

# **Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission On The Role Of The State Of Alaska In Combatting Global Warming**

## **I. FINDINGS:**

Global warming, also known as the greenhouse effect, is modifying the climate of the earth, through the generation of carbon dioxide and other trace gases (methane, tropospheric ozone, chlorofluocarbons, and nitrous oxide).

These gases are, in large part, the result of human activities, including the widespread use of fossil fuels, population growth, deforestation, agricultural practices, and use of chlorofluorocarbons.

Current scientific understanding predicts that continued alteration of the global atmosphere will cause widespread temperature extremes and sea level rise which will, in turn, have serious implications for the Earth's ecosystems, agricultural production, water supply, human health, wetlands, and climate.

Shifts in the climate will cause catastrophic disruption of economic, political, social, and ecological systems on earth of all nations.

Further scientific evidence suggests that such changes will be felt sooner and more extremely in the arctic, which includes Alaska.

It is incumbent upon policy-makers to understand the links between our actions in the past and now and the likely resultant damage to our planet. It is further incumbent upon policy-makers to take measures to reduce those actions which are causing global warming.

The State of Alaska needs to develop policies to assist in reducing the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

## **II. PURPOSE:**

The Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission On The Role Of The State Of Alaska In Combatting Global Warming will develop a base of information on global warming.

Upon that base of information and with public input to be solicited statewide, the Commission will draft suggested options and policies to be presented to the Governor as to ways in which the State of Alaska can reduce the state's contribution to greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Furthermore, the Commission will assess national and international programs involved in global change and recommend optimal ways for the state to actively participate in those programs.

## **III. ORGANIZATIONAL GUIDELINES:**

The Commission will be composed of 11 members with geographical representation, selected by the Governor, and be concerned, involved and/or knowledgeable about the various elements of global warming, such as scientific, energy conservation, utility, agricultural, environmental and economic. Two members will be appointed from state government and two members from the legislature (one from the House and one from the Senate). The Chair will be selected from other than those serving in State Government or the Legislature.

The Office of the Governor will provide sufficient staff for the Commission and meetings will be held as frequently as necessary to accomplish the tasks of the Commission. No compensation, other than that for travel and per diem expenses, will be made to Commission members.

Within six months after convening, the Commission shall present a draft report for public review. Public input will be solicited statewide. A final draft, incorporating public testimony as appropriate, will be then be prepared and presented to the Governor within two months after completion of the public hearings on the draft.

The final report will suggest specific policies and make specific suggestions as to how best the State of Alaska can reduce the increase in greenhouse gases. Short and long term economic analyses of the policies and options will be a part of the report.

# GLOBAL WARMING IMPACTS UPON ALASKA

Certain human activities on earth are creating an imbalance on our planet known as "*Global Warming*" or the "*Greenhouse Effect*". This is a phenomenon where we are adding certain gases into the atmosphere and actually warming the earth and creating an imbalance in the earth's biological systems.

While the scientific community does not fully understand all of the details, from what we know now, **it is imperative that we take action now, since if we wait until the predicted dire consequences occur, it will be too late.** This is a complex and global issue that calls for action at all levels of society. It is said that it takes a lot of drops to fill a bucket. We must all do what we can.

The Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission is intended to start the process for Alaska to do its part in reducing our contribution to global warming. With our cold climate, we contribute more carbon dioxide per capita. In addition, the temperature increase in the arctic will be greater and felt sooner than in temperate climates. More precipitation is also anticipated.

## **Manmade contributions to global warming come from the following sources:**

◦ 1. Carbon dioxide	Fossil fuel burning, deforestation	49%
◦ 2. Methane	Agriculture, fertilizers	18%
◦ 3. Chlorofluorocarbons	Foam insulations, refrigerants, aerosols	14%
◦ 4. Nitrous oxides	Combustion bi-products, manufacturing	6%
◦ 5. Other greenhouse gases	Combustion, manufacturing	13%

## **Impacts from rapid (3-9 degrees in 50 years) increase in temperature**

- Raising of water levels through melting of polar ice
- Melting of permafrost
- High fluctuations in weather patterns
- Loss of plant and animal habitats due to inability to adapt to rapid change.

## **Impacts on communities**

- River and sea level increase leading to increased flooding and loss of coastal land and low lands adjacent to rivers.
- Foundations of structures, roads, airports, water and sewer and other improvements threatened.
- Loss of subsistence livelihood through loss of habitat.

## **Examples of what can be done now to reduce the impact**

- Apply least cost planning to new capital projects.
- Increased energy efficiency of heated structures including heating systems and appliances.
- Increased efficiency of diesel electrical generation. Co-generation of fuels, waste heat recovery, fuel substitutions, alternative and renewable fuel source development.
- Promoting methods of increasing efficiency in all modes of transportation.
- Sustainable yield harvesting of timber. Increased tree planting where feasible (trees absorb carbon dioxide).
- Re-cycling of waste products, such as aluminum cans, bottles, newspaper, etc.
- Working with congressional members toward national recognition and action on the problem.
- Education of our children on the problems and solutions (they will pay for our inaction).

## **Immediate benefits of doing something now**

- Reducing impact of global warming.
- Increased health safety and comfort in operating heated structures and electrical appliances.
- Decreased cost in operating heated structures and electrical appliances.
- Reduced cost and increased life in operation of moving vehicles.
- More affordable housing.
- Productive local jobs.
- Increased standard of living, less time and money spent on energy.
- Assured source of wood (In forested areas).
- Increased capacity of landfills.
- Sustained ecosystem for fish and game.