

## **A PROVEN PLAN FOR NORTH CAROLINA CLIMATE ACTION**

### **Why does North Carolina need to take action on climate change?**

Action to reduce carbon dioxide emissions is urgently needed as North Carolinians increasingly feel the impacts of climate change from flooding, slower storms that drop more rain, and warmer and more humid days and nights. Scientists warn of more dire consequences for North Carolina's economy, environment and people—including to people's health--if no action is taken or action is delayed. The decisions we make today determine the legacy we leave our children and grandchildren.

### **What would the rule do?**

Under the proposed rule, North Carolina would join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a market-based program to cap and reduce carbon dioxide emissions from the power sector. The rule requires a power plant to hold a credit (or "allowance") for each ton of carbon dioxide pollution it emits. The rule puts an absolute limit on carbon pollution levels by "capping" the total number of allowances, and reducing that number over time. The states initially auction a fixed quantity of allowances, but then power plants and others can buy and sell allowances.

### **How would a North Carolina emissions trading program work?**

If a power plant emits carbon dioxide, its owner has to buy an allowance for each ton of carbon dioxide pollution produced. These allowances can be bought and sold in an existing regional auction called the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which helps to keep costs down. The number of available allowances is reduced each year to reduce pollution.

The utilities have the flexibility to make cost effective decisions, but the program helps create a level playing field for all of the ways we can generate electricity by taking into account some of the costs of carbon dioxide pollution.

### **Do North Carolinians support taking action on carbon dioxide emissions?**

Yes. According to surveys and analysis by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, about 68% of North Carolinians support setting strict carbon dioxide limits on coal-fired plants and 74% of North Carolinians support regulating carbon dioxide as a pollutant. Carbon dioxide is the leading cause of climate change, with one of the largest sources in North Carolina coming from burning polluting fossil fuels to generate electricity.

### **Will this program be effective?**

Yes, emissions trading works. Just ask the states that have already been participating in RGGI, where carbon dioxide emissions dropped 47% over the last decade. And it is not a new idea. A few decades ago, acid rain plagued the United States, harming and killing fish, wildlife, and forests. The issue is now largely in the past thanks to a cap-and-trade program for nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide, the primary causes of acid rain.

### **How will this program help North Carolina's health and environment?**

North Carolina should see immediate public health and productivity benefits due to reductions in harmful pollutants and particulate matter in the air.

- Like those states already participating in RGGI, we can expect fewer premature deaths, hospital visits, and lost work or school days, associated with asthma and other respiratory illnesses, strokes, and heart attacks.
- In just the first six years of RGGI's existence, already-participating states have benefitted by an estimated \$5.7 billion attributed to improved public health.
- In the longer term, as more and more countries, states, and cities around the globe implement similar climate solutions, we should also see improvements in the extreme weather and flooding that is already affecting North Carolina.

### **What does this program mean for North Carolina's economy?**

Savings! It is estimated that over the first decade of RGGI, participating states experienced net economic benefits of \$4 billion. Retail electricity prices in RGGI states have actually decreased by 6.4% on average from 2008 to 2016 thanks to investments in energy efficiency programs and cheap renewable energy.

### **What is the status of the petition/program?**

The petition for rulemaking filed with the N.C. Environmental Commission outlines a comprehensive approach to reduce heat-trapping carbon dioxide emissions from power plants by participating in a regional emissions-trading program. The commission has 120 days to initiate rulemaking or deny the petition.

### **What can I do to help?**

Let Governor Cooper know you support taking action on climate change by capping and reducing carbon pollution from power plants and joining a regional market-based program. The program will benefit North Carolina's economy, improve people's health, and is an inexpensive step we can take to start addressing climate change now.

Contact Governor Cooper: <https://governor.nc.gov/contact/contact-governor-cooper>  
or

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