

BEST PRACTICES



Taking Local Action on Climate Change

It may seem like a distant problem, but climate change is already affecting the health of our local streams. In the summer, warmer temperatures and lower rainfall mean streams are shallow and hot during a critical time for salmon and other species. During the winter, more intense rainstorms cause an increase in stormwater and flooding. Faster snow melt brings flooding sooner which erodes stream beds. Increasingly acidic water offshore is disrupting life for plankton and shellfish, and by extension, animals that depend on them for food. In recent years, flooding, algae blooms, and smoke from wildfires all have impacted the health of people and the environment in Thurston County. These kinds of events come at a cost, and they are predicted to become more common here in the coming years.



But that future is not locked in. The truth is that there is a lot we can do to change direction, and some of that work is underway now. In 2018, the governments of Thurston County, Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater, adopted shared targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 45 percent below 2015 levels by 2030 and 85 percent below 2015 levels by 2050. Since then, they have been working on a Climate Mitigation Plan to reduce local contributions to climate change.

Climate mitigation is the actions we can take to limit our contributions to climate change. When we travel, use electricity or water, or grow and raise food, we increase emissions of heat-trapping greenhouse gases that warm the planet. In Thurston County, the bulk of our greenhouse gas emissions come from energy use in homes and businesses and from driving gas-powered cars and trucks. Smaller sources include solid waste and agriculture.

Climate mitigation actions take greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide out of the atmosphere or prevent those gases from entering the atmosphere in the first place. We will always need to travel, eat, and use electricity. That's why it is important to find less harmful ways to do the things we do every day and limit climate change impacts in the Thurston region.

Strategies to reduce emissions include increasing the energy efficiency of our homes and offices, increasing production of renewable energy, reducing miles driven alone, switching to electric cars, supporting local farms that use practices to keep carbon in the soil, and preserving and planting trees. Local governments are looking at many different ways to achieve their goal. To find out more about the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan and climate actions in your area, visit trpc.org/climate.

What Can You Do to Take Climate Action?

Dramatic and lasting change comes from countless little shifts throughout society. Governments, businesses, families, and individuals all have a role to play. Here are some ways to get started:

- **Start a conversation.** National surveys have shown that while most Americans believe global warming is happening and are worried about its impacts, the majority say they rarely or never hear it discussed among

their friends and family. Researchers call this the “climate change spiral of silence”—people concerned about climate change avoid talking about their concerns because they don’t hear other people talking about it. That silence can leave us feeling isolated and overwhelmed. You don’t need to be an expert on the science to let others know your hopes, fears, experiences, and actions when it comes to climate change—you might find out you share more common ground than you thought.

- **Rethink your ride.** Try increasing the number of trips you make by transit, carpooling, walking, or biking. Support your city in development that creates high density and mixed-use areas to reduce the need for driving. Buying a new car? Test drive an electric vehicle to see if it makes sense for you.
- **Reduce energy use.** Request a free home energy assessment from Puget Sound Energy, and consider upgrading to higher efficiency appliances and fixtures. If you rely on natural gas for heat, consider switching to a ductless heat pump or other electric heat source. Investigate options for using more renewable energy at your home, place of worship, or business.
- **Reduce waste.** Measure the food that you throw away and take the Waste Less Food Challenge. Try a meat-free meal once a week. Choose items with less packaging, and buy local to reduce emissions from shipping and packaging.
- **Advocate for change.** Tell your elected officials that addressing climate change is important to you, so they know to prioritize it when making work plans and budget decisions. If you have found it difficult to take a climate action, let them know what would make it easier or less expensive. Get together with your friends, neighbors, co-workers, or a local organization like the Thurston Climate Action Team to talk about what to do next.

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