



## **Rocky Mountain Climate Organization Supports House Bill 13-1293 Concerning the creation of a position by the governor for climate change April 29, 2013**

The Rocky Mountain Climate Organization (RMCO) supports [House Bill 13-1293](#) as passed by the House. As Governor Hickenlooper recently told the [Colorado Climate Network's](#) annual conference of local governments and organizations that support them, "Climate change is the single greatest risk the globe faces." It threatens Colorado's long-term economic prosperity and the precious natural resources on which that prosperity depends. The state should take a strong leadership role in reining in the impacts of climate change, as well as in preparing for the changes which scientists say are already in motion due to accumulation of heat-trapping pollution in the atmosphere. A state government position with the responsibility to coordinate climate action plans, as described in this bill, would be an important step in providing that leadership.

RMCO is a mainstream coalition with 21 partner organizations, including 11 local governments, Colorado's largest water provider, four businesses, and five nonprofit organizations. We work to keep the West a special place by reducing climate disruption and its effects here.

During 2006-07, RMCO convened a Climate Action Panel (CAP) to recommend ways to reduce our state's contributions and vulnerabilities to climate change. Patterned after projects to develop climate action agendas in other states, including many in the West, the Climate Action Panel was the first in the nation to be convened by a non-profit organization. Project Directors appointed 34 leaders from the state's public, private, and non-profit sectors to serve as panel members, who were assisted in their work by policy work groups. Altogether, 116 Coloradans worked for a year to develop the panel's recommendations, supported by a team of substantive experts in technical and cost-effectiveness analyses. The panel recommended 70 actions to be taken in Colorado, consisting of 55 recommendations to reduce heat-trapping greenhouse gases and 15 recommendations to prepare the state for the changes that may be coming.

The centerpiece of the RMCO panel recommendations is a state goal of reducing Colorado's emissions of heat-trapping gases 20 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050, compared to 2005 levels, the same goal that became part of the state's Climate Action Plan announced by Governor Ritter in 2007.

Doing our part to reduce emissions is important to reducing Colorado's vulnerabilities to a disrupted climate. The most important of those vulnerabilities is a projected likely decrease in water supplies. Although there is a range of projections about the possible effects of an altered climate on our water supplies, most projections are for decreases in overall water flow. If that occurs, it will be that much harder to meet our state's already stretched water needs, especially as our population continues to grow. Among the many other likely impacts of climate change here are increases in insect infestations in our forests, such as the mountain pine beetle epidemic now killing virtually all of the mature lodgepole pine trees in the state; more wildfires; more heat waves; more extreme weather events (including flooding that can damage transportation infrastructure); additional stresses on fish and wildlife; and more prevalence of illnesses such as West Nile disease. What we do in Colorado, by itself, obviously cannot be enough to prevent those impacts. But we certainly can do our share. And we can help lead the way and show the nation and world what can be done.

Climate action needs to take place at all levels of government, yet the state can play a unique role in bringing together leaders from the private sector, universities, scientists, water providers, and nonprofits, along with state, federal, and local agency managers to develop a plan of action. RMCO supports HB 13-1293 because the state government climate coordinator envisioned by the bill would be a significant step toward making such important partnerships a reality.

We urge your affirmative vote on HB 13-1293.

Thank you,

*Tom Easley*

Tom Easley, director of programs  
The Rocky Mountain Climate Organization