

Climate Action Salt Spring

Highlights from the 2011
Salt Spring Island Climate Action Plan

Salt Spring Island Climate Action Council
www.climateactionsaltspring.ca

THE CLIMATE ACTION COUNCIL

Salt Spring's Climate Action Plan was produced by the Salt Spring Island Climate Action Council. The Council was established in May 2010 to coordinate the development and implementation of a Climate Action Plan for Salt Spring Island. The Council consists of representatives of the following agencies and organizations:

- Capital Regional District
- Islands Trust
- Institute for Sustainability, Education and Action
- Island Pathways
- Salt Spring Island Agricultural Alliance
- Salt Spring Island Chamber of Commerce
- Salt Spring Island Transportation Commission
- Salt Spring Island Water Council
- Salt Spring Island Conservancy
- Transition Salt Spring
- Earth Festival Society

And a youth representative, Gulf Islands Secondary School, plus up to four members at large with specific expertise and/or interests related to the Climate Action Council's mandate

Acknowledgements

The Salt Spring Island Climate Action Council wishes to thank all those who contributed to the Climate Action Plan, including everyone who attended the community workshop in February 2010, council members who contributed sections of the plan and reviewed and edited drafts, and our twelve outside technical reviewers.

cover photo: Mount Erskine © M.Levy/flaearthphoto.com



A Salt Spring Island Climate Action Plan

Our climate is changing. We must learn to change with it. "Business as usual" is no longer either wise or safe.

As an island community, we are particularly vulnerable. We depend on fossil fuels for transportation, including the ferries that bring us—and everything we need—here. We rely on imported food. We are vulnerable to severe weather events like wind storms and storm surges. Hotter, drier summers pose greater risks of devastating forest fires. Sea level rise will affect our shorelines and low-lying buildings.

We are also an active, engaged, resourceful community with the ability, initiative and willingness to prepare now for a century of profound change. We know that it is more important to leave a legacy than to leave an impact.

In collaboration with members of our community, the Salt Spring Island Climate Action Council has developed an action plan to **help us meet our future head on**, and **with our eyes open**.

"Climate change is a complex, multi-year challenge for our region. It is a wake-up call to a system in decline, and the future of the Capital Region—our economic structures, government policies, and culture—will be determined by how we deal with this challenge."

—Climate Action in the Capital Region

The Need to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Climate change affects everyone. It will especially affect our children, our grandchildren, and generations to come. We must act now, to protect ourselves and our environment, and future generations. We hold their future in our hands.

In recent times, we've been pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere like there's no tomorrow. Now, whether or not there will be a safe and comfortable tomorrow depends on us cutting back those greenhouse gas emissions significantly.

*The upper safe limit for atmospheric CO₂ is 350 ppm (parts per million).
The current level is over 390 ppm, and rising.*

