What makes your community sustainable?

CLIMATE ACTION

Record breaking summer heat, a destructive tornado, flooding from a tropical storm and severely crippling snow storms; they all happened in 2011. And these abnormally destructive events are only expected to happen more often. It's time for our communities to take action.

Climate action intends to make our communities better in two ways: by improving our response to extreme weather events and by reducing our contribution of air pollutants which lead to a poorer climate.

The recent storms in our region show the dynamic climate changes we can expect in the future. The scientific consensus is that recently-observed abnormal weather around the world is the result of global warming, which raises temperatures, increases water vapor in the atmosphere and alters normal weather patterns. We can do our part to stave off the worst impacts of global warming by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, which is the pollutant that traps heat in the earth's atmosphere and is generated in large part by burning fossil fuel for energy, such as oil, coal and gas.

Why is this topic important?

Proactively adapting to a warming climate can save lives and community resources. While we cannot reverse global warming, we can prepare our cities and towns to suit the changing conditions. Steps like modifying agriculture practices, improving storm water infrastructure, and preparing for heat waves, tropical storms and heavy snowfalls can protect our region for future generations.

It is also important to do our part to reduce our contribution to the continued warming of the planet. Not only is it a responsible approach, but as the costs of carbon-based fuel sources continue to rise, so will our costs for electricity, heat and transportation. Reducing overall energy use and transitioning to renewable energy sources such as solar, water, geothermal and wind power will improve our community's social, environmental, and economic sustainability.

DID YOU KNOW:
Most sources of greenhouse gases also emit pollutants that are detrimental to human health, contributing to asthma and other chronic diseases. Communities that are exposed to greater traffic congestion and industrial activity often experience the greatest health burden. Monitoring and reducing fossil fuel emissions can help achieve positive long-term effects for the region and immediate improvements in the living conditions of urban communities and those living near industries or transit corridors.

New England's Sustainable KNOWLEDGE CORRIDOR
Our region. Our future.
www.SustainableKnowledgeCorridor.org

Issues and Trends

Warming Summers

Scientists predict an increase in global temperatures from two to 11 degrees Fahrenheit over the next century. Even a small uptick in global temperature averages would dramatically alter regional forests and farmland. The Hartford-Springfield region is already experiencing heat increases, as a record-breaking 103 degrees was measured at Bradley Airport in July, 2011.

Extreme Weather

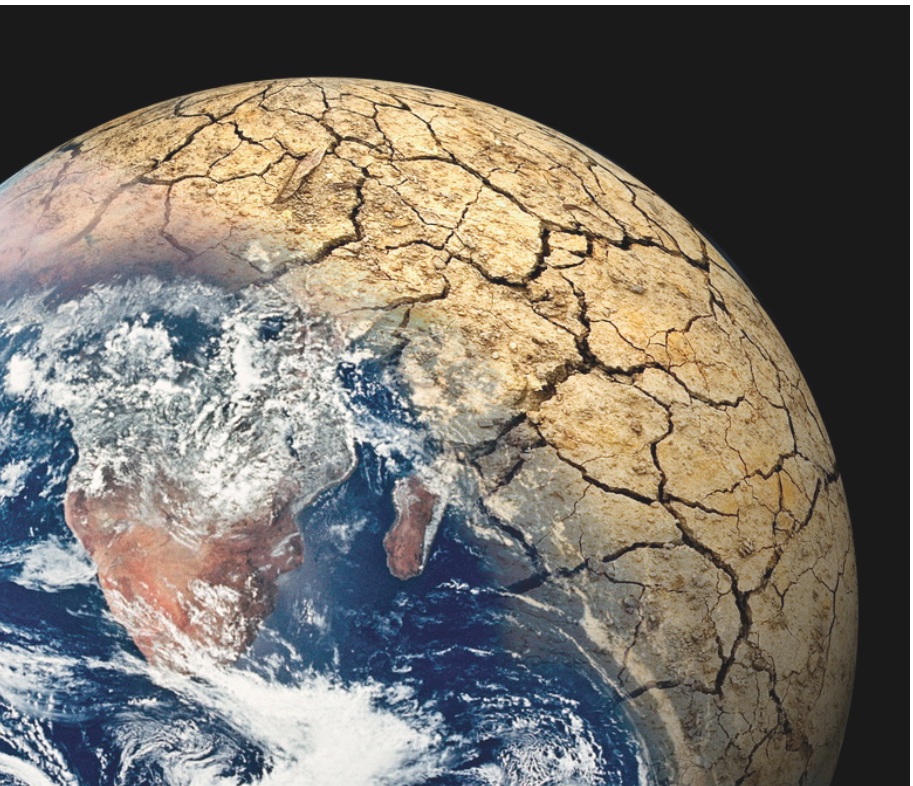
Large storms are more likely in coming years, increasing the risk of exposure to strong winds and flooding. In 2010 and 2011 alone the region saw record-breaking snowfalls, a major tornado, massive tree damage, extended power outages, severe flood damages and tropical storm activity. Ironically, as large storms form, they draw moisture from the air, making occurrences of drought more likely as well.

Energy Security

New England is heavily dependent on fossil fuels for transportation, electricity and heating. Increasing energy prices due to market shocks, environmental costs and decreasing world supplies, put the region's economic well-being at risk.

Green Jobs

The Hartford-Springfield Region is well-positioned to take advantage of increased demand for green technologies, which promote the creation of new jobs throughout the corridor.



How is Progress Measured

Climate action issues intersect with many other issues and indicators important to our daily life. We can measure progress on climate action by:

- Verifying emergency preparedness and our ability to recovery from sever weather events
- Monitoring energy use and greenhouse gas emissions
- Monitoring water and air quality indicators
- Measuring habitat health and well-being

How to Support Change

- Join the grassroots movements to address climate change
- Reduce our use of fossil fuels that power our vehicles – ride a bike, take the bus, or buy a hybrid vehicle
- Conserve the energy we have by insulating our homes and improving the efficiency of our heating and cooling systems
- Attend town meetings to support local plans to increase resiliency to the effects of climate change
- Support policies that transition the region to renewable energy sources (solar, wind, geothermal)
- Take steps to ensure the safety of all residents by preparing for heat waves and other extreme weather impacts.
- Modify agricultural and land use practices to reduce water use and protect against erosion

How to Learn More

The Pew Center on Global Climate Change
http://www.PewClimate.org

United States Climate Action Network
http://www.USClimateNetwork.org/

Climate Reality Project
http://www.ClimateRealityProject.org/

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