

Oregon Global Warming Commission 2020 Biennial Report to the Legislature

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

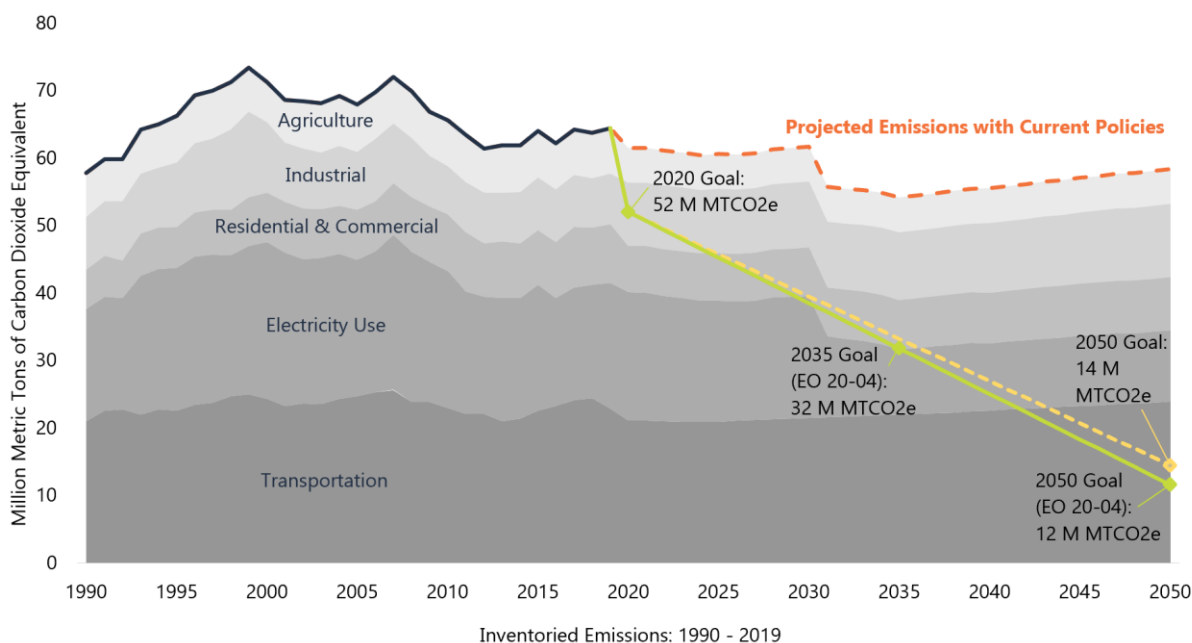
Facing the Climate Problem

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's *Global Warming of 1.5°C* special report makes it clear that we are in an all-hands-on-deck climate crisis with a need for faster, more ambitious, and sustained action across all economic sectors – including how we use and manage our natural and working lands. Climate change and the secondary effects it triggers impact human health and safety, our infrastructure, economic growth, food and water supplies, the environment we love, and the fish and wildlife that inspire us. The costs of inaction are significant and growing. Since the 1980s, the U.S. alone has sustained 279 weather and climate disasters; the direct cost of which have exceeded \$1.825 trillion and taken more than 14,223 lives. The number of events, costs, and deaths have increased decade-over-decade throughout this period. This year will be no exception to that trend.

Here in Oregon, the impact of climate change could not be more evident than the tragedies experienced in 2020, from the extreme runoff event that caused damage to and closed I-84 and flooded homes in the Pendleton area in the winter, to the extensive drought declarations and the devastating fires experienced in the fall. Climate change is an equity issue, multiplying a series of threats—from food and housing insecurity to health hazards— that are already facing disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, including low-income, Black, Indigenous, and rural households.

To be clear and to the point, Oregon has not made the progress envisioned in the Oregon Global Warming Commission's [Roadmap to 2020](#). We are not on track to meet our 2020 emission reduction goal. Preliminary 2019 sector-based emissions data exceeds the state's 2020 emissions reduction goal by 26 percent or 13 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e), erasing all of the gains we had made since 2010. While it needs to be updated, our current projection estimates that we will miss the 2035 and the 2050 goals set forth in [Governor Brown's Executive Order 20-04](#) by 23 and 54 million metric tons CO₂e respectively.

Figure 1: Oregon Past and Projected Greenhouse Gas Emissions Compared to Goals (Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, 2020)



How can we get back on track?

The OGWC has received a growing body of public comments from Oregonians. Most express frustrations that our actions have not kept pace with the scope of the crisis and call on the OGWC to set a tone of extreme urgency with “an unequivocal and immediate call to action.” Meeting our climate mitigation goals will require actions that have cross-cutting economic, social, and cultural impacts, as well as actions focused on individual sectors. Governor Brown’s Executive Order 20-04 is a significant addition to previous efforts to address climate change in Oregon.

Over the course of the last two years, the OGWC has discussed a wide range of topics. We reviewed the state agencies’ EO 20-04 response plans and gathered information on the most important elements each of the agencies has proposed. We have also looked beyond what the agencies have authority to do today to identify actions agencies need new authority to advance. In the 2020 biennial report, the OGWC strongly recommends that the Legislature fully fund rulemaking and agency work plans called for in EO 20-04 and highlights 36 additional actions that should be taken to help Oregon get back on track toward our climate mitigation goals.

Benefits of Climate Action

Early action to mitigate and adapt to climate change has the potential to significantly benefit Oregon’s communities, our economy, and our environment. Well-designed climate mitigation actions can make our citizens healthier and our communities more resilient, especially communities that have suffered the greatest impacts from climate change as well as many other social injustices. Businesses can benefit too. As carbon becomes more constrained, businesses that reduce their GHG emissions’ footprint will have a significant market advantage. Similarly, jurisdictions with a low-carbon, low-cost energy supply and supportive policies for reducing GHG emissions will be well positioned to attract new businesses and encourage business expansion in their communities.

The complete 2020 Biennial Report to the Legislature and past Commission reports are available online:
<https://www.keeporegoncool.org/reports/>

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