

The Climate and Energy Action Challenge - It is up to us!  
By Ashland Conservation Commissioners James McGinnis and Marni Koopman  
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Have you ever heard the quote “We have met the enemy and he is us”? This was a quote by Pogo the possum on the poster Walt Kelly designed to help promote environmental awareness and publicize the first Earth Day in 1970. Like Pogo said then, we all share part of the responsibility for the trashing of planet Earth, so we should all do our share to help clean it up, right? With a world of 7+ billion people (double the population of 1770), that catch phrase back then applies in spades today.

On November 15, 2015, over three-hundred Ashland residents converged to participate in the Ashland Climate Challenge kickoff. Mark Yaconelli hosted a standing room only crowd. The day was filled with food, booths, presentations, panels and a community conversation about Ashland’s future.

Scott Denning, atmospheric scientist from Colorado State University, gave a brilliant overview of how climate change is simple (CO<sub>2</sub> pollution causes it), serious (the earth is heating rapidly, changing the very structure of where and how we live), and solvable (conversion to 100% non-carbon energy will cost about 1% of GDP, and we’ve made such changes before). A panel of experts discussed how the cities of Eugene and Ft Collins, and SOU are taking action, and the city of Ashland discussed its conservation programs to reduce water and energy consumption. The day culminated in a community discussion about Ashland’s climate and energy future. Participants discussed their vision, challenges and the actions that should be taken both personally and as a community. The outcomes from that discussion will help inform the Ashland Community Climate and Energy Plan to be developed in 2016.

The preceding week was filled with events including a local photography exhibit titled, “Beauty in the time of Climate Change”, a youth climate action training to teach kids how to be effective advocates for a stable climate and a beautiful future, film screenings, SOU re-upping their commitment towards carbon neutrality and sustainability, and an “Awakening the Dreamer Changing the Dream” symposium. A very special Hearth event, hosted by Mark Yaconelli, featured heartfelt speakers on the subject of “Rising to the Challenge”.

WOW, this validates that we as a community, including our City Council, are ready to take the next quantum leap forward to clean up our planet, particularly when it comes to carbon pollution.

What does the next year or two have in store for us? It is up to all of us! Two big things are being initiated simultaneously: the Ashland Climate Challenge and the Climate and Energy Action Plan.

The Ashland Climate Challenge is a community-wide collaborative effort to quickly reduce our greenhouse gas pollution and tackle climate change at the local level, getting us moving on emissions right away while the plan is being developed. The Ashland Climate Challenge is asking businesses and residents to **POWER DOWN** by reducing electric and natural gas use by 10% each month in 2016, **GREEN UP** our transportation by using alternative modes and staying closer to home or school, and **SHOUT-OUT** by

participating in the Climate and Energy Action Plan process. This includes communicating your thoughts through the media, to elected officials, and directly to your families and friends (if 3 people showed up at every City Council meeting to shout-out, it would make a huge impact). To learn more about the Ashland Climate Challenge go to [www.ashlandclimatechallenge.org](http://www.ashlandclimatechallenge.org).

The Mayor appointed Climate and Energy Action Plan Committee is working with the City to hire a consultant to assist in the development of the Action Plan. The real work for this committee will begin in February when the contractor is selected. This is where you have an opportunity to step further into the process by becoming involved in public meetings, reviewing and commenting on plan progress, and most importantly staying involved in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year and beyond as we begin to implement the plan.

Ashlanders have always been a resilient sort, and we continue to evolve with new ways of thinking that support each other, our environment and our businesses. We on the Conservation Commission are super excited, and we are genuinely appreciative of our community (one that I – James – have been blessed to live in for 32 years) for taking these next big steps.

For more information about the Climate and Energy Action Plan Ad-hoc Committee, go to [www.ashland.or.us/ClimatePlan](http://www.ashland.or.us/ClimatePlan).