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QuickPoint! - Oregon is meeting its 2020 GHG emissions goals, depending on how you measure it

By Rachel Dawson

Is Oregon meeting its 2020 greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction goals? It depends on how you measure emissions.

The Oregon Legislature established GHG reduction goals in 2007 through [HB 3543](#). The law called for reducing GHGs to 10% below 1990 levels by 2020, and 75% below 1990 levels by 2050.

However, the statute does not say whether GHGs should be measured in the aggregate or on a per capita basis. This is an important distinction given Oregon's population growth since 2007.

The Oregon Global Warming Commission (OGWC), a group created by [HB 3543](#), insists on measuring total GHG emissions. Using this metric, Oregon produced 13% more total emissions in 2017 compared to 1990 levels, and thus appears to be failing.

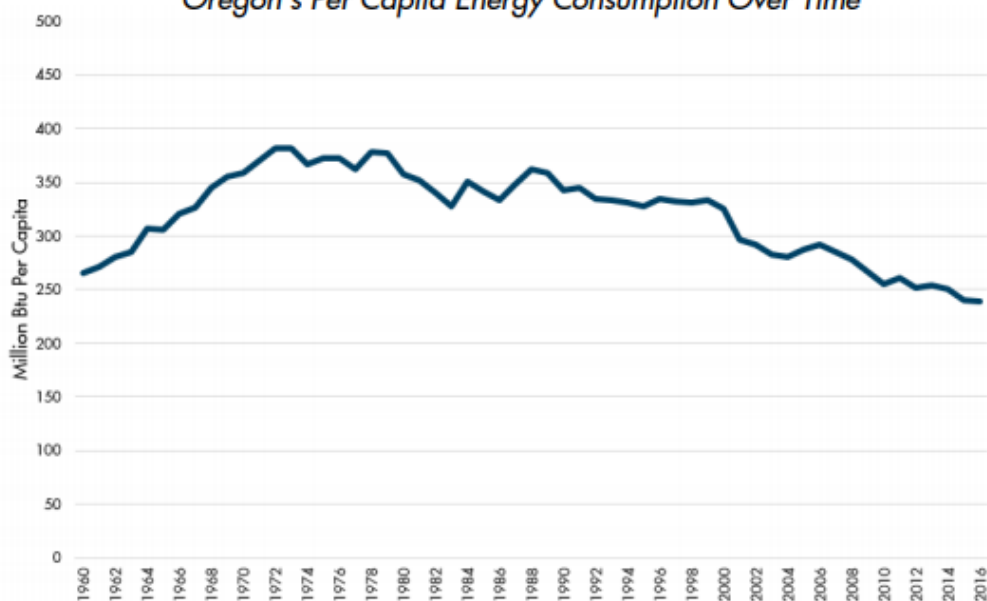
When measured on a per capita basis, Oregon GHG emissions in 2017 were actually **21% lower than 1990 levels**. We have more than doubled the 10% emissions reduction goal, three years ahead of the deadline.

In fact, Oregon has improved its energy efficiency so much that per capita energy use in 2016 was the lowest it's been since 1960, declining 37% since it peaked in 1972. Oregon has the lowest per capita energy use in the entire Northwest.

(over)



Oregon's Per Capita Energy Consumption Over Time



Source: Oregon Department of Energy, 2018 Biennial Report

Unfortunately, you won't see any celebration from the Global Warming Commission, because good news doesn't sell. More importantly, the Commission needs the perception of a crisis in order to justify Governor Brown's climate change agenda. Oregon legislators should remember this when the Governor's cap-and-trade bill is debated in February.

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