



Climate Change Issues for Local Governments

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About Washoe County

- ▶ Located in Northern Nevada, bordered by northeastern California and southern Oregon, includes North Lake Tahoe; County seat is Reno
- ▶ 6,900 square miles of high desert (4,000–10,000 ft elevation)
- ▶ 83% of land federally owned and managed
- ▶ 427,000 population
- ▶ 11.4% unemployment rate (October, 2012)
- ▶ 48% of homeowners under water in mortgages; #2 in nation for foreclosures
- ▶ 2,500 County employees (down from 3,200)
- ▶ Lost 50% of assessed value in five years
- ▶ \$600 million annual budget currently (down from \$800+ million)

County Commission Strategic Objectives

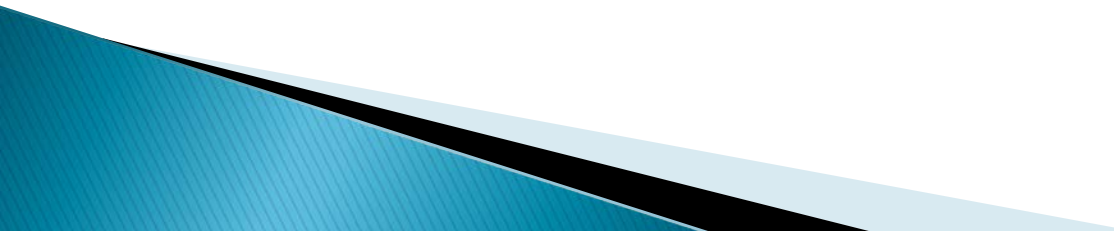
- ▶ Sustainability of our financial, social and natural resources
 - ▶ Economic Development and Diversification
 - ▶ Safe, secure and healthy communities
 - ▶ Employee development
 - ▶ Public participation and transparent communication
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“The economy is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the environment, not the other way around.”

--Gaylord Nelson



History of Sustainability Efforts

- ▶ First Sustainability Summit in 1997
 - ▶ Three times named #1 Local Government in US for Waste Reduction by US EPA
 - ▶ Energy Strategy adopted in 2001; updated in 2010; LEED buildings, energy conservation retrofit programs
 - ▶ Community residents have a close connection to the natural environment
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Water

- ▶ Conservation ordinance; 3 times per week watering restrictions, no watering mid-day
- ▶ 100% water re-use at treatment plant; reclaimed water infrastructure for all non-residential uses
- ▶ Groundwater recharge program
- ▶ Integrated water management; conjunctive use of stream and groundwater sources
- ▶ Cloud seeding program supported in part by local governments' joint Water Authority
- ▶ Watershed protection, erosion control, sediment reduction projects at Lake Tahoe
- ▶ Monitoring changes in supply due to decreased snowpack
- ▶ Warming of river temperatures could impact sewage treatment standards; multi-million dollar impacts if fisheries impacted
- ▶ \$500 million "Living River" Truckee River Flood Control project
- ▶ Pilot program for mandatory xeriscaping in a new development; reduced water and sewer infrastructure requirement by 10%

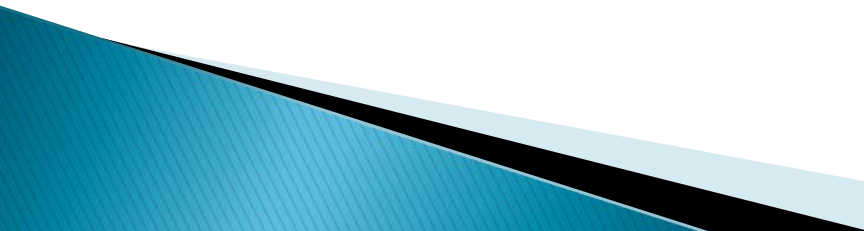
Wildfire Risk Management

- ▶ Forest fuels reduction projects; integrated with power generation from waste Biomass where feasible
- ▶ Noxious and non-native weed management laws
- ▶ Fire adaptive communities code amendments in land use plans
- ▶ Neighborhood Fire Safe Councils; defensible space and “Living with Fire” education series
- ▶ “Red Flag” days when operation of machinery in wildland/urban interface is prohibited
- ▶ Now seeing wildfires year-round; in November 2011 lost 42 homes; in January 2012 lost 28 homes and one fatality; had emergency operations for wildfire and major flood in same day

Habitat and Air Quality Management as Infrastructure Issues

- ▶ Open Space and Natural Resource Management Plan completed in 2008 won national award for biodiversity assessment; used in land use and infrastructure planning
- ▶ Vector Control efforts to manage pests using non-toxic strategies, growth pattern decisions
- ▶ Completed ICLEI Milestone 1 of 5: Emissions Inventory & Forecast
- ▶ “Road diet”—bike friendly communities, traffic circles, computerized traffic management
- ▶ Electric vehicle charging station

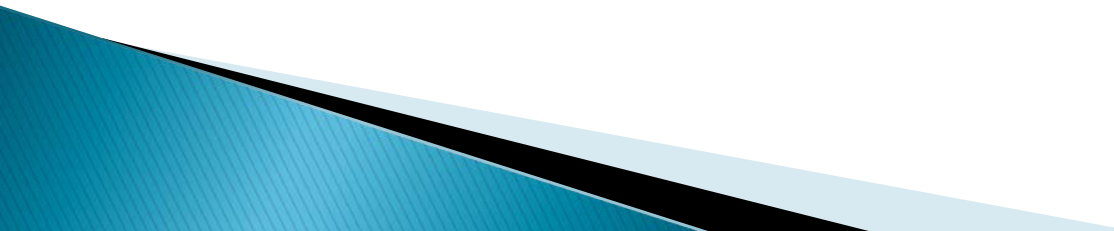
Other efforts

- ▶ Code changes to support wind power generation sites, local food production to reduce carbon footprint
 - ▶ Bike Policy and Bike to Work Day (I do it myself and ride 20 miles roundtrip; we publicize my participation)
 - ▶ Buy Local Campaign – County spent \$126 million locally on goods and services in FY 12; 82% of purchases are in-state vendors to reduce carbon footprint
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How do we engage citizens?

- ▶ Place Attachment Theory (Altman & Low, 1992; Brown & Perkins, 1992)
 - People will act to improve a place with which they have an emotional relationship
- ▶ Norm Activation Theory (Schwartz, 1977)
 - Pro-social behaviors activated by four variables:
 - Problem awareness—knowledge of person or subject in need
 - Ascription of responsibility—how responsible a person feels for the need
 - Outcome efficacy—the relative usefulness of actions to alleviate the need
 - Ability to help—a person's perception of their ability to help alleviate the need

Keys to success

- ▶ Citizens will support infrastructure funding and policy changes if they know that you are doing everything else you responsibly can: water conservation, fire risk mitigation, waste reduction, stricter building codes, buying local, etc.
 - ▶ Accuracy and transparency of data used to make decisions is critical
 - ▶ Trust in decision-makers (the swing County in a swing State)
 - ▶ Economic ROI documented (high cost of doing nothing)
 - ▶ Disciplined execution; performance measurement
 - ▶ Visibility of achievement; celebrate recognition
 - ▶ Leadership by example
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Questions?

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Thank you!

