

FAQs: Western Climate Initiative and Oregon's Faith Community

What is the Western Climate Initiative?

The Western Climate Initiative (WCI) is a collaborative effort between seven western states and three Canadian provinces to develop regional strategies to reduce global warming pollution. As of April 2008, the states involved include Arizona, California, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and Washington; and the Canadian provinces include British Columbia, Manitoba, and Quebec. Additionally, many other jurisdictions have Observer status in the WCI.

What is the goal of the WCI?

The Governors and Premiers adopted a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions across the region 15% below 2005 levels by 2020 from all major sources.

How did Oregon Interfaith Power and Light Become Involved in the WCI?

The Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, recognizing the moral importance of environmental issues, and global warming in particular, has housed important projects in the Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns for over 15 years. One of these projects, Oregon Interfaith Power and Light, has been training congregations and installing hands-on renewable and conservation measures across all of Oregon, while also advocating for strong policy measures in Salem and Washington D.C.

Now that the federal government has failed in leading the nation on global warming policy, the WCI has become the most significant effort in North America to control global warming pollution. And OIPL is taking a lead role among faith groups to involve the faith community in the timely and essential WCI regional effort.

What Role Can the Faith Community Play in Oregon and the WCI?

The faith community adds an important voice advocating for moral and equitable solutions to the critical threat global warming brings to all of Earth's inhabitant's. In Oregon, the faith perspective has already been present in the development of global warming actions taken so far, and is poised to play the same role in forming the solutions at the regional level through the WCI.

OIPL works with a large diverse coalition of organizations called the Western Climate Advocates Network (WeCAN). We encourage Oregon's faith organizations, clergy and laypeople to take every opportunity available to let their voices be heard while WCI is developing a plan, and while that plan is implemented in Salem. We can assist and provide avenues for participating directly into the WCI process and for contributing to the region-wide WeCAN advocacy.

How will the WCI partners meet their goal?

By August 2008, the Governors and Premiers will complete the design of a region-wide market-based plan to meet the 15% reduction goal. They will sign a Memorandum of Agreement that will commit each state and province to implement the plan. Each state and province will develop their specific approaches to meeting the regional agreement, subject to the structural design elements in the plan. In many cases, this will require either new regulations or new legislation. Full implementation of the region-wide market based plan will likely occur in 2012.

What will the WCI plan do?

The major element plan will be the establishment of a system that would set a cap on greenhouse gases across the seven states and three provinces, and then allow companies to buy or trade pollution credits to meet the required cap. The WCI market mechanism will be the first in the West to incentivize major companies for cutting their global warming pollution. It will also be the first program in the country that caps greenhouse gases from all major sectors of the economy, not just electric utility companies.

The plan will also identify a number of complementary policies for states and provinces to adopt to help meet the regional goal, where an alternate system of regulation is more appropriate.

How will the WCI integrate with a federal climate plan?

The WCI gives state and provincial partners an opportunity to lead their nations by shaping meaningful climate policy for the West that guarantees success for the region, and that serves as a strong model.

The WCI partners are committed to finalizing a plan that can be integrated into a program when adopted by Congress. Given the aggressive timeframe of the WCI process, the regional cap and trade program will likely inform the next version of federal climate legislation that will be debated by the new Congress of the United States starting in 2009.

How can my organization or faith community get involved? Get in touch with Oregon Interfaith Power and Light, a project of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. Join us for a training, forum or our February 2009 Energy and Climate Stewardship Advocacy Day. Participate in advocacy actions and legislative visits. Learn about the faith foundations for action.

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