

Maryland Commission on Climate Change issues annual report

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Jay Apperson

[\(410\) 537-3003](tel:(410)537-3003)

jay.apperson@maryland.gov

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Baltimore, MD (Nov. 21, 2016) –Maryland continues to make progress in meeting goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and in adapting and responding to climate change, a new report shows.

The report – unanimously approved by the independent Maryland Commission on Climate Change – also includes recommendations for continued progress in combating the effects of climate change. A bill signed into law earlier this year by Governor Larry Hogan requires that Maryland reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent from 2006 levels by 2030 while continuing to have a net positive effect on both the economy and job creation in Maryland.

“An active agenda to reduce pollution and increase resiliency is good news for the state and the Chesapeake Bay,” said Ben Grumbles, Maryland Secretary of the Environment and Chairman of the Maryland Commission on Climate Change. “Many thanks to the diverse array of leaders on the Climate Commission for the continuing collaboration and commitment to sustainable solutions.”

The Maryland Commission on Climate Change is charged with advising the Governor and General Assembly on ways to mitigate the causes of, prepare for and adapt to the consequences of climate change and maintaining and strengthening the State’s Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan. Commission priorities include building broader partnerships with federal, State and local governments and the private sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the likely impacts of climate change in Maryland, better communicating with and educating Marylanders about the urgency of the challenge and options to address it and establishing action plan goals and timetables for implementation.

The Commission, established in 2007, produced a plan that was the catalyst for the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act of 2009. The 2009 Act included a requirement that Maryland reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2020. Reduction estimates appear to show that Maryland is on the path to meet that 2020 goal.

In 2015, the Maryland General Assembly codified a Commission whose expanded membership has representatives from the administration, the legislature, business, non-profit organizations and local governments. The current co-chairs of the Commission are Anne Lindner, director of state government affairs

Exelon and business community representative, and Stuart Clarke, executive director of the Town Creek Foundation.

The 2015 law requires the Commission to submit an annual report. Last year, the Commission unanimously adopted a report that called on Maryland to develop and implement a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030 while strengthening efforts to improve the State's economy and create new jobs. Those recommendations formed the basis for the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act of 2016. The Department of the Environment is working on a plan to meet those requirements. A draft plan is due in 2018 and a final plan is to follow in 2019.

The Commission's 2016 annual report states: "In order to protect the State's economy, the local environment, and the health of its citizens, Maryland must continue to strengthen its climate change mitigation and adaptation actions. At the same time, it is important to remember that climate change is a global problem, and Maryland programs and policies must be part of a larger climate action plan to be broadly effective at preventing many of the costs of unmitigated climate change to the State."

Actions described in the 2016 annual report include:

- Commission support for the Department of the Environment's efforts to reduce methane emissions from landfills, natural gas infrastructure such as compressor stations and wastewater treatment plants. The Commission recommends further research into additional methane sources such as agriculture and fuel production and transport.
- Commission support for the Department of the Environment's efforts to develop to develop and implement stronger tools for analysis of social equity issues. This effort will include continued consultation with Maryland's Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities.
- Commission work, with State agencies, to create and refine tools to help the State and local governments anticipate and plan for climate change impacts. An increased effort to support adaptation at the local level is a Commission priority for 2017.
- Analysis of the potential impact of climate change on jobs and the economy within such sectors as agriculture, fisheries, tourism and energy.

Information on the Maryland Commission on Climate Change is available on the Maryland Department of the Environment's website at <http://bit.ly/mcccpage>.

About Author

by Jesse McKinney