

# Carbon Neutral Kootenays Project Update

October 2009

## Background

The **Carbon Neutral Kootenays** project is a collaboration by local governments and First Nations in the Kootenays to begin reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from municipal, regional, and First Nation operations. Many municipalities and regional districts have signed on to the Province of BC's Climate Action Charter, thereby committing to reducing emissions and becoming carbon neutral in their operations by 2012. This initiative – begun in March 2009 - is being funded by the **Regional Districts of Central Kootenay, Kootenay-Boundary, and East Kootenay with the Columbia Basin Trust** to meet these requirements and assist their member municipalities to meet their commitments. The project is being delivered by an experienced team which includes Kootenay-based staff.

The project includes three regional districts and 29 municipalities and five First Nations.

- Compile **energy and GHG inventories** for local government operations and First Nations - which includes the energy consumed and the related emissions from buildings, recreation centers, utility services, and vehicles operated by the municipality.
- Develop **Carbon Neutral Action Plans**, in consultation with staff, for the operations of each of the three regional districts;
- Develop a **template of typical actions for member municipalities** and First Nations to refine and customize to their unique needs;
- Define **options for ongoing collaboration on implementing** energy conservation and climate change actions in the region;
- Evaluate the opportunities for an in-**Kootenays carbon offset system**, and;
- Build capacity for climate action throughout the Kootenay region.

## “Survey Says” ...Kootenays Already on the Path to Carbon Neutral

Reducing energy use and GHG emissions is not a new direction in the Kootenays. At the project outset, a survey was conducted of the participating local governments and found that many were already taking action: Key findings were:

- 75% of communities were already taking some actions in their own operations. Actions include new city halls heated by geo-exchange, lighting and heating retrofits to existing city halls and fire halls, improving insulation and increasing staff awareness
- Almost ½ were taking some action on their fleet including buying smaller vehicles or considering hybrids to implementing an anti-idling policy, using biodiesel or joining E3 Fleet.
- 1/3 are working to reduce energy consumption in their recreation centers including rinks and pools. Actions include solar hot water for pools, geo-exchange for rinks and pools as well as a variety of energy efficiency retrofits to existing facilities.
- Actions don't stop with local government operations. Over 1/3 of local governments were also taking some action at the community level. Actions were diverse, but many are reviewing or planning to review their OCP's in light of the 2010 requirement to have a ghg target in the OCP. Others are taking specific actions like improving transit, installing LED lighting, considering run-of-river generation, or operating district heat utility. Incentives to eliminate old wood stoves and old light bulbs were also noted.

## **Carbon Neutral Kootenays 2009 Activities**

Since March 2009, the project has delivered:

### **Capacity-building**

- Three Full-day climate change 101 workshops for first nations and local government elected officials and staff delivered in Christina Lake, Cranbrook and Nelson. A second, condensed version was delivered by two webinars. Approximately 94 elected officials and staff attended these workshops.
- Three full-day Inventory Learning Sessions that 38 local government staff and interested stakeholders attended from around the Kootenays and the Columbia Basin.
- 88% of participating all municipalities and regional districts had one or more staff or elected officials attend one or more of these training sessions. This equates to over 100 person-days of training on climate change.
- Presentation of project at AKBLG
- Project web page at the Columbia Basin Trust site with project information available for download  
( [http://www.cbt.org/Initiatives/Climate\\_Change/?Carbon\\_Neutral](http://www.cbt.org/Initiatives/Climate_Change/?Carbon_Neutral) )

### **Inventory Compilation**

- A prototype inventory format has been developed and is being refined.
- The project has now received data from over 30 of the local governments involved in the project



- Staff workshops to develop a corporate action plan have been held in the Central Kootenay RD, and similar workshops will be held in the East Kootenay and Kootenay Boundary RDs this fall.
- Action plan templates for local governments to use to develop their own unique carbon-neutral strategies will be developed in late 2009.
- Work has begun on analyzing options for an implementation agent to enable ongoing collaboration, knowledge sharing, and coordination. The project is investigating both potential activities for the implementation agent, possible legal structures, and the business case for an implementation agent.
- In parallel to the implementation agent investigation, the project is also considering the possibilities for a Kootenays offset strategy.
- Webinars will be conducted when inventories and action plan templates are released to provide guidance on their use and to answer questions

## **Mark Your Calendars**

Several key project milestones for the fall include:

September 2009: Research documents on implementing agent options developed to inform discussions of strategies for 2010 and onward.

October 2009      Review of offset strategies for a Kootenays-based offset system.

October 2009:      Release of DRAFT energy and GHG inventories to local governments for their review and comment.

November 2009: Regional district action plans released

December 2009: Municipal action plan templates released

December 2009: REVISED Energy and GHG Inventories released to communities

February 2010:    Project completion

The **Carbon Neutral Kootenays** project is an initiative to assist local governments in the Kootenay region in meeting their commitments under the Climate Action Charter, including becoming carbon neutral in their operations. It is jointly funded by the Regional Districts of Central Kootenay, East Kootenay and Kootenay Boundary, and the Columbia Basin Trust, with the participation of member municipalities and First Nations.

In 2009, the initiative includes compiling inventories of energy and greenhouse gas emissions for local government operations, developing action strategies for reducing emissions from Regional District operations, and conducting outreach and capacity building activities for staff and elected officials in the Kootenay region.

This project is being implemented and facilitated by The Sheltair Group (\*now Stantec) with the Community Energy Association.

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