
# Climate Commitment Annual Report

## October 2023

EAU CLAIRE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

The ECASD Energy Committee is a means to help channel both staff and student voice to guide our efforts in reaching the goal of 100% non-renewable, carbon-free by 2050. We would like to acknowledge the following people for their commitment and guidance regarding this important work from the past school year, in no particular order:

| | | | |
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| **Gabi Augustya** – ECASD Student Representative | **Issabelle Campbell** – ECASD Student Representative | **Madison Guo** -- ECASD Student Representative | **Jim Boulter** - UWEC |
| **Jim Fey** – Student Transit | **Sarah French** – Community Member | **Alicia Howe** – ECASD / Memorial Science Teacher | **Jeff Nestor** – Facilities Manager, ECASD |
| **Ned Noel** – City of Eau Claire | **Michael Schwiebert** – ECASD / North Science Teacher | **Julie Thoney** – Xcel Energy | **Jeremy Gragert** – EC City Council |
| **Kate Felton** – EC City Council | **Jim McDougall** – CEO at Upstream / Solar Energies | | |
| **Kurt Madsen** – ECASD | **Mike Johnson** - ECASD | | |

## Introduction:

The Eau Claire Area School District has committed to immediate and ongoing action toward a goal of achieving 100% renewable energy and carbon neutrality for the District by 2050. This commitment is a direct response to the threat of global climate change. Addressing climate change at the local level is essential in both taking responsibility and addressing human and environmental risks. Through specific actions, listed throughout this document, ECASD commits to using evidence-based, transparent, equitable and inclusive processes to preserve, protect, and enhance the natural world. This plan will include interim renewable energy and carbon-neutrality targets for each of the first five years and longer- term targets for each five-year period thereafter.

This plan will emphasize four key areas in achieving 100% renewable energy and carbon neutrality:

1. **Biodiversity:** The ECASD will enhance the environmental diversity of District properties to provide important resources like water, air, habitat, and shade, and also to sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

2. **Emissions:** The ECASD is invested in maintaining its strong record of participating in energy efficiency programs.

3. **Transportation:** A significant portion of Eau Claire's greenhouse gas emissions is a result of moving people and goods around the city. Innovative transportation solutions for the ECASD are needed to reduce carbon and improve human health.

4. **Waste and Recycling:** The waste that is sent to Eau Claire's local landfill produces methane emissions that contribute to global warming. Reducing waste via recycling and other measures is a key focus area for all District facilities.

A Sustainability Report was completed by our ECASD Buildings & Grounds Department in 2017. This is the most recent and comprehensive report conducted by our district. You can view 2017 Sustainability Report HERE.

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## Explanation and Overview of this Report:

The Eau Claire Area School District is committed to increasing our energy efficiency as they pertain to the long-term goals of attaining carbon neutrality and 100% renewable energy by the year 2050. This commitment will be the lens through which the District's Results and Operational Expectations policies are viewed (Eau Claire School Board, 2022). This annual report meets the Eau Claire School Boards "Operational Expectation – Climate Commitment" to publish for the community an annual update as to the achievement of goals in the climate commitment work plan.

More importantly, this annual report serves to inform our stakeholders including students, families, community members, and staff about the intentional efforts made by the district to address the climate crisis. The purpose behind these climate commitments is a direct and local contribution to the reduction of global climate change.

## AUDIT FOR FISCAL AND ENVIROMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN SCHOOL BUILDINGS

In collaboration with our Building's & Grounds Department, 20% of our buildings will be audited on a rotating annual basis. These audits are designed to help provide fiscal and environmental responsibility as we ensure our learning environments are most productive for our students. They will also help determine where capital expenditures and training can be used to help achieve the climate goals of the district. You can learn more about the auditing process by clicking HERE.

To help inform the audit, the General Manager of Facilities or Operations will complete the Climate Commitment checklist. The Climate Commitment checklist should be used as a tool to help determine not only training and capital expenditures but also be used to develop a roadmap towards carbon neutrality.

The checklist is broken down into five different categories.

