

## Carbon-fee Ballot Initiative Powers Ahead

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*A local group will pursue a 2008 carbon-fee initiative. Polling indicates strong Colorado voter support for a modest fee to reduce carbon emissions and increase funding for alternative energy.*

A group committed to reducing Colorado's greenhouse gas emissions plans to go ahead with a November 2008 ballot initiative for a statewide carbon fee. Polling done by the group shows strong and broad-based support for the proposal, according to organizer Tom McKinnon.

The initiative would impose a fee on greenhouse gas emissions amounting to about \$3.50 per month in average energy costs for a Colorado household. The money raised, estimated in excess of \$150 million, would be used to promote research and development of alternative energy resources and energy-efficiency.

The group conducted a statewide poll on the proposals, the results of which will be released later this month. But McKinnon, a professor at the Colorado School of Mines, said that the data show support for the project among nearly all age and party groups.

While the proposal appears to be popular with voters, a fee at the level being proposed by the group - which is called the Colorado Carbon Initiative - would not do much to reduce carbon emissions in the state. Most research shows that the price of carbon will have to be driven considerably higher to have much impact on emissions. Analysis by another group shows that a \$37 per ton tax on carbon - the equivalent of about ten cents a gallon of gasoline - would reduce carbon emissions from a "business-as-usual scenario" by only about seven percent.

In order to have much impact on climate change, global carbon emissions would need to be reduced by 50 to 70 percent by the year 2050.

A second but cooperating group, Colorado Clean Energy Tax Shift (COCETS) has said it plans to pursue an initiative that would substantially increase the cost of carbon, while using the money raised from the fee to reduce other state taxes. But COCETS leader Sue Radford said she found the CCI polling data persuasive.

The CCI poll asked voters to consider the small fee proposal against a larger one similar to the COCETS proposal. Support for a high carbon fee dropped off substantially when compared to the the lower fee proposal.

To qualify for the November ballot, initiative organizers have to collect more than 74,000 signatures by early August.

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