

Executive Summary

THE ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHALLENGE

Over the course of a year, through a process that engaged over 125 stakeholders and received input from over 200 citizens, the 29 members of Governor John Lynch's Climate Change Policy Task Force developed this Climate Action Plan which is aimed at achieving the greatest feasible reductions in greenhouse gas emissions while also providing the greatest possible long-term economic benefits to the citizens of New Hampshire. The most significant reductions in both emissions and costs will come from substantially increasing energy efficiency in all sectors of our economy, continuing to increase sources of renewable energy, and designing our communities to reduce our reliance on automobiles for transportation. In essence, a response to climate change and our economic future are inextricably tied to how we produce our energy and how much energy we use. Future economic growth in New Hampshire as well as mitigation of, and adaptation to, a changing climate will depend on how quickly we transition to a new way of living that is based on a far more diversified energy mix, more efficient use of energy, and development of our communities in ways that strengthen neighborhoods and urban centers, preserve rural areas, and retain New Hampshire's quality of life.

THE OPPORTUNITY

New Hampshire's Climate Action Plan presents an opportunity to:

- Spur economic growth through investment in our own state's economy of monies currently spent on energy imports.
- Create jobs and economic growth through development of in-state sources of energy from renewable and low-emitting resources, and green technology development

and deployment by New Hampshire businesses.

- Avoid the significant costs of responding to a changing climate on the state's infrastructure, economy, and the health of our citizens.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR FORESTS

Preserving our working forests and avoiding conversion of our forest lands to other purposes will be critical to the success of New Hampshire's Climate Action Plan. New Hampshire is currently 84 percent forested, and the forest products industry has been and will continue to be a key component of our state's economy. In addition, our tourism and outdoor recreation economies are heavily dependent on the health of our forests. Sustainably managed forests in New Hampshire provide a broad range of benefits, including: the ability to absorb and store large amounts of carbon; renewable supply of wood for heating, lumber, and a variety of forest products; and recreational opportunities.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Force recommends that New Hampshire strive to achieve a long-term reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. The goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050 has been adopted by numerous states, cities and organizations¹. This goal is based on the reductions that climate scientists believe to be necessary to stabilize greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at or below 450 parts per million CO₂. It has been projected that stabilizing the concentrations of greenhouse gases at this level will avoid the most severe and catastrophic potential impacts of climate change².

In order to move toward this long-term goal and provide the greatest economic opportunity to the state of New Hampshire, the Task Force recommends 67 actions to:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from buildings, electric generation, and transportation.
- Protect our natural resources to maintain the amount of carbon sequestered.
- Support regional and national initiatives to reduce greenhouse gases.
- Develop an integrated education, outreach and workforce training program.
- Adapt to existing and potential climate change impacts.

Based on the greenhouse gas emission reductions projected for the recommended actions, the Task Force has chosen a mid-term goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 20 percent below 1990 levels by 2025. All of the recommended actions can be implemented immediately or through a phased-in approach that can expand implementation as technology evolves and economic means become available. The sooner reductions are accomplished, the greater the economic benefit; actions can either begin more quickly to provide a fairly steady rate of greenhouse gas emission reductions or they could be delayed, thus requiring larger reductions at a later time. **Delays in achieving reductions would result in increased implementation costs, thus reducing their economic benefit and making it more difficult to reach the long-term goal.**

To achieve the goals in the Plan, the Task Force recommends the formation of a public/private partnership – the

New Hampshire Energy and Climate Collaborative – to oversee and guide early implementation of the NH Climate Action Plan. Effectively, the Collaborative will be “the keeper of the Plan.” The primary purpose of the Collaborative will be to track and facilitate implementation of the Plan’s recommendations, and to report to the Governor, Legislature, and general public on progress toward achieving the desired outcomes.

New Hampshire’s Climate Action Plan will benefit the economy, increase state and regional energy security, and improve environmental quality. By implementing the actions recommended by the Task Force, New Hampshire will achieve substantial emission reductions beginning immediately, using cost-effective, available technology. The greatest reductions would come from improvements in the building sector, followed by the transportation and the electric generation sectors. These emission reductions are associated with significant reductions in energy consumption. The total impact of the recommended actions will be sufficient to place New Hampshire on a track to achieve substantial reductions in the mid-term and to be well placed to achieve the more aggressive reductions over the long-term. Additional measures will be needed in the long-term to achieve the 80 percent below 1990 levels reduction target. Such measures are likely to be based on the widespread adoption of new and advanced technologies.