1. Site
2. Water Efficiency
3. Energy and Atmosphere
4. Indoor Environmental Quality
5. Recycling and Garbage

The auditor will use a numbering scale:

- 1- Does not meet requirements
- 2- Meets some requirements
- 3- Meets all requirements

Categories and scale will give a more in-depth understanding of deficiencies and where

improvements can be made.

After obtaining site-based information using the Climate Checklist, a report will be developed that highlights what is done well and where there are opportunities for improvement. The report will also include actionable items for improvement. The audit will include water, gas, and electrical usage. It will be shared with Buildings & Grounds and the principal of that respective building.

Reference an example of an Audit for Fiscal and Environmental Responsibility within school building, here: Climate Report Lakeshore

Prior to the Audit for Fiscal and Environmental Responsibility, a 2017 Sustainability Report was completed by our ECASD Buildings & Grounds Department. This is the most recent and comprehensive report conducted by our district. You can view 2017 Sustainability Report HERE.

**Definitions, as they pertain to the context of this report:**

- **Carbon Neutrality**: is a state of balance between the $CO_2$ emitted into the atmosphere and the $CO_2$ removed from the atmosphere.
- **Renewable Energy:** energy that is collected from renewable resources that are naturally replenished on a human timescale
- **Emissions:** The production and discharge of something; particularly gas or radiation.
- **Opportunity Sector for Biodiversity**: strategies which increase the natural carbon sinks in Eau Claire by enhancing local vegetation and natural landscapes.
- **Opportunity Sector for Transportation**: strategies that reduce the amount of vehicle travel or convert fossil fuel vehicles to lower carbon emissions.

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## Evidence of Current Performance & Data

### Biodiversity

Biodiversity represents all life and its interdependences. It provides a blueprint for how to operate sustainably. In the natural world, a waste output is a nutrient input. The sun's energy and carbon cycles are examples of interrelated systems that benefit life. Human-made systems, on the other hand, can disrupt natural ones. One disruption is evident with the vast burning of carbon-based fuels in our transportation and building sectors. This imbalance of carbon-based fossil fuels is threatening many aspects of life we have come to rely on.

Biodiversity Evidence / Current Performance:

- Environmental Diversity Assessment - Rubric for assessing diversity

Biodiversity / Future Actions:

- Implement Diversity Assessment at 20% of the ECASD buildings per year
- Increase awareness of energy efficiency strategies within our Eau Claire Community

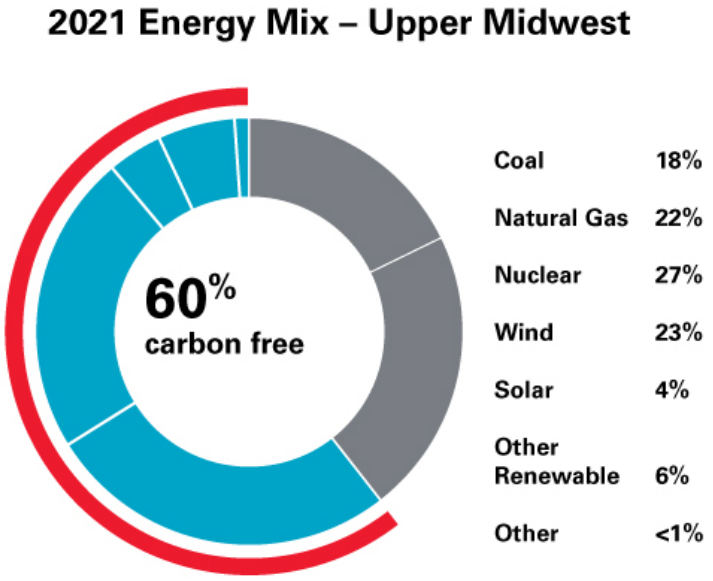
## Emissions

Building / Operational Emissions

The Buildings and Grounds Custodial/Maintenance staff of the Eau Claire Area School District (ECASD) is charged with delivering facilities that are safe, comfortable, and clean for students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Custodial staff are committed to environmental stewardship and sustainability, both contained in the Green Cleaning Policy. Green Cleaning comprises an entire program affecting our choice of cleaning chemicals, practices, and equipment. Read the Green Cleaning Policy, in its entirety, HERE.

