

Forum Explores Solutions to Climate Change

COG's Regional Climate Change Staff Roundtable brought together more than 75 environmental planners, local government executive representatives and other policy makers to begin plans for a regional climate change agenda.

According to the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), 2006 was the warmest year in U.S. history. Globally, the warm seasons are growing longer. Hence, climate change has the potential to impact our region in a number of important ways, including coastal zone flooding, heat waves and other dangerous weather events, and changes in precipitation patterns.

The half-day forum focused on programs in the metropolitan Washington region that could contribute to solutions to climate change, often referred to as global warming. Participants of the half-day forum shared current local efforts and ideas for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from areas such as transportation and building energy consumption. Speakers from the District of Columbia and Arlington, Fairfax and Montgomery counties discussed measures currently underway to lessen the impacts of climate change. They were joined by representatives of national programs including the [Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative](#) (RGGI), Sierra Club's [Cool Cities Campaign](#), [U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement](#), ICLEI's [Cities for Climate Protection Campaign](#), Energy and Environment Study Institute (EESI), the Climate Change Institute and Friends of the Earth.

As local governments have begun to sign onto these national programs and are implementing a variety of related programs (e.g., Green Building incentives, low emission vehicle purchases, education and outreach), COG is exploring ways that it can bring members and stakeholders together to facilitate development of a regional agenda. Major consensus throughout the speakers seem to be that an effective climate change initiative should include a 3-pronged approach: transportation green fleet, energy efficiency and renewable energy.

COG is currently working on plans to address the concerns raised during the discussion, which may include the development of a regional conference later this year with a broader audience -- the private sector, elected officials, and others. Areas of potential interest include establishing consistent regional inventories and reduction targets, leveraging program resources, and initiating a focus on balancing the region's economic growth with its need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions over the long term.

Those that attended may have left the meeting with a sense of community responsibility. In that regard, one attendee was quoted to say, "think globally act locally." For more details on the roundtable, including the agenda and presentations, [click here](#). You may also contact George Nichols by phone at 202-962-3355 or by email at gnichols@mwkog.org.

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All materials from the roundtable can be found at:

http://www.mwkog.org/environment/committee/committee/documents.asp?COMMITTEE_ID=139