

First United Methodist Green Team says: City of Missoula can and must move quickly to reduce carbon output

In 2017, a study showed Missoula's city government operations producing 10,800 metric tons of carbon emissions annually. City leaders responded by pledging to reduce that output by 50 percent by 2020.

It was a lofty goal, which we fell far short of achieving.

A new study says the city's carbon output in 2020 was 18,500 metric tons – a sharp increase from 2017, not the decrease envisioned.

City officials attributed the increase primarily to the acquisition of Mountain Water Co., the municipal water utility.

“Our city pumps and wells are very outdated. About half the water pumped up from the aquifer and treated falls back in. When someone turns on their tap, a pump is working to get them water,” Leigh Ratterman, the city's climate action specialist, told City Council members in late August. “Now that we own the utility, we have the opportunity to make the changes to reduce the emissions. I see it as a positive thing.”

While that's true, the city also made little progress toward cutting its carbon emissions in other areas between 2017 and 2020. And that's where we as citizens can make our voices heard.

Ratterman assured Council members that Missoula government offices are enthused about reducing their carbon output in coming years. But what are the details? Where is the plan?

Here's the breakdown of municipal greenhouse gas emissions by department: water and wastewater, 58%; buildings and facilities, 18%; the city's vehicle fleet, 12%; street lighting, 6%; employee commute, 5%; and solid waste facilities, around 1%.

Here's more about the recent report and the city's response, from Missoula Current:

<https://missoulacurrent.com/outdoors/2021/08/carbon-output-missoula/>

The city's lack of progress is particularly alarming in the wake of this month's release of the global 2021 climate report by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. That document sounded the "code red" for humanity and planet Earth, and warned of mass extinctions and natural disasters on a scale never before seen.

"The house is literally on fire," said City Council member Bryan von Lossberg.

Will the city of Missoula achieve its goal of carbon neutrality by 2025? We need to ask for a more specific outline of how and when officials will take meaningful, substantive action. Call or write your City Council members today [at this link](#). Let them know you want Missoula to achieve its climate action goals. Tell them you're ready to help!