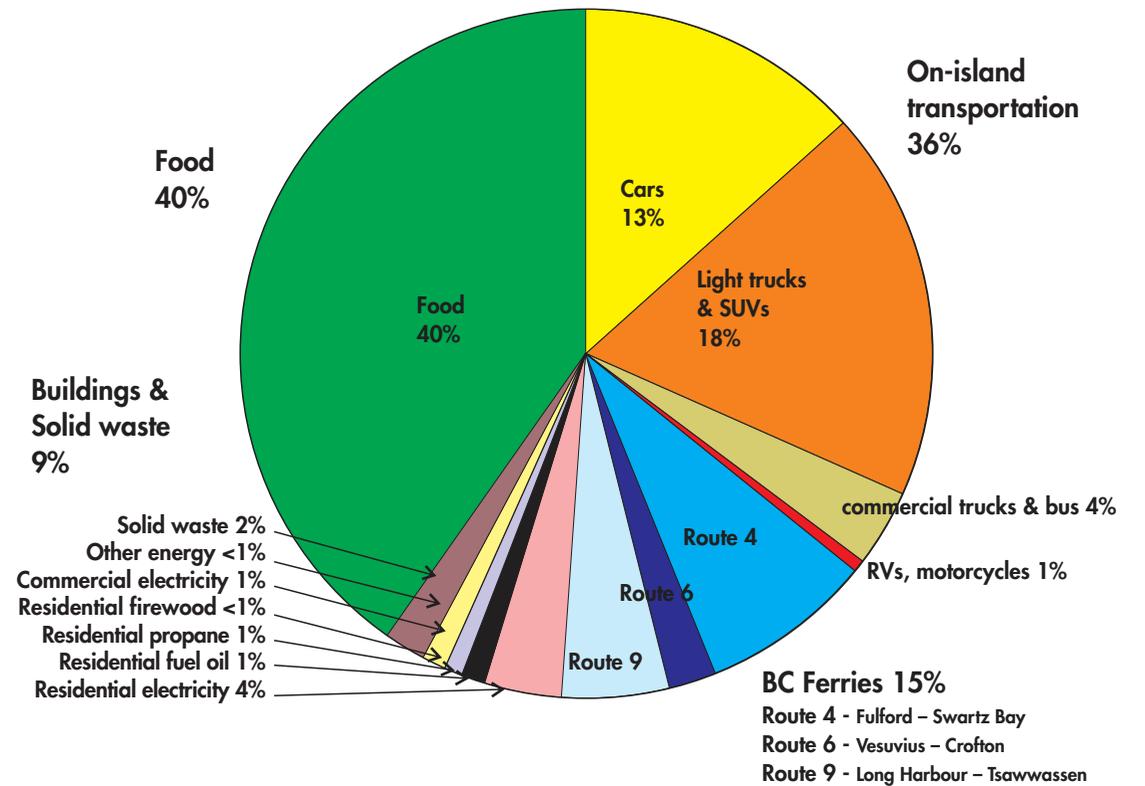


Increase in atmospheric CO₂ between Feb 1959 and Feb 2011.
Mauna Loa Observatory, Hawaii
Earth Systems Research Laboratory, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Where do Salt Spring's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Come From?

In 2007, our total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from food, transportation fuels, electricity use, heating fuel, firewood, propane, solid waste, and BC Ferries fuel were estimated at about 70,000 tonnes. That's about 7 tonnes for each of us.