XCEL Energy is a critical partner in helping us reach our energy goals. Simply by partnering with XCEL has provided us tremendous advantage in reaching our goals. Here are a few highlights of our partnership with XCEL in meeting our energy goals:

- Xcel Energy was the first U.S. energy provider to set aggressive goals across all the ways our customers use energy: electricity, heating, and transportation. Together, all three commitments represent a comprehensive vision that positions us to become a truly net-zero energy provider by 2050.
- Reduced carbon emissions 50% since 2005, keeping the company on track to achieve its interim goal of reducing carbon emissions 80% by 2030, on the way to 100% carbon-free electricity by 2050.
- Water use associated with owned and purchased electricity is down more than 29% as we aim for **70%** lower water use by 2030. Air emissions are down **82%** since 2005.
- From 2017 to early 2022, we added 14 new wind farms across seven states that saved customers **$1.8 billion** through a combination of reduced fuel costs and tax credits.



Transportation Emissions

Learn more about transportation in the section below.

Emissions Evidence / Current Performance:

- Green Cleaning Policy
- Increase in Air Filtration and Air Filter
- Strong partnership with XCEL energies

Emissions / Future Actions:

- Contracted with 3rd Party to conduct baseline emissions testing in October 2022

## Transportation

Transportation is quite possibly the largest environmental impact on our community. With over 11,000 students and 1,500 staff members traveling to the district each day, we must be aware of this significant footprint on the environment.

ECASD also operationalizes a fleet of their own vehicles to help with district wide operations, including buildings and grounds maintenance, garbage/recycling hauling as well as staff and student transportation. As part of our goal to have zero emissions, ECASD had conducted a feasibility study to determine likelihood of acquiring and maintaining a zero emission/electric fleet of district motor vehicles. Results of the study are, as follows:

The District's current fleet of vehicles and motorized equipment is currently gas powered. Through discussions with Enterprise, our vehicle leasing company, we were able to discuss the option of moving to an electric fleet of vehicles. Through these discussions, we determined that, at this point, there is limited information available about leasing electric cube vans, work vans and heavy trucks/equipment. The lack of practical information regarding their range and abilities is due to the availability to acquire these vehicles because of supply issues. There also is a lack of reliable information regarding costs, longevity, trade in value, and timeline for various models to be available to government agencies. The current supply climate has affected the ability for companies to produce a supply of electric vehicles as well as gas powered vehicles. The current timeline our leasing company has is 2024 for increased availability for government agencies.

The technology is ever changing and is allowing for extended range and reliability. The average miles travel for a food hauler using a cube van in the district is 68 miles per day. The range of an electric vehicle of that size is still unknown but would be well over that per day. From the period of November 1st, 2020, to November 1st, 2021, the cost of gasoline for the vehicle was $1792.00. The estimated electrical cost to charge a vehicle during that time would be significantly less. The maintenance cost of commercial electric vehicles is still unknown, because of the lack of supply and use to have as a baseline.

The district can add a charging station at the Service Center to accommodate an electric vehicle fleet. The addition of an electric vehicle would significantly reduce the districts carbon emissions, light duty vehicles produce 340 grams of CO2 per mile. There are several unknow factors related to cost, maintenance, and run time during plowing. The commercial electrical vehicle market is limited by supply and has not allowed for an established baseline. The ever-evolving technology and manufacturing capabilities will make it feasible for the district to convert its fleet over time to electric when the supply increases.

Partnership with Student Transit

Federal regulations on emissions are updated regularly. As these updates are operationalized, bus manufacturers adhere to the updated regulations as they produce new buses for sale. Common practices for bus companies, such as Student Transit, is to update their fleet, as older equipment times out. The company's fleet is updated to environment emission requirements, as they purchase new buses. Currently, around 80% of Student Transit's bus fleet operates under the 2006 'Diesel Exhaust Fluid (DEI)' guidelines, with the remaining 20% of the fleet population slowly timing out and being replaced by new, updated buses. Student Transit accesses grants, through the Environmental Protection Agency, to help offset the cost of upgrading the fleet. Learn more about these grant programs HERE. The federal government prioritizes local school districts who receive grant funding to help in replacing their fleet based on a set of four priorities. You can learn more about which districts qualify as a priority and more about how the qualify HERE.

