



National Leadership Summits For a Sustainable America

Summary of Energy & Climate Change Action Plan

Background

On June 5-7, 2006, the Wingspread Conference Center hosted a meeting of 40 national leaders whose organizations are dedicated to sustainable energy security and/or climate protection in the United States.

The meeting had two objectives: 1) to determine key themes or principles for U.S. action on energy security and climate protection; and 2) to identify concrete joint projects, or “action items”.

The Summit’s sponsors hoped these objectives would increase national progress on energy security and climate protection (ESCP) by facilitating greater communication and collaboration between the many national and grassroots organizations that work on these issues.

The Summit did not seek consensus on themes and actions. Rather, the action plan records ideas that received strong support and commitments for leadership from one or more organizations.

Key Summit Themes

- 1) Energy security and climate protection are urgent national issues and require action.
- 2) The U.S. needs strong leadership on these issues, at all levels of government and civil society.
- 3) Energy security and climate protection should not be viewed solely as environmental issues. ESCP organizations must communicate the economic, national security and many other benefits.
- 4) It is important to communicate not only the urgency of these issues, but also the tremendous opportunities they offer for U.S. companies and workers to provide all nations with the knowledge, technologies and products needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve their energy security.
- 5) Organizations promoting climate protection and energy security must speak to issues the American people care about, in terms that help individuals understand that their actions are needed now and can make a difference.

Actions Items

Participants in the Summit identified 28 “first tier”¹ actions and the groups or individuals who will lead them. Due to the urgency of energy security and climate protection, participants believed that all of the actions should begin as soon as possible, unless otherwise noted. The following are summaries of each action item.

Action 1: Create a web-based clearinghouse for ESCP organizations to share effective communications research, messages and techniques.

Action 2: Assess recent events designed to increase the media’s understanding of climate issues and determine whether an additional event is needed. If so, conduct a Wingspread conference that brings 20 media people together with 20 energy/climate experts to forge links and collaborations.

Action 3: Create an ad hoc Science Advisory Group to help ESCP organizations identify and develop effective messages about how climate change relates to the everyday lives and concerns of American people and places.

Action 4: Create more frequent and effective opportunities for ESCP organizations to share technical and scientific information, situation analyses, best practices, lessons-learned and communications ideas.

Action 5: Engage ESCP-oriented youth organizations² to help develop strategies, materials and campaigns that focus on youth. Use video games, music, National Teach-Ins for climate education, an Earth Day on Climate.

Action 6: Mobilize the power of positive examples by documenting, collecting and sharing exemplary stories of successful climate action from all sectors.

Action 7: Make greenhouse gas emissions “visible” by developing a labeling program that gives consumers feedback on their carbon production. For example, work with progressive utilities, automakers and appliance manufacturers to provide carbon labeling on utility bills and consumer products responsible for significant greenhouse gas emissions.

Action 8: Create a broad-based political coalition for ESCP action, building on groups that are currently active and new groups that need to be brought into the process.

Action 9: Create an American Pledge for Climate Protection – a “nuts and bolts” commitment to address climate change – and encourage all citizens to sign it: consumers, political candidates and elected leaders, CEOs, etc. Encourage ESCP organizations to circulate the statement to their members and networks. Encourage

¹ First-tier actions are those given highest priority by Summit participants. Many additional ideas were discussed and will be recorded in future documents.

² An increasing number of universities have student organizations dedicated to sustainable development practices on campus. Other youth organizations include SustainUS (<http://www.sustainus.org/mambo/>); the My Community, Our Earth project (<http://www.aag.org/sustainable/>); and the Action Sports Environmental Coalition (www.asecaction.org).

the involvement of the League of Women Voters and other grassroots organizing groups.

Action 10: Organize a seminar for the next Congress on current climate science, federal policy options and existing and new legislation supported by climate scientists and climate protection organizations. Feature presentations by a bipartisan delegation of prestigious science and policy experts.

