



Pacific Institute
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PICS News Scan – 22 November 2011

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The PICS News Scan is a weekly summary of the major climate-change related science, technology, and policy advances of direct relevance to the BC provincial and the Canadian federal governments and more generally to businesses and civil society. The News Scan focuses on cutting edge climate issues and solutions gathered by the fellows and faculty of [ISIS, a research centre at the Sauder School of Business](#), in partnership with the [Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions \(PICS\)](#). Access to some referenced articles may require a journal subscription or purchase of the article, and appropriate links are provided for this purpose. To be added to the News Scan distribution list or to provide content feedback and/or suggestions about interesting news items, please email picsscan@uvic.ca.

Complementing the News Scan is the [PICS Briefing Note Service](#). This service provides timely and concise analysis, as well as suggested policy action, on issues related broadly to BC climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Research Theme I: The low carbon emissions economy

Carbon trading initiative a success, study says

November 15, 2011. A [new study](#) of the US's [Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative](#) (RGGI) says the 10-state program has created more than \$1.6 billion (US) in regional economic value. This figure represents the value of future savings as the energy efficiency benefits are realized. Three-quarters of it would come from savings in electricity, natural gas and heating oil bills. [According to the study](#), customers saved nearly \$1.3 billion on electricity bills through energy efficiency investments. The program helped create 16,000 jobs region wide, and has retained more than \$765 million in local economies by reducing the demand for fossil fuels. Despite these gains, the program is currently under threat [as New Jersey is planning to drop out](#) and other states may follow suit.

While the regional plan in the north east of the United States may be at risk, the results of this study should bolster support for other regional emissions trading systems in North America. The [Western Climate Initiative](#) (WCI), in which BC is a member, has a mandate to “reduce regional GHG emissions to 15 percent below 2005 levels by 2020 and spur investment in and



development of clean-energy technologies, create green jobs, and protect public health.” The study of the RGGI suggests that some of the savings mentioned are achievable within the WCI system. The objections to the RGGI from participant states don’t necessarily undermine the value of regional trading. New Jersey complained that the incentive to reduce emissions wasn’t great enough and emissions were being pushed to jurisdictions outside the regional trading block. This concern illustrates the need to establish an appropriate cap as well as border policies related to the import of high emitting energy and goods from other jurisdictions.

<http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/11/15/greenhouse-gas-initiative-a-success-study-says/>

IEA says we have 5 years to act on climate change

November 11, 2011. In a new report released by the [International Energy Agency \(IEA\)](#) scientists warn that if the current trend to build high-carbon-emitting infrastructure continues, the [amount of carbon the world can consume before warming exceeds the 2 degree Celsius limit set by scientists](#), will be reached in 2017, and this will leave us more vulnerable than ever to the effects of irreversible climate change. The energy decisions society makes today will lock the world into much higher emissions for the next few decades. This study estimates that global primary energy demand recovered by 5% in 2010, resulting in a record 30.6 gigatonnes of CO₂ emitted in 2010. Government subsidies that encourage the consumption of fossil fuels increased to \$400 billion.

The development of BC’s natural gas reserves is a hot topic in the province at the moment. Premier Clark has [announced her government’s intentions](#) to develop these reserves, despite growing concern that [shale gas development and climate targets](#) cannot be reconciled. One solution to this could be to delay the implementation of further climate action, such as not joining the WCI’s cap and trade scheme in 2013. Some WCI members have already delayed their involvement and chosen instead to join an initiative called [North America 2050](#). While it is admirable that these regions are publicly making a call to action, this report from a reputable international organization creates a strong case for immediate action.

