



Annual Report: Climate Change Advisory Committee 2022-2023

UN urges dramatic climate action as records keep tumbling

“With global temperatures soaring and greenhouse gas emissions at unprecedented levels, dramatic climate action is needed to steer away from runaway climate change,” a 2023 UN report has found.

UN, “Emissions Gap Report,” November 20, 2023

**Annual Report:
Climate Change Advisory
Committee
2022-2023**



Our Mission and Goals:



Make recommendations to Commissioners regarding climate change impacts in Chatham County and ways to adapt to and mitigate these impacts:

- (a) Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases with related improvements in air quality,
- (b) Promote the use of renewable energy,
- (c) Promote carbon neutral/green building standards for new and existing buildings both public and private
- (d) Encourage resilient and regenerative conservation-oriented land uses for both residential and commercial land development standards that foster climate change mitigation and adaptation
- (e) Seek best practices to retain County's tree cover.

CCAC Committee Membership

NAME	POSITION	NAME	POSITION
Charles Cooper	Co-Chair	Alicia Koblansky	Member
Robbie Cox	Co-Chair	John Bonitz	Pittsboro Rep
John Graybeal	Past Chair	Vickie Atkinson	Member
Mike Petruska	Past Chair	Goldston Rep	Vacant
Keith McLaurin	Past Vice Chair	Pam Hawe	Siler City Rep
Ed Beroset	Member	David Delaney	BOC Commissioner Liaison
Nita Dukes	Member	Kevin Lindley	Environmental Quality Director and staff liaison

Our Accomplishments & Activities for 2022-2023:



Earlier, the Committee prepared a “Chatham County Climate Action Plan” specifying 10 steps the County could consider in its climate change planning.

Our 2022-2023 Accomplishments and Activities in these 10 steps occur in two clusters:

(1) Sequestration and Regeneration and (2) Reducing Greenhouse Gas Pollution.

Our Accomplishments & Activities for 2022-2023:

Sequestration and Regeneration Recommendations

- 1. Conserve, Protect Sensitive Lands**—develop strategy for 20,000 acres
 - Consulted with Senior Advisor, The Conservation Fund in NC re. land acquisition.
 - Developed “land conservation” metric in draft “Climate Dashboard.”
(Superseded by Planning project for tracking environmental goals in Comprehensive Plan.)
- 2. Protect County’s Trees**—Develop Tree Protection Ordinance
 - Participated in Tree Protection Ordinance Working Group. Recommendation to Commissioners, Dec. 5, 2022.

Our Accomplishments & Activities for 2022-2023:

Sequestration and Regeneration Recommendations

3. Promote Sustainable & Regenerative Agriculture

- The Committee's working group continued research on regenerative land use for sequestering carbon, including consultations with agriculture groups and the County Extension Agent.
- Presentation to Chatham County Ag Business Group on regenerative ag.

4. Learning Areas in Parks—Establish 10 carbon demonstration gardens (No action this period)

5. Green Space in New Developments (No action this period)

Our Accomplishments & Activities for 2022-2023:



Reducing Greenhouse Gas Recommendations:

- Researched NC Utilities Commission rulings re. HB 951, requiring a 70% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and net zero by 2050.
- CCAC members attended NC Utility Commission public hearing (July 2022) regarding its potential carbon ruling

(Continued monitoring of the Utility Commission is important for Commissioners re. its carbon and net metering rulings, i.e., two BOC letters in 2022 re. Utility Commission actions)

- Researched Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) “direct payments” to local governments for clean energy projects
- Researched Rewiring America clean energy “Savings Calculator” for potential tax credits and rebates for Chatham County residents

Our Accomplishments & Activities for 2022-2023:



Reducing Greenhouse Gas Recommendations:

6. Cleaner County Fleets—increased Use of Electric Vehicles (EVs) & Hybrids

- Formed Electric School Bus working group to research feasibility of ESBs for County.
- Received report on school children’s health benefits and improved academic performance from riding electric buses
- CCAC members interviewed Assistant Superintendent of Operations and Director of Transportation for Chatham County Schools re. concerns about electric school buses

7. Accessibility of EV Charging Stations

- Received report on sources of Federal funding for EV charging stations
- Began investigation of energy infrastructure for future Co. heavy-duty EV vehicles

Our Accomplishments & Activities for 2022-2023:

Reducing Greenhouse Gas Recommendations:

8. Reduce Emissions with Green Buildings

- Researched Inflation Reduction Act funding for energy efficiencies in low-income homes per Comprehensive Plan: “Require energy efficiency in affordable housing” (*Str. 3.5*)

9. Green Jobs Summit (No action this period)

10. Climate Perspective in County Decisions and Progress Measurement

- Appointed two CCAC members as ex-officio members of the UDO Subcommittee
- Drafted “Climate Dashboard” for tracking progress of actions toward Chatham County environmental goals. (Superseded by Planning Dept. proposal)
- Recommended Commissioners’ support for Planning Dept. budget proposal to track the environmental goals in the Comprehensive Plan (letter, April 5, 2023).

