## Meeting unveils Minnesota's Climate Action Plan to reduce GHG emissions

About 200 people, including Lt. Governor Tina Smith and leaders from state agencies, nonprofits, and businesses, attended a meeting titled "Building Minnesota's Climate Action Plan" on July 20 at the Science Museum of Minnesota in Saint Paul. The meeting, led by the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB), reviewed key findings from EQB's recently released Climate Solutions and Economic Opportunities (CSEO) report (pdf) and discussed action steps to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and grow the economy.

The meeting was a chance for the Climate Subcommittee of EQB to unveil strategies to help Minnesota reduce GHG emissions by 30% by 2025 and 80% by 2050, goals laid out in the Next Generation Energy Act passed in 2007 by the Minnesota Legislature. Minnesota has made progress in reaching those goals, but it is not on track to meet either of them.

"Minnesota has long been a national leader on environmental protection and energy innovations, and we are committed to continuing that tradition of leadership," said Mike Rothman, commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Commerce. "That's why we are all here this afternoon."

Rothman pointed out that many of the strategies analyzed in the CSEO report require changes in how our electricity is generated and consumed—changes that promise positive environmental and economic impacts. Many of the "immediate-impact policies" discussed in the report focus on increased deployment of clean energy, which includes both renewable energy and energy efficiency. These policies would account for 64% to 79% of the GHG reductions the analysis shows could be made between now and 2030.

Jessica Burdette, State Energy Office manager of energy efficiency programs, reviewed the "immediate-impact policies" at the meeting. Increasing the Renewable Electricity Standard stands out as a policy option with significant potential to reduce GHG emissions, create jobs, and strengthen our economy, while reducing our dependence on out-of-state fossil fuel energy sources, she said. The analysis shows that a 50% Renewable Electricity Standard alone (the current standard requires that 25% of electric sales come from renewable resources by 2025) would result in more than one quarter of the total greenhouse gas reductions needed to reach Minnesota's 2030 target.

In addition to renewable resources, great opportunity exists to reduce emissions and save money via energy efficiency. Efficiency opportunities identified in the report include expanding utility conservation improvement programs, increasing combined heat and power systems, broadening implementation of Minnesota's Sustainable Buildings (SB) 2030 initiative, and increasing efficiency efforts for wastewater treatment facilities. Increased application of SB 2030 would meet nearly 20% of the greenhouse gas reductions needed to achieve the 2030 target.

*Immediate-impact policy options for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions*

| Policy options | 2030 annual in-state GHG reduction (CO2 e-tons) | % Reduction towards 2030 target | NPV costs/savings 2015-2030 ($2014MM) | Average annual employment (full and part-time) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increase the renewable electricity standard to 50% | 14 | 27 | -404 | 1,820 |
| Increase the renewable electricity | 8 | 15 | -620 | 1,510 |

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| standard to 40% | | | | |
| Retire and repower coal plants | 7 | 13 | 752 | 310 |
| Increase energy efficiency requirements 2.5% (CIP) | 5 | 10 | -1,882 | 1,560 |
| Increase energy efficiency requirements 2% (CIP) | 5 | 10 | 1,272 | N/A |
| Combined heat and power (CHP) | 5 | 10 | -1,112 | 2,330 |
| Zero energy building codes (SB2030) | 10 | 19 | -2,050 | 2,750 |
| Wastewater treatment facilities energy efficiency | .07 | .14 | -56 | 80 |

The 44-page CSEO report also details:

- long-term strategies, which will be critical for reaching the 2050 goal, and
- pilot programs, which have the potential to reduce emissions but are relatively new technologies that need to be studied more before wide scale implementation.

"We look forward to our ongoing discussion about the many strategies to transition Minnesota's energy system in ways that promote high-quality state jobs and a clean future for our kids and grandkids," said Rothman. "An increase in the Renewable Energy Standard to 50% stands out as a policy option with significant potential to reduce greenhouse gases and strengthen our economy, while reducing our dependence on out-of-state fossil fuel energy sources. Minnesota can be proud of the policies we have already enacted and the progress we have achieved on energy efficiency and renewable energy. But we must not be content to rest on our laurels."

Learn more about the CSEO project on the Environmental Initiative website and read the full CSEO report (pdf). Project leadership on the report was provided by the EQB, Minnesota Department of Commerce, and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, with several other agencies contributing to the report.