2007 Salt Spring Baseline GHG Emissions

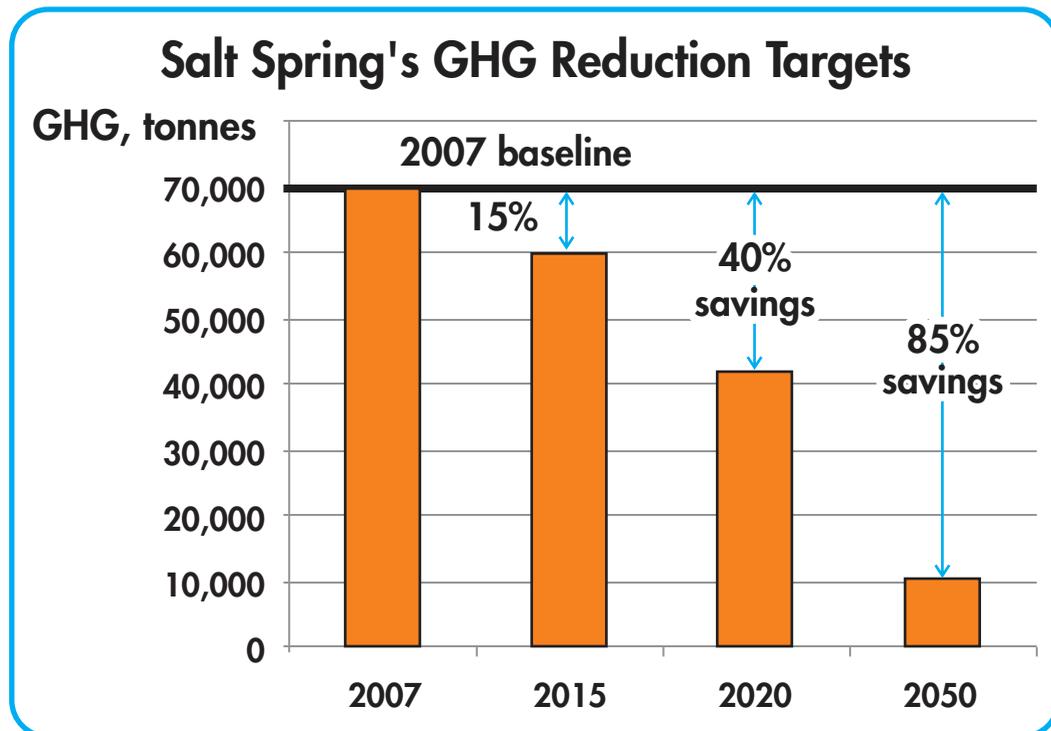


Salt Spring's GHG Reduction Targets

In 2010 our Local Trust Committee set GHG emission reduction targets for Salt Spring. As required by provincial legislation, these targets are included in our Official Community Plan.

The targets call for a reduction in GHG emissions from 2007 levels of at least 15% by 2015; at least 40% by 2020, and at least 85% by 2050. It will take the combined efforts of individual and community initiatives, actions by all levels of government and the business sector, technological changes, and changes to land use to meet these targets.

To meet our 2015 target, we need to phase out 10,500 tonnes of GHG emissions. How will we do that?



Priority One: On-Island Transportation

The Climate Action Plan calls for reducing GHG emissions from island vehicles by 5,000 tonnes by 2015 and by 13,000 tonnes by 2020.

Can we do this? Of course we can.

We can achieve most of these savings by making three simple changes to our driving habits:

- **Drive 20 percent less.** *(It's easier than you think! Try the bus if possible)*
- **Give a neighbour a ride.** *(The more often, the better!)*
- **Drive "smart".** *(See tips below)*

A typical 30 kilometre return trip to Ganges in a subcompact car puts 5 kilograms of GHG emissions into the air. The same trip in a truck emits about 8.6 kilograms. If every islander finds a way to eliminate just one trip out of every five, we will cut Salt Spring's carbon emissions by about 4,500 tonnes.

Saving someone else a trip by offering them a ride is another way to reduce emissions. If islanders carpool by taking one more person along every fourth trip, emissions will drop by about 5,500 tonnes.

And if we all drive "smart" by keeping tires properly inflated, removing unnecessary weight, avoiding idling and rapid acceleration and braking—we will use less fuel and reduce carbon emissions by another 1,000 tonnes.



Priority Two: Food and Agriculture

The typical North American diet is responsible for more GHG emissions than operating a car. Surprised? Well, it's mainly because of the emissions that result from the industrial food production and distribution system.

Fossil fuels are used to manufacture fertilizers, operate farm machinery, and transport, process and store food. Processed food and intensive livestock operations have especially high carbon footprints. Avoiding “junk food” and replacing factory-farmed meat and dairy products with other protein sources reduces the carbon footprint from food. Local and regional organically grown food, with an emphasis on vegetarian fare, produces far fewer emissions than conventional imported and processed food.

Salt Spring's indirect GHG emissions from food are probably about 28,000 tonnes. The Climate Action Plan calls for reducing GHG emissions from food and agriculture by 4,000 tonnes by 2015 and 9,000 tonnes by 2020.

We can achieve these savings with three basic changes:

- ***Eat less processed food***
- ***Eat more organic and vegetarian food***
- ***Eat more local and regional food***



Photo: Shari Macdonald

Priority Two: Food and Agriculture cont.

If every islander eats dairy-free vegetarian meals 3 days a week, Salt Spring's overall emissions will go down by 3,000 tonnes.

The whole island can slim down by another 1,000 tonnes if everyone eats local food just one day a week.

Shopping at the Tuesday and Saturday farmers' markets, and at roadside farm stands, is a great way to support local farmers, build our local agricultural economy, and reduce GHG emissions.

