

Chapter 70A.05 RCW
INTEGRATED CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSE STRATEGY

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RCW 70A.05.010 Development of an integrated climate change response strategy. (1) The departments of ecology, agriculture, commerce, health, fish and wildlife, natural resources, and transportation, the state conservation commission, the Puget Sound partnership, and the emergency management division shall develop an integrated climate change response strategy to better enable the state to prepare for, address, and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The integrated climate change response strategy should be developed in collaboration with local government agencies and tribal governments with climate change preparation and adaptation plans to the extent feasible.

(2) The department of ecology shall serve as a central convener for the development of vital programs and necessary policies to help the state adapt to a rapidly changing climate.

(3) The department of ecology shall consult and collaborate with, at a minimum, the departments of fish and wildlife, agriculture, commerce, health, natural resources, and transportation, the state conservation commission, the Puget Sound partnership, and the emergency management division in developing and implementing an integrated climate change response strategy and plans of action to prepare for and adapt to climate change impacts. Other state agencies may choose to participate in the process.

(4) The department of ecology will engage other relevant state agencies to ensure that other climate resilience actions such as those related to worker safety and community response are incorporated in the updated strategy.

(5) In updating the integrated climate response strategy, the department of ecology shall collaborate and engage with local governments, tribal governments, nongovernmental organizations, public and private businesses, and overburdened communities as defined in RCW 70A.02.010. In developing the engagement plan for development of the strategy, the department of ecology shall announce the opportunity to participate and include, to the extent possible, organizations that express interest in participating. The department of ecology shall also use guidance from the office of equity, the environmental justice council, the community engagement plan adopted under RCW 70A.02.050, and tribal consultation framework adopted under RCW 70A.02.100 to

direct agency engagement with historically or currently marginalized groups, overburdened communities, vulnerable populations, and tribal governments.

(6) (a) The department of ecology shall work with the University of Washington climate impacts group to ensure the state has access to relevant scientific and technical information about the impacts of climate change on Washington's ecology, economy, public health, and society, including a central location for accessing this information and use of any existing climate impact tools.

(b) The University of Washington climate impacts group will explore opportunities to partner with other data providers and leverage existing tools that can help further the understanding of climate impacts, such as the department of health's Washington tracking network.

(c) The University of Washington climate impacts group must examine existing best practices and new methods that could be used to measure and evaluate climate change resilience for the purpose of better understanding and tracking how investments made in climate change resilience translate into outcomes. The results of this examination must be provided to the legislature by June 1, 2024. [2023 c 169 s 2; 2009 c 519 s 10. Formerly RCW 43.21M.010.]

Findings—Intent—2023 c 169: "(1) The legislature finds that Washington is already experiencing negative community and environmental impacts due to climate change with disproportionate impacts to certain communities and populations and further finds that actions to increase climate resilience, as defined in RCW 70A.65.010, can help prevent and reduce impacts to communities and ecosystems.

(2) The legislature further finds that greater cross-agency coordination on resilience, including an updated statewide climate resilience strategy, will help the state: Avoid high costs in the future; address and reduce the highest risks and greatest vulnerabilities; create more efficiencies; better leverage funding; foster more equitable outcomes; and provide for greater accountability.

(3) The legislature further finds that RCW 70A.65.050 requires an updated statewide strategy for addressing climate risks and improving resilience of communities and ecosystems. Therefore, the legislature intends to direct the department of ecology to update and modernize the *2012 Integrated Climate Response Plan* with the assistance of other state agencies.

(4) The legislature intends for the department of natural resources to continue pursuing climate resilience actions on the public lands they manage and to collaborate with other state agencies in statewide climate resilience efforts." [2023 c 169 s 1.]

RCW 70A.05.020 Requirements of strategy—Content of updated strategy—Report to the governor and the legislature. (1) The integrated climate change response strategy should address the impact of and adaptation to climate change, as well as the regional capacity to undertake actions, existing ecosystem and resource management concerns, and health and economic risks. Agencies should consider a range of scenarios and time scales for the purposes of planning in order to assess vulnerability of state assets and services and inform

agency actions to reduce expected risks and increase resiliency to the impacts of climate change.

(2) (a) By September 30, 2024, the department of ecology shall compile an updated climate change response strategy, including information and data from the departments of fish and wildlife, agriculture, commerce, health, natural resources, and transportation, the state conservation commission, the Puget Sound partnership, and the emergency management division that: Prioritizes solutions that can be implemented within and across state agencies; and identifies recommended funding and technical and other essential resources for implementing solutions.

(b) The strategy must include:

(i) A summary of each agency's current climate resilience priorities, plans, and actions;

(ii) Strategies and actions to address the highest climate vulnerabilities and risks to Washington's communities and ecosystems;

(iii) A lead agency or group of agencies assigned to implement actions; and

(iv) Key gaps to advancing climate resilience actions, including in state laws, policies, regulations, rules, procedures, and agency technical capacity.

