

Southern Oregon Climate Action Now



Confronting Climate Change

To: City of Ashland Climate Policy Commission
From: SOCAN-Ashland Climate Action Project
Date: March 10, 2021
Re: Climate-related updates

Thank you all for your amazing work to advance climate action in Ashland.

We would like to share a few updates with members of the Commission.

1. **Equity.** It is important to ensure robust consideration of equity issues associated with fossil gas wind-down. [Here is an excellent white paper on the subject.](#) In “**EQUITABLE BUILDING ELECTRIFICATION: A FRAMEWORK FOR POWERING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES,**” The Greenlining Institute studied the challenges and opportunities that building electrification presents for low-income communities – 70 percent of whom are renters caught up in a housing and energy affordability crisis. Quoting here from the Executive Summary:

The framework finds that electrification can be a transformative force for low-income residents and it explains the steps the state must take to ensure that electrification helps close the clean energy gap in California and provides relief to millions of residents facing energy insecurity in the current system....

Meanwhile, the cost of safely maintaining California’s gas system is set to escalate dramatically in coming years as increasing infrastructure costs and safety upgrades combine with a decline in demand as the state transitions away from fossil fuels to hit its climate targets.

The result will be higher costs spread around fewer customers – leading to significantly higher gas bills and prompting those with the means to do so to move off the system for financial, health, and environmental reasons. As this trend continues, gas customers who face barriers to electrification will need assistance to move to cleaner electric appliances to help shield them from the rising cost of gas.

2. We are in a process of interviewing various cities to explore what they have learned about climate plan implementation. Eugene just approved version 2.0 of their climate plan (CAP2.0). Two findings from this discussion:
 - a. [Eugene has a very active community-based climate collaborative.](#) Eugene Climate Collaborative Partners. “CAP2.0 focuses on engagement with systems-level actors, or the Eugene Climate Collaborative Partners (ECC Partners). ECC Partners are specifically defined as organizations who have significant oversight and impact on

community-wide fossil fuel use and emissions or have the ability to affect or alter systems that will enable the community to adapt and prepare for climate change. By starting with the ECC Partners, the CAP2.0 lays the foundation to make it easier for everyone – individuals, households, businesses, and other organizations – to take actions that support the CRO goals.”

- b. [Eugene uses a triple-bottom line tool that staff say has been very effective in aligning values and work outputs of staff and commissions around climate impact-equity-and economic](#) --which helps reduce the constant paralysis that can emerge when policies are advanced that look at only one of these dimensions. *“The Triple Bottom Line, or TBL, is a framework the City of Eugene is using to reach its sustainability goals. It’s designed to help us think about and explore the environmental, equity and economic impacts, benefits and trade-offs of our decisions. It’s a decision making framework that can be adapted to any organization such as business, non-profit, governmental or community groups. If you would like to begin using this approach in your organization, a TBL tool has been developed to guide you through this process.”*

We encourage all Ashland commissions to consider an approach like this.

3. Upcoming zoom conversation

**Natural Gas: The Fossil Fuel You Came to Love
Seduced by methane, now plagued by heartburn**

A Zoom Conversation -- March 25, 7-8:30pm

[Click here to register!](#)

Studies show that most Americans think natural gas is a clean fuel that does little harm from a climate or pollution perspective. Residential and commercial use of natural gas in Oregon has soared in recent decades. We hear a lot about “decarbonization”, but in some ways, natural gas--which is primarily methane--is in some ways worse than coal. This panel discussion will update us on the latest research on the climate, environmental, and health impacts of natural gas, including impacts on indoor air quality from gas appliances. We’ll also touch on the gas bans that many cities and other government entities have enacted and how gas companies have responded to these bans.

This is the first in a series of conversations we will host in 2021 on the economic, social equity, and practical implications of our natural gas connections--and our desire to sever them.



Panelists: Dan Serres, Conservation Director, Columbia Riverkeeper; David Farrer, Toxicologist, Oregon Health Authority; and Tom Graly, Co-leader of the Berkeley Climate Action Coalition’s Electrification Working Group

Future programs will focus on (1) experience of cities that have taken steps to reduce fossil gas utilization; (2) steps that households can take to reduce their fossil gas utilization.

We always welcome input from the Commission on our programs. We hope to support and amplify your work through public education.

4. Along those same lines, SOCAN-Ashland would be happy to host topics that the Commission members would like to delve into for their own learning to optimize their ability to serve the Commission, that cannot be done in the context of regular Commission meetings. For example, if there are particular cities that you would want us to invite for a panel discussion we could do that. Registration for such programs would not be limited to CPC members and the programs would not be described in any way as CPC programs. Please consider.

5. **Upcoming SOCAN Monthly Meeting. SOCAN Monthly Meeting: Bringing Social Equity to Climate Advocacy** March 30 @ 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm [Link to register](#)

Speakers: Cecilia Estolano, CEO and Founder, [Estolano Advisors](#) & Asma Mahdi, Policy Director, [Better World Group](#).

While we all face the looming threats of climate change, communities of color, tribal communities and rural Oregonians are on the frontlines of this existential threat. The Almeda and South Obenchain fires were vivid examples of this reality, as many of the hardest hit residents were from historically marginalized and disadvantaged communities. To compound the devastating impacts of the fires, there are very-real risks that these residents will be unable to stay as our communities rebuild. At the same time, Governor Brown's Executive Order 20-04, the Oregon Climate Action Plan (OCAP) is shining a spotlight on climate and environmental justice and new legislation has been introduced to incorporate an "equity lens" into multiple levels of state climate policy.

What does "climate equity" mean? Does an equity focus detract from or strengthen climate advocacy? Does it make a difference? What is meant by the phrase "just transition"? How can we infuse social equity into the fabric of our climate policy advocacy?

Cecilia Estolano, CEO and Founder of Estolano Advisors, and Asma Mahdi, Policy Director of Better World Group, authors of the December 2020 "[State of Oregon Climate Equity Blueprint](#)" will join us by zoom to help us work to achieve a more equitable, climate-adapted future.

Registration Required – [Link to register](#) (After registering, you'll receive a confirmation email with a Zoom link to join the event.)

SOCAN meets monthly on the last Tuesday of each month. Meetings are currently being held via Zoom. We explore topics related to climate change through speakers and movies.

These meetings are free and open to the public.

Please feel free to contact ACAP Chair Lorrie Kaplan at lorrie@socan.eco or 240-676-0040 to discuss how we can best work together.

Thank you for your consideration.

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