

WORKING ON CLIMATE CHANGE SOLUTIONS

Lincoln City On Path to Become Carbon Neutral

Lincoln City, a popular tourist destination and home to almost 8,000 residents, sits beside the ocean at just 11 feet above sea level.

Forward-thinking Mayor Lori Hollingsworth and City Manager David Hawker know that global warming-related effects, such as large storm events and sea level rise, would impact their community.

They also see savings and economic benefits in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from fossil fuels through energy conservation and renewable energy options. The goal, becoming carbon neutral, refers to balancing emissions with a comparable amount of carbon sequestered (stored) or offset.

Riki Lanegan was hired to do a comprehensive assessment of the city's current carbon emissions or "carbon footprint" to help inform reduction targets. She's completed the first step in determining emissions from all city government operations including heating, lighting, city vehicles, employee commuting, and other activities. Her next step is to assess emissions community-wide, a more difficult task given the current lack of adequate data available, data sources that are collected in different units or quantities, and the scarcity of accurate collection sources.

Lanegan uses emissions analysis software provided by ICLEI, an organization that supports local governments. She has consulted with several other Oregon cities also using this tool. Some of the data for city operations are relatively easy to acquire, such as kilowatt hours used and city vehicle mileage. Many local governments need additional funding to complete their full carbon footprint picture including data on residents and commercial operations.

Lincoln City has already picked some of the "lower hanging fruit" such as stepping up recycling efforts, joining Pacific Power's Blue Sky renewable energy program, requiring LEED certification for new city buildings, and other measures. The "higher hanging fruit" — more substantial and significant reduction actions — are needed to meet a carbon neutral goal. With the help of ICLEI and its software tools, the most effective reduction strategies can be uniquely tailored to the city. Further action includes mitigation efforts to offset emissions produced, such as purchasing carbon credits from a local organization that holds forested lands that store carbon. The challenges are many as municipalities chart new territory in analyzing their carbon footprints to affect a meaningful reduction and reversal of global warming.



City of Lincoln City