

**Department of Ecology News Release - September 15, 2016**

# **Washington adopts first-of-its-kind rule to combat climate change**

*Clean Air Rule will cap and reduce carbon pollution*

OLYMPIA – In an effort to protect all that Washington has to offer future generations, the Washington Department of Ecology is launching [a new plan to combat climate change](#).

After months of stakeholder meetings, and public review and input, Ecology today adopted a first-of-its-kind clean air rule that caps and reduces carbon pollution.

“Today marks a watershed moment in our country’s history,” said Ecology Director Maia Bellon. “We are taking leadership under our clean air act, adopting a strong and practical plan to reduce greenhouse gases, and doing our fair share to tackle climate change.”

Scientists have known for more than a decade that carbon pollution is the primary cause of climate change. Recognizing the need to take action, in 2015 Gov. Jay Inslee directed Ecology to cap and reduce carbon pollution under Washington’s Clean Air Act.

Under the new rule, businesses that are responsible for 100,000 metric tons of carbon pollution annually will be required to cap and then gradually reduce their emissions.

If a business cannot limit its own emissions, it has other options. It could develop a project that reduces carbon pollution in Washington, such as an energy efficiency program. Businesses could also comply by buying carbon credits from others or from other approved carbon markets.

The plan relies on businesses to trade independently among themselves and with other markets. All emissions reductions, projects and trading would be validated by independent auditors with oversight from Ecology.

Natural gas distributors, petroleum fuel producers and importers, power plants, metal manufacturers, waste facilities, and state and federal facilities would be included in the plan and need to show their emissions are declining by an average of 1.7 percent a year starting in 2017.

Washington is particularly vulnerable to a warming climate. Communities in the state depend on snow-fed water supplies to provide drinking water, irrigation for agriculture, and about 65 percent of the state’s electrical power. Shellfish, which are a major industry on Washington’s coast, are susceptible to ocean acidification – created when carbon dioxide reacts with seawater. And in Eastern Washington, increasing numbers of wildfires threaten air quality and the health of people with asthma and other breathing difficulties.

Ecology’s rule goes into effect Oct. 17, 2016. For more information about the Clean Air Rule, visit Ecology’s [website for more information](#).

**Contact:** [Camille St. Onge](#), communications, 360-584-6501, [@ecologyWA](#)