Diesel Exhaust Fluid is an additive that significantly reduces the emissions. Student Transit maintains and stands by the DEI fleet as the most efficient fleet for serving the ECASD community, both in terms of environmental efficiency and what makes the most sense for our community, at this time. Currently, Student Transit is upgrading outdated equipment to diesel/DEI capability.

Student Transit has recently contracted with a company called Sawatch Labs to conduct a fleet feasibility study to determine if some form of transition to an electric fleet is a feasible option for Student Transit. This study concluded in Winter of 2023, which will then provide recommendation to Student Transit on the feasibility of starting a transition to an electric fleet.

Student Transit personnel recently hosted an event where a version of an electric bus was showcased. This was the first bus of its kind that Student Transit staff had an opportunity to interact with.

Student Transit is also partnering with Xcel Energy to determine the feasibility of developing an appropriate infrastructure to support some form of an electric fleet. Xcel Energy has praised the forward thinking, planning, and participation of Student Transit.

Partnership with Safe Routes to Schools

We continue to participate and promote Safe Route to Schools programming. Here are some of the results from this past year and into 2023 with SRTS:

- Safe Routes to School had a Walk and Roll Challenge in the Month of May in 2022 promoting routs for students to walk or bike to school. They participated in all the elementary buildings and offered prize drawings that every day a student walked or biked to school could enter to win a prize.
- From the 2018 SRTS Safety Plans there the intersection of Western and Eddy were redesigned to include extending sidewalks, installing medians west of the intersection and south of the intersections, repainting crosswalks, and travel lanes, plus adding a crosswalk and on the southwest corner of the intersection
- Memorial High School had parking lot on Fairfax side redesigned with dedicated sidewalks added. A school zone median was installed in the center lane with pedestrian access on Fairfax, designated pedestrian crossing signage with painted crosswalks, and the speed was reduced 25 MPH. Along Keith Street there was bump-outs and pedestrian crossing signs installed.
- Northwoods Elementary School had 15 MPH School Zone signs installed south of the school.
- North High had crosswalks painted at intersections, pedestrian signs installed at Mar's and Piedmont, and redesigned parking lot for more pedestrian and bike friendliness.
- Locust Lane changed the parking lot, so Locust is the entrance and Potter is the exit for safer vehicle and pedestrian drop off and pick up traffic.
- Ride Share, fuel efficient parking spots have been created for some schools like Sherman Elementary.
- SRTS conducted a study for 2022-2023 school year. Items completed in September and October of 2022 are Parent surveys, walk and ride audit for each school with volunteer assistance, and cross walk evaluations.
- Working with City, County, and Township for extending bike path by Northwoods and McKinley schools to promote more walking and biking to those locations.
- Speed study at school with high traffic areas like Longfellow on Birch, and Putnam Heights on MacArthur, Stein, and Hamilton Streets.
- Will be working with City Engineering while Birch Street is being examined for projects in the next year for additional signage, stop and go lights, and pedestrian crossing lights.
- As parking lot projects are identified, especially for the successful November 2022 ECASD referendum, will seek the ability to install EV car charging stations.

Transportation Evidence / Current Performance:

- 80% of Student Transit Fleet currently Meeting / Exceeding – lower carbon emission federal regulations.
- ECASD Fleet Feasibility Study completed

Transportation Future Actions:

- Continue to explore feasibility of transitioning to zero emission transportation in ECASD as well as Student Transit

  Student Transit – conducing a feasibility student with Sawatch Labs, in partnership with XCEL Energy to determine how zero emission transportation can benefit our community.

- Safe Routes to School is conducting an Updated Safety Study for the 2022-23 school year. This study will help inform and promote alternate means to school, such as walking and biking.

## Waste & Recycling

Technological waste:

Information on the general life cycle of technological hardware in ECASD can be found here: General Life Cycle Information.


For over 10 years the District has used a local company, First Choice Recycling, to remove our electronic waste and provide verification of recycling exceeding industry standards. Furthermore, assurances provided that all recycled materials have been processed in an environmentally responsible manner and have maintained a zero-landfill policy.