(c) The strategy must be guided by the following principles:

(i) Prioritize actions that both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build climate preparedness;

(ii) Protect the state's most overburdened communities and vulnerable populations and provide more equitable outcomes;

(iii) Prioritize actions that deploy natural solutions, restore habitat, or reduce stressors that exacerbate climate impacts. Specifically, prioritized actions must include those related to drought resilience, flood risk mitigation, forest health, urban heat islands and the impacts of the built environment on the natural environment, Puget Sound health, and mitigating expected impacts on outdoor recreation opportunities;

(iv) Prioritize actions that promote and protect human health;

(v) Consider flexible and adaptive approaches for preparing for uncertain climate impacts, where relevant; and

(vi) Address the risks in each geographic region of the state with appropriate scope, scale, and urgency.

(3) By September 30, 2024, the department of ecology, in coordination with partner agencies, shall provide recommendations to the governor's office and relevant committees of the legislature, consistent with RCW 70A.65.050, on a durable structure for coordinating and implementing the state's climate resilience strategy, including a process for prioritizing and coordinating funding for climate resilience actions across agencies.

(4) The department of ecology shall update the climate response strategy every four years and provide interim biennial work plans to the governor's office that report on implementation progress and summarize agency needs and priorities for biennial budget planning processes starting by September 30, 2025.

(5) Agencies responsible for implementing actions in the updated strategy shall provide information needed for reporting to the department of ecology by August 15th of odd-numbered years starting in 2025. Agencies may identify and include any resources needed to carry out duties under RCW 70A.05.040. [2023 c 169 s 3; 2009 c 519 s 11. Formerly RCW 43.21M.020.]

Findings—Intent—2023 c 169: See note following RCW 70A.05.010.

RCW 70A.05.030 Assistance with updating strategy. The department of ecology and partner agencies may consult with qualified nonpartisan experts from the scientific community including, but not limited to, the University of Washington's climate impacts group, as needed to assist with updating the integrated climate change response strategy. The qualified nonpartisan experts from the scientific community may assist the department of ecology on the following components:

- (1) Identifying best practices and processes for prioritizing resilience actions and assessing the effectiveness of potential actions;
- (2) Developing a process for identifying metrics and measuring progress and success towards statewide resilience goals;
- (3) Analyzing opportunities and gaps in current agency resilience efforts; and
- (4) Identifying other issues, as determined by the department of ecology, necessary to develop policies and actions for the integrated climate change response strategy. [2023 c 169 s 4; 2009 c 519 s 12. Formerly RCW 43.21M.030.]

Findings—Intent—2023 c 169: See note following RCW 70A.05.010.

RCW 70A.05.040 Incorporation of current and future climate change impacts by state agencies. State agencies shall consider current and future climate change impacts to the extent allowed under existing statutory authority and incorporate climate resilience and adaptation actions as priority activities when planning, designing, revising, or implementing relevant agency policies and programs. Agencies shall consider: The integrated climate change response strategy when designing, planning, and funding infrastructure projects; and incorporating natural resource adaptation actions and alternative energy sources when designing and planning infrastructure projects. [2023 c 169 s 5; 2009 c 519 s 13. Formerly RCW 43.21M.040.]

Findings—Intent—2023 c 169: See note following RCW 70A.05.010.

RCW 70A.05.050 Coordinated state response to federal funding opportunities. (1) The department of ecology shall work with the office of financial management and other relevant state agencies and entities to facilitate coordination of a state response to federal funding opportunities related to climate resilience.

(2) In seeking to better coordinate funding for climate resilience, the department of ecology must develop an interagency work group structure and may leverage any existing forums such as the interagency, multijurisdictional system improvement team established in RCW 43.155.150. [2023 c 169 s 6.]

Findings—Intent—2023 c 169: See note following RCW 70A.05.010.

RCW 70A.05.060 Estimated state agency costs. (1) By September 30, 2024, the department of ecology shall provide the estimated state agency costs for implementing the updated climate response strategy, including existing programs and new recommended actions, to the governor and appropriate committees of the legislature. Estimated state agency costs should be projected over two, four, and 10-year time frames.

(2) The department of ecology shall track funding appropriated by the legislature for implementing the strategy and include this information as part of reporting to the governor's office on odd-numbered years starting in 2025. [2023 c 169 s 7.]

Findings—Intent—2023 c 169: See note following RCW 70A.05.010.

RCW 70A.05.800 Chapter does not authorize new or additional regulatory authority. Nothing in this chapter creates any new or additional regulatory authority for any state agency. [2023 c 169 s 8.]

Findings—Intent—2023 c 169: See note following RCW 70A.05.010.

RCW 70A.05.900 Findings—2009 c 519. The legislature finds that in chapter 14, Laws of 2008, the legislature established greenhouse gas emission reduction limits for Washington state, including a reduction of overall emissions by 2020 to emission levels in 1990, a reduction by 2035 to levels twenty-five percent below 1990 levels, and by 2050 a further reduction below 1990 levels. Based upon estimated 2006 emission levels in Washington, this will require a reduction from present emission levels of over twenty-five percent in the next eleven years. The legislature further finds that state government activities are a significant source of emissions, and that state government should meet targets for reducing emissions from its buildings, vehicles, and all operations that demonstrate that these reductions are achievable, cost-effective, and will help to promote innovative energy efficiency technologies and practices. [2009 c 519 s 1. Formerly RCW 43.21M.900.]