Action 11: Jump-start climate action by the next Administration by developing a detailed analysis of Federal agencies' authorities, programs and capacities related to climate protection. Identify programs that were killed or cut by previous Administrations and Congresses and that should be restored. Include recommendations for actions the President can take within his/her first 100 days in office and develop a legislative agenda for the first 1,000 days in office.³

Action 12: Identify leaders from all sectors and both political parties – business, religious, state and local government, NGOs, academia, celebrities, etc. -- to carry the message of climate protection to the nation. Recommend possible board members for the Alliance for Climate Protection. Create and promote a Climate Protection Speakers' Bureau.

Action 13: Produce and distribute a series of Climate Action Guidebooks that provide recommended actions and policies, technical guidelines, information and tools for Mayors, Governors, Legislatures, corporate executives, small and medium-sized businesses, and individual consumers. Start with a "Mayors' Climate Action Guidebook" with model ordinances, executive orders, administrative orders, best practices, positive examples of action by leading cities, etc.

Action 14: Promote state and local policies and legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through enlightened building, land use and transportation policies.

Action 15: Educate and mobilize Governors, Mayors and CEOs to get active on climate and to spur action among their peers. Incorporate energy security, health arguments in messages to and for political and local leaders.

Action 16: Pair cities that are leading the nation in climate action in mentor relationships with cities getting started. Train students and others to provide community energy audits and carbon inventories.⁴

Action 17: Propose to the Energy Information Administration that it include place-based, community energy information in its data, including the Annual Energy Outlook.

Action 18: Convene a multi-stakeholder process at Wingspread to design a national cap-and-trade proposal with a cap set at science-based levels necessary for meaningful US progress on climate protection.

³ A working title for the document: 100 Days of Climate Action: How the Next President Can Meet the Challenge of Global Warming.

⁴ While the principal mechanism for urban commitments to climate protection is the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement, mayors also have made commitments through other instruments including the Urban Environmental Accords.

Action 19: Develop national recommendations on carbon reduction strategies for sectors not covered by regional or national cap-and-trade regimes – for example, the transportation and building sectors.

Action 20: Create and seek funding for a proposal to identify and evaluate the impact of removing perverse federal tax and investments subsidies for carbon-intensive activities and technologies, as well as disincentives to practices, technologies and investments that reduce global warming.

Action 21: Conduct education, outreach and analyses to align capital markets in support of clean energy/carbon reduction objectives. Conduct 10 briefings for Wall Street analysts; reach out to state comptrollers and treasurers; assist business leaders trying to invest in climate protection strategies.

Action 22: Increase Federal investment in clean energy technology deployment by creating a Small Environmental Business Investment Corporation and developing a blueprint on Federal clean energy investment strategies for the next Administration.

Action 23: Organize a Wingspread event to create a dialogue between the philanthropic, energy and climate communities to encourage philanthropies and institutional investors to invest in the development of technologies that are climate-friendly and that enhance US energy security.

Action 24: Build awareness of and confidence in carbon offset programs for individual energy consumers and encourage consumers to use them. Work with stakeholders to create recommended standards; identify qualified organizations to conduct third-party certification;⁵ create brand for certified programs.

Action 25: Develop a decade-long strategy to support investment in a new carbon-reduced economy.

Action 26: Create an ongoing support function to foster communication, coordination and mutual support among ESCP organizations.

Action 27: Produce and distribute communications products from the Energy and Climate Change Summit for the use of participants in their own communications activities.

Action 28: Evaluate progress on this action plan every 6-12 months, post progress reports on the Summit web site and apply lessons learned to the planning of upcoming Summits and action plans.

⁵ Some third-party certification programs already exist. Examples include Green-e (<http://www.green-e.org/>). For one inventory of available offset programs and prices, see http://www.ecobusinesslinks.com/carbon_offset_wind_credits_carbon_reduction.htm