<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2659&ArticleID=8936>

Research Theme II: Sustainable communities

Recycling saves the planet and creates jobs – Report

November 15, 2011. [According to a recent report](#), if the US increased its recycling rate from the current 33% to 75%, 1 million jobs would be created as a result, boosting the economy, reducing the amount of garbage sent to landfill, and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the sector. The report focuses on the idea of ‘transforming the waste sector into a materials management sector’, and offers concrete estimates of the benefits that would result from a transition. As an example, recycling 1000 tons of paper and cardboard would create 7 jobs throughout the process, while incinerating or dumping that same 1000 tons of paper in a landfill would create less than one full-time job (0.66). The report concludes that in order to achieve a higher diversion rate, policies and regulations are required to support

recycling and waste diversion practices and stimulate opportunities for materials reuse.

In BC, Metro Vancouver [has set a target of 70% diversion rate by 2015](#), and organizations such as the [Recycling Council of British Columbia](#) are advocating for 100% diversion. Both initiatives have the potential to create jobs and spur entrepreneurial opportunities as organizations find better ways to use and manage waste. [Efforts are also underway to focus on the construction sector](#), putting in place policies and guidelines to foster improved recycling and reuse at construction and demolition sites. [A report produced last year](#) focuses specifically on opportunities for green jobs and sustainable production in BC, and highlights specific strategies for green job creation in the province.

http://www.bluegreenalliance.org/press_room/press_releases?id=0170

Research Theme III: Resilient ecosystems

Deforestation causes cooling in northern US, Canada, study finds

November 16, 2011. A [new study](#) published in Nature confirms a long held assumption about the impacts of deforestation, and has researchers calling for new climate-monitoring strategies. The study finds that the impact of deforestation on global warming varies depending on latitude. For example, the researchers noted that deforestation in the boreal region, north of 45 degrees latitude, results in a net cooling effect. According to the research this is due to the albedo effect, which measures how much solar radiation is reflected back into space. This means that although cutting down trees releases carbon into the atmosphere, it also increases the reflection of sunlight, especially when there is snow cover. The authors stress that this does not mean we should start cutting down trees at higher latitudes, because forest ecosystems provide a range of other ecosystem services, even if at certain latitudes they may be warmer than open areas.

Climate models have long suggested that the conversion of forest to grasslands or crops could create a small cooling effect. The goal of the study was to quantify the impact. While the authors clearly state that their findings do not call for a radical shift in policy or approach to climate monitoring, the study should inform future practices of forest management. This study is about the larger picture of the warming planet, going beyond a focus on the impacts of deforestation on levels of greenhouse gas emissions. Climate policies are not simply about an assessment of net GHG emissions, but should focus on overall climate and environmental impacts at both the federal and provincial levels.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/11/111116132910.htm>

Research Theme IV: Social mobilization

Climate change impacts on mental well-being

November 15, 2011. Psychologists are sounding the alarm with regards to the mental health effects of climate change, suggesting that damage estimates of natural disasters should also

consider the mental and human health impacts to communities and individuals. [The American Psychological Association recently published a special report on climate change and psychology](#). The researchers note that as climates adapt and change, “nations will have to increasingly contend with issues like depression and post-traumatic stress disorder along with changes in infectious disease patterns and air quality.” Population migration due to climate changes issues are also having impacts on well-being, as people are displaced or move into cities. Abrupt climate change can be likened to the impact of the changing seasons, in that they can affect how people feel and go about their lives. Australia has been particularly hard hit by natural disasters including floods, droughts, and fires, [and The Climate Institute](#) reported on the impacts earlier this year.

[In British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada and the northern US](#), regions have gone largely unscathed by changing weather and natural disasters. Less population-dense communities have been affected by climate change issues, including pine beetle infestation and [thawing permafrost](#). Climate change will largely impact smaller communities in the short term, as changes to natural resources impact towns heavily reliant on them. Job loss and migration to cities will impact rural BC and affect the well-being of these areas. [Research is ongoing at Thompson Rivers University](#) to study the impacts on rural communities in the province, and [the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives](#) is looking at the social implications of climate change, including impacts on resource-dependent communities.

<http://www.eenews.net/public/climatewire/2011/11/15/2>



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