ECASD works in partnership with Cisco Technologies to return expired equipment so it falls in line with their Customer Recycling Solutions programs and goals.

ECASD also works in partnership with Heartland Business Systems (HBS) to ensure process followed collection of E-Waste. Certificates of Destruction and reporting of total amount collected, in pounds, are reported back to ECASD by HBS.

ECASD also participates in Government Surplus Auctions as means to sell surplus equipment. This has created a revenue for ECASD of over $325,000 since 2011. This equates to repurposed taxpayer dollars, versus sending surplus equipment to the landfill.

Food Waste:

ECASD / Nutrition Department emphasizes a “offer vs. serve” approach to serving food with the specific intention of reducing waste. ECASD meets certain USDA regulations, that must be met to emphasize this approach.

Learn more about ECASD's, "Offer to Serve" approach here:

*"In order to have a complete lunch, each student must choose three food components (grains/bread, meat/meat alternate, fruit/vegetable and milk). Students are encouraged to try all the side items offered but are required to take a full serving of the fruit/vegetable food component. At breakfast, students may refuse up to one item but are required to take a full serving of a fruit or vegetable food component.*

*Offering students options to compile a complete lunch or breakfast, rather than simply serving them, allows for less food waste because each child is given the choice to choose healthy foods based on their personal preferences. It also gives our children a wider variety of foods to try, helping them prepare to choose healthy foods throughout their life."*

Construction Waste Management:

Given the continual maintenance, improvement, and additions to school buildings, ECASD follows Construction Waste Management and Disposal statute, which you can find more information on by clicking THIS LINK.

General Waste Management:

The District has its own garbage service. We own one truck that services every building across the District at least once a day. Having an internal service allows for additional collections at schools as needed or even on weekends for special community or school events. In the 2014-15 school year the District transported almost 600 tons of garbage. A good portion of the trash weight is food waste. The District is continually looking for a method to separate organic material from trash for recycling. Currently there is no good method for storing these materials for several days without pests/foul smell issues and there is also no collection firm/process for these items in the area.

Co-mingling recycling at every location which includes plastic, cans, paper.

General Recycling Management:

ECASD contracts out recycling services. Cardboard and other recyclables are collected per a schedule that is determined by quantity collected at the school and the size of dumpster stationed at the school.

A metal recycling container is permanently stationed at the Service Center and at each high school during the summer. During the school year, items containing metal are collected from the schools and deposited in the metals dumpster at the Service Center.

Batteries, waste oil, fluorescent tubes and other hazardous chemicals from activities in District buildings are collected and transported to the Service Center where they are sorted and arrangements made for proper disposal. Concrete from deteriorated sidewalks, curbs and gutters is hauled away by the excavator to their site where it is broken up for paving base

course.

Waste & Recycling Evidence / Current Performance:
- Currently participating in metals recycling program
- Participating in “Offer to Serve” approach
- Following Construction Waste Management Statutes

Waste & Recycling Future Actions:
- Continue to enhance partnership with City of Eau Claire on food waste reduction / composting opportunities.
- Maintain, at minimum, currently metal recycling efforts

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## Climate Commitment Action Plan

Because of the widely acknowledged urgency of the climate crisis, the ECASD commits to immediate and ongoing action toward a goal of achieving 100% renewable energy and carbon neutrality for the District by 2050. Throughout this action the ECASD will use evidence-based, transparent, equitable, and inclusive processes to preserve, protect, and enhance the natural world.

Action Steps & Highlighted Accomplishments

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| **Action Step #1**<br><br>Establish an energy committee with the following stakeholders with an overall goal to prepare and implement a clean and renewable energy transition plan, and meet the commitments and goals set forth by this policy. | Highlighted Accomplishments of Action Step #1:<br><br>2022-2023 – Collaboration with representatives from Focus on Energy. When in building planning phase for referendum, consultation with Design Assistance. Maximizing roof construction projects to include room for solar panels. Identified the contractor to complete the baseline carbon footprint testing. Provided promotional ideas and events to promote the collaborative work of the committee.<br><br>2023-2024 – Committee re-established and first monthly meeting has been set. Highest priorities will include the examination of the OE-3 Monitoring Report and Annual Report, propose and refine plans for the successful November 2022 referendum projects. Seek more participation and expertise from the community in our District’s efforts. |
| **Action Step #2**<br><br>The district will monitor, evaluate, and improved CO2 levels in the occupied spaces to control the amount of outside air being brought into a given space. | Highlighted Accomplishments of Action Step #2:<br><br>Currently identified a contractor to conduct baseline emissions testing for our District, as a whole. |