Our Accomplishments & Activities for 2022-2023:

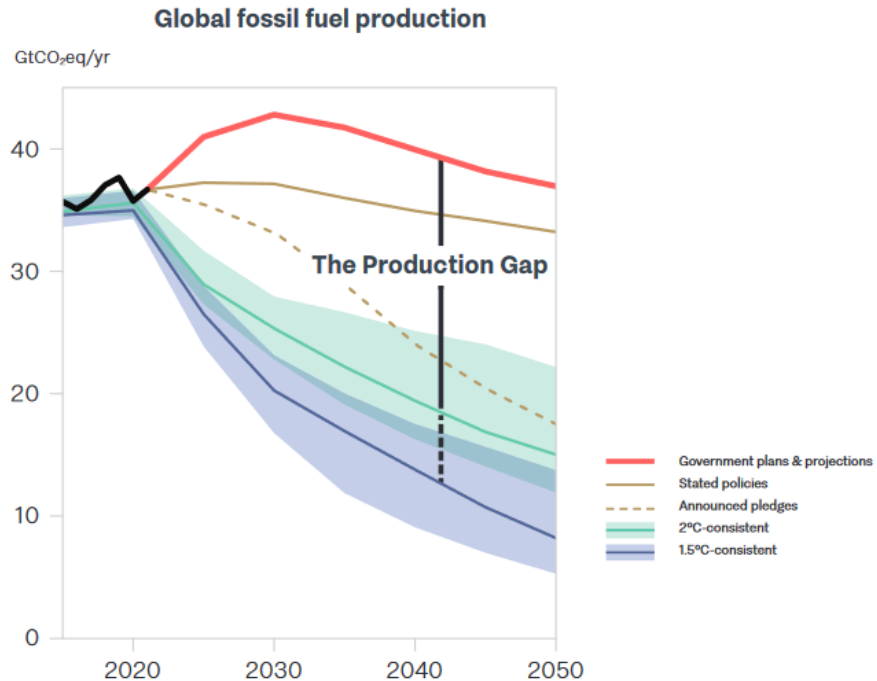
Barriers and Challenges

1. The primary challenge continues to be the rapid pace of development in the county. As natural lands are converted to commercial and residential purposes, efforts at sequestration suffer with the loss of trees, the county's major source of carbon sinks.
2. A second challenge is that the Inflation Reduction Act's implementation may take longer, delaying the ability of local governments to obtain bridge loans for electric infrastructure and solarization projects or assist County residents in securing tax credits and rebates for weatherization and energy efficiencies.
3. Further are actions by Duke Energy and Electric Membership Corporations (EMCs) to reduce payments for residential solar panel energy generation, providing a disincentive for adoption of solar panels.

Our Accomplishments & Activities for 2022-2023:

Barriers and Challenges

4. Finally, the challenge from climate change may worsen as nations fall behind in meeting their emissions goals: “Contrary to pledges to cut fossil fuel production, government policies worldwide will add up to a **doubling of production** in 2030, “a new report from the UN environment agency (UNEP) concludes, Nov. 8, 2023.



Our Accomplishments & Activities for 2022-2023:

RECOMMENDED CHANGES

1. In 2022-2023, the Committee focused primarily on clean energy, electric vehicles, energy efficiency, and benefits from the IRA climate law. Are Commissioners satisfied with this emphasis? Or are additional or other subjects (e.g., green jobs summit) desired for the Committee's objectives in 2024?
2. Because Greenhouse Gas Inventories have implications for staff time and may inform Commissioners' decisions, the Committee intends to begin planning for a new Greenhouse Gas Inventory in late 2024, particularly as VinFast, Wolfspeed, and other developments begin production in 2024 and beyond.
3. Siler City appointed Pam Hawe as representative to the Climate Advisory Committee.

Thank you!

***Robbie Cox and Charlie Cooper
(Co-Chairs)***

Climate Change Advisory Committee

