Meteorological Administration (CMA) and the US National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Scientists from both countries will support each other to increase their understanding of how GHGs behave and learn more about how the carbon cycle works in hopes of improving decision making regarding climate change policy.

Offsets and Renewable Energy Credits

IPCC Releases Renewable Energy Report

This May the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a special report entitled [Renewable Energy Sources and Climate Change Mitigation](#). The report states that by mid-century 80% of the world's energy supply could come from renewable energy (RE) sources. Though reaching this amount is dependent on national action through intentional public policies that would favor these sources and make it easier for them to compete in the marketplace.

The report assessed a broad range of RE penetration scenarios and RE technolo-

gies. The six major technologies included were:

- Bioenergy
- Direct solar energy
- Geothermal energy
- Hydropower
- Ocean energy
- Wind energy

All scenarios indicate that renewables will be an increasing part of the energy market. See the blue box below for key findings.

Technical Developments

Assessment of Natural Gas Vehicles

Natural gas is used in a portion of the US vehicle fleet (e.g., city buses) at present. A recent issue brief by Resources for the Future focuses on the potential role of natural gas vehicles in moving the US toward a lower carbon vehicle fleet. The brief looks at the potential for light-duty vehicles to run on compressed natural gas and for heavy-duty trucks to run on liquefied natural gas.

The brief concludes that natural gas could be a reasonably cost-effective alternative for heavy-duty trucks, depending on how conditions develop, but not for light-duty vehicles. Greater accessibility to fueling stations, technological advances in vehicle design, and changes in fuel prices could change the incentives toward more natural gas vehicles. Read the brief [here](#).

Key Findings from the Renewable Energy Report (IPCC)

"With consistent climate and energy policy support, renewable energy sources can contribute substantially to human well-being by sustainably supplying energy and stabilizing the climate." –Ottmar Edenhofer, Co-Chair of IPCC Working Group III

The new IPCC report on renewable energy (RE) assesses the mitigation of climate change. Below are some of the report's key findings:

- Developing countries have >50 % of current global capacity for RE
- Technical potential of RE technologies exceeds current global energy demand
- Vast majority of RE resources are untapped (one estimate: 97%)
- A challenge is integrating RE into existing energy supply systems and end use sectors
- Renewable energy capacity grew in 2009: grid-connected solar power grew by >50%, wind capacity by >30%, and solar water/heating by >20%, geothermal by 4%, and hydropower by 3%
- Hydropower is the largest RE source in the electricity sector



Globally, hydropower is the largest source of renewable energy for electricity