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Plan Open for Public Comment until Nov. 9; Governor Says PA Must Do More to Protect Economy, Environment

PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 14 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Governor Edward G. Rendell said today that the commonwealth is taking another significant step in its efforts to avoid the devastating effects of climate change as he outlined recommendations from the state's Climate Change Action Plan, which are now open for public comment.

The report recommends 52 actions to help the state reduce greenhouse gas emissions that lead to a changing climate.

The Governor said climate change represents a serious threat to the future Pennsylvania's economy, environment and the livelihoods of its residents.

"Climate change could be absolutely devastating to Pennsylvania," said Governor Rendell, noting that Pennsylvania currently contributes 1 percent of all man-made greenhouse gas emissions. "It threatens virtually every aspect of our lives; our infrastructure was designed around a stable climate; many industries like agriculture depend on variations in the seasons; and new diseases that once could not survive here will now be able to flourish in warmer temperatures.

"The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is clear. The commonwealth needs smart, effective policies in place that specifically reduce global warming pollution and that protect our economy, environment and livelihood."

The report, adopted by the Climate Change Advisory Committee and the Department of Environmental Protection, calls for a 30 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions below year 2000 levels by 2020.

Included among the recommendations are a "Re-Light Pennsylvania" program that encourages residential and commercial use of more efficient lighting systems,

the Eco-Driving program that offers fuel-saving tips and incentives to drive less, and an urban forestry program that increases carbon storage in trees while reducing buildings' heating and cooling demands.

The recommendations, combined with recent federal and state actions, such as the passage of the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard, electricity conservation measures approved by Act 129, the 2008 Biofuel Development and In-state Production Incentive Act, the Diesel-powered Motor Vehicle Idling Act, and the Pennsylvania Clean Vehicles Program, has the potential to reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 42 percent, or more than 120 million tons.

By themselves, the 52 agreed upon recommendations in the report would reduce emissions by 36 percent.

Governor Rendell said these proposed actions will not only benefit the environment, but will also help put people back to work. The action plan's recommendations are expected to result in the net creation of 65,000 new full-time jobs and add more \$6 billion to the state's economy by 2020.

While the commonwealth has made great strides in addressing this issue, the Governor said there is much more to be done.

"Our efforts over the last nearly seven years and the recommendations in this report will allow us to make the critical emission reductions needed to prevent further impacts on our climate," said Governor Rendell. "But we cannot stop there. More can and must be done.

"The General Assembly has an incredible opportunity before it with House Bill 80, which will greatly expand our 2004 Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard. If passed, this stronger standard would reduce emissions by another 16 million tons, or the equivalent of taking 3 million cars off the road. It will also reduce volatility in energy prices, cut the dollars that Pennsylvanians send out-of-state for energy purchases, and attract billions of dollars of new investment, which will create thousands of new jobs."

Anyone interested in submitting written comments on Pennsylvania's Climate Change Action Plan may do so by Nov. 9 via mail or e-mail. A return name and address must be included in each e-mail.

E-mail comments should be submitted to epclimatereportcomments@state.pa.us. Written comments should be submitted to Joseph Sherrick, Department of Environmental Protection, Rachel Carson State Office Building, 400 Market St., Harrisburg, PA 17105. DEP will not accept comments submitted by facsimile.

For more information or to review Pennsylvania's Climate Change Action Plan, visit www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: Climate Change. Questions should be directed to Joseph Sherrick at josherrick@state.pa.us or Kim Hoover at khoover@state.pa.us or by calling 717-772-8911.

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