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| **Action Step #3**<br><br>Develop and follow an internal District rubric or index for environmental diversity on District properties to gauge present use and improve environmental stewardship. | Highlighted Accomplishments of Action Step #3:<br><br>District Biodiversity Rubric developed; implementation began 2022-23 school year.<br><br>The rubric was used to help guide decisions on referendum projects at North High, South Middle, and Putnam Heights<br><br>Example: Putnam Heights courtyard has native low maintenance plantings and garden boxes. |
| **Action Step #4**<br><br>Publish the programs, agreements, and grants in which the District participates and applies annually. | Highlighted Accomplishments of Action Step #4:<br><br>Current participation in XCEL Energy's Peak Energy Curtailment Process<br><br>Partnership with Eau Claire County / Compost and Food Waste Reduction Programs<br><br>Partnering with Focus on Energy for guidance on equipment purchases during referendum work.<br><br>Focus on Energy grant programming.<br><br>Carbon footprint study has been completed to set baseline. This is a major accomplishment for the District. See study HERE.<br><br>Development of ECASD OE3 energy committee website |
| **Action Step #5**<br><br>Commit to auditing 20% of our buildings each year in a five-year rotation to be fiscally and environmentally responsible. | Highlighted Accomplishments of Action Step #5:<br><br>Audit process established<br><br>Checklist to guide audit developed<br><br>Reports now being conducted on new schools in the year's rotation – Meadowview, Locust Lane, North High, South Middle, Northwoods<br><br>Climate Report South Middle 2022-23 |

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| **Action Step #6**<br><br>Improve our energy efficiency in all existing schools and buildings, new construction (solar-ready) and major renovations. | Highlighted Accomplishments of Action Step #6:<br><br>Currently 60% carbon free in partnership with EXCEL Energy<br><br>ECASD electricity usage again benchmarked below statewide average<br><br>Planning and preparations in process due to the successful November 2022 ECASD referendum<br>LED lighting with dimmable switches and occupancy sensors in all additions and renovations. A prime, significant example is South's renovation. This will include updated lighting to LEDs, and Memorial's auditorium remodel will convert lighting to LEDs, starting in the Spring of 2024.<br><br>Referendum work on Northstar, Locust Lane, Northwoods, and Meadowview includes updates to air handling system to lower emissions and energy usage<br>.<br>Replacement of heating systems at Northstar, Meadowview, and Manz to condensing boilers to reduce energy usage |
| **Action Step #7**<br><br>Commit to adding a process of determining location-efficient properties and transportation routes that are innovative and efficient. | Highlighted Accomplishments of Action Step #7:<br><br>Demo and Trends: Guiding Principle #7 – Minimization of transportation and time costs.<br><br>Demo and Trends: Guiding Principle #12 - "Green Policy" - Climate "The community impact that newer facilities or remodels have on the equity and climate commitments of the Board"<br><br>The South Middle School construction is already being examined for efficiencies with the upcoming phases of the project by Student Transit in collaboration with District leadership. |

**This coming year, 2023-24**

Re-establish the Energy Committee's purpose and principles for operation; seek more participation and expertise from the community in our District's efforts. Continue to meet and refine our commitment to the School Board and District Administration by May of 2024.

**2022 Climate Goal:** *60% carbon free / *33% renewable energy
Those goals were met – 60% carbon free AND **41**% renewable energy
**2023 Climate Goal:** *63% carbon free / 44% renewable energy
**2030 Climate Goal:** *81% carbon free / *55% renewable energy
**2040 Climate Goal:** 92.5% carbon free / 77.5% renewable energy
**2050 Climate Goal:** 100% carbon free / 100% renewable energy
**Source: Excel Energy*