Of course, if we all eat more local food, we'll have to grow more food here too. Fortunately, we have the potential to grow much more food on Salt Spring than we already do, both in market and home gardens. Island organizations, including the Salt Spring Agricultural Alliance and its members, and Transition Salt Spring are doing great work toward this goal. Support these groups, and start planting!



Photos: Shari Macdonald

Individual Choices Matter

Transportation and food are the two key sectors where the daily decisions we make have a huge influence on Salt Spring's total GHG emissions. We can reduce our carbon footprint in other ways too.

The Climate Action Plan calls for reductions in emissions at home by conserving energy and by using more energy-efficient appliances and retrofitting our houses. We can also reduce methane from solid waste by composting our food right in our own backyards. Renewable energy systems such as solar hot water, solar electricity, and micro-hydro have some potential on Salt Spring Island.

Taking a long-distance flight or a cruise ship vacation adds significantly to an individual's carbon footprint. Exploring our own beautiful region is a more carbon-friendly option.

Some of our biggest decisions—such as choosing a vehicle, building a house, and planning the size of a family—have long-term carbon repercussions that are difficult to reverse and require careful consideration.

This table shows the effects on GHG emissions of some decisions.

Activity	Emissions savings (Kilograms GHG)
Hang clothes to dry rather than use electric dryer	.07
Avoid one 30 km round trip into Ganges in a subcompact car	5
Eat dairy-free vegetarian meals for a day	7.5
Avoid one 30 km round trip into Ganges in a pickup truck	8.6
Avoid one return ferry trip to Vancouver	20
Avoid round-trip flight from Vancouver to Mexico	600
Build 1,000 square foot house rather than 4,000 square foot house	69,700
Have one less child — 100 year emissions savings	550,000

Salt Spring's Climate Action Plan in a Nutshell

Actions related to transportation and food are crucial for achieving our 2015 and 2020 GHG reduction targets.

Transportation: Improve light and commercial vehicle performance; decrease automobile reliance; increase public transit; reduce travel by island residents; support BC Ferries in reducing ferry emissions.

Food and agriculture: Shift to a climate-friendly diet of minimally processed organic, local and regional food. Eat more vegetarian food and fresh produce.

Other actions:

Homes: Reduce energy consumption and GHG emissions from existing and new homes; reduce embodied energy in construction materials. Reuse, repair and recycle more items.

Businesses and institutions: Reduce energy consumption and GHG emissions in our workplaces; support carbon-neutral businesses; build net-zero new commercial and institutional buildings.

Land use and conservation: Shift development to villages; protect forests for carbon sequestration and storage; address potential effects of sea level rise.

Local renewable energy: Increase use of small renewable energy systems such as solar and micro hydro, and explore the potential for tidal and deep geothermal systems.

Community: Shift community values to support strong climate action; help people recognize the carbon legacy of personal decisions.

Government: Support strong commitment from all levels of government to reducing GHG emissions.

Read the complete Climate Action Plan on our website:

www.climateactionsaltspring.ca

CLIMATE ACTION CHECKLIST

Everyday choices that make a difference

Transportation

- Walking, cycling, using public transit instead of cars.
- Combining trips and ride-sharing.
- Reducing travel overall.
- Teleconferencing in place of travel.
- Reducing recreational travel, vacationing locally.

Food

- Reducing consumption of highly-processed and highly-packaged foods.
- Including more vegetarian and local organic food in the diet.
- Selecting local and regional organic or grass-fed meat and dairy products.
- Raising vegetables organically at home.

Homes and Businesses

- Reusing and recycling more items.
- Reducing consumption (and saving money) by repairing things, sharing things, and eliminating some discretionary purchases.
- Eliminating outdoor wood burning.
- Composting garden waste and food scraps.
- Conserving plants, trees and soils.
- Selecting the most energy-efficient equipment, lights and appliances when purchasing.
- Retrofitting homes and businesses for energy savings when renovating.

Watch for Climate Action events and information.

Get involved and check out our website:

www.climateactionsaltspring.ca