



Climate Commitment Annual Report

October 2024

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 continued commitment and guidance regarding this important work, in no particular order:

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	Brooke Brienen – ECASD / Meadowview - Elem. Representative	Rachel Brettingen – ECASD / Delong – M.S. Representative
Joel Dimock – ECASD	Jim Boulter - UWEC	Michael Johnson – ECASD	Memorial “Eco-Warriors” – Student HS Group

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](#).

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 interested parties across the district 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. This rotation is firmly established: Flynn, Manz, Memorial, Northstar, and Putnam Heights were audited this year. These audits are designed to help provide fiscal and environmental responsibility as we ensure our learning environment is 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.xlsx](#). 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 Manz 2024](#)

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 CO₂ emitted into the atmosphere and the CO₂ 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.docx](#) - Rubric for assessing diversity

Biodiversity / Future Actions:

- Continued Implementation Diversity Assessment at 20% of the ECASD buildings per year

- ECASD Use of Building Automation Systems (BAS) to control HVAC systems:
- Monitors Co2 levels in gathering spaces and adjusts outside air intake based on a predetermined Co2 level.
- Programmable systems set using best practices (national standard) for outside air brought into our buildings, and the automation systems allow us to continually monitor and adjust levels to provide a comfortable and safe environment.
- ECASD continues to exceed the recommended air changes per hour in classrooms.
- ECASD has continued updating and replacing old automation systems to provide the healthiest and most efficient environments for students and staff. Montessori, South, Putnam, and Memorial have had or are having their control systems upgraded. This allows for greater monitoring and control.
- Replacement of air handlers at Northwoods, Locust Lane, and Northstar will improve air quality at provide better climate control. These locations have been completed.

Emissions

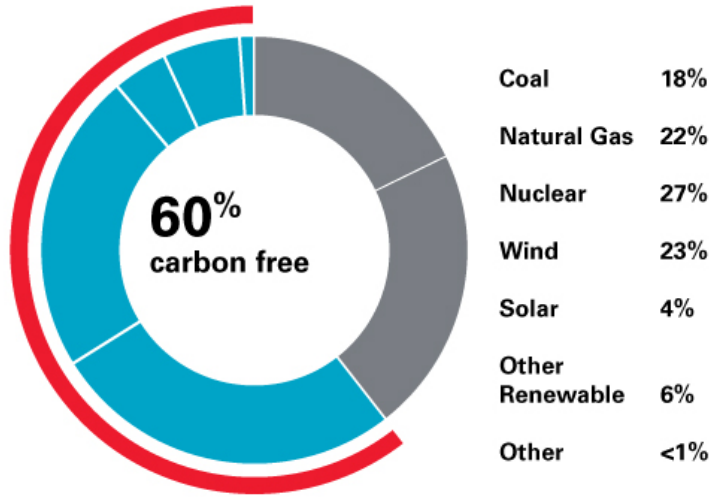
Building / Operational Emissions

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.

2021 Energy Mix – Upper Midwest



Transportation Emissions

You can learn more about our carbon footprint as it pertains to busing/ transportation and emission data, [HERE](#). Learn more about transportation in the section below.



Emissions Evidence / Current Performance:

- [Green Cleaning Policy.docx](#)
- Increase in Air Filtration and Air Filter
- Strong partnership with XCEL energies

Emissions Completion / Future Actions:

- The District had contracted with 3rd Party to conduct baseline emissions in 2023.
- CVTC – Wisconsin Technical College System General Purpose Revenue grants
- Xcel Energy's Peak Energy Curtailment Program
- Use of ESSER II / III Funding to improve aging infrastructure at Longfellow Elementary, Northwoods Elementary, and Northstar Middle School.
- Xcel Curtailment Process
- Partnering with Focus on Energy for guidance on equipment purchases during referendum work.
- Focus on Energy grant programming: from 8/23/23 to present, the District received \$124,000 in rebates.

- Carbon footprint study has been completed to set baseline. This is a major accomplishment for the District. This 144-page document was included in PDF format in our Annual Energy Report 2023.

Transportation

Transportation is quite possibly the largest environmental impact on our community. With over 11,000 students and 1,400 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. 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 unknown 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 90% of Student Transit's bus fleet operates under the 2006 'Diesel Exhaust Fluid (DEF)' guidelines, with the remaining 10% 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 DEF 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. Currently, Student Transit is upgrading outdated equipment to diesel/DEF capability. To learn more about the carbon footprint currently employed in the machinery used at Student Transit, click [HERE](#).

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 and at this time in 2024, the recommendation to Student Transit on the feasibility of starting a transition to an electric fleet is not feasible due to the lack of data of electric buses in use.

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 continues to praise 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 with SRTS:
- Safe Routes to School - Walk and Roll Challenge.
- Memorial High School parking lot on Fairfax side was 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 were bump-outs and pedestrian crossing signs installed.

- Northwoods Elementary School had 15 MPH school zone signs installed south of the school. North High School had crosswalks painted at intersections, pedestrian signs installed at Mars and Piedmont, and a redesigned parking lot for more pedestrian and bike friendliness.
- Locust Lane altered their 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 has last conducted their updated study for the 2023-24 school year.
- Consulting with City of Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, and Townships for extending bike path by Northwoods and McKinley schools to promote more walking and biking to those locations. Speed studies completed at school with high-traffic areas like Longfellow on Birch and Putnam Heights on MacArthur, Stein, and Hamilton Streets.
- Consultation with City Engineering while Birch Street is identified for projects for additional signage, traffic lights, and pedestrian crossing lights.
- As parking lot projects are identified, we will continue to seek opportunities for EV car charger installations.

Transportation Evidence / Current Performance:

- 90% of Student Transit Fleet currently Meeting / Exceeding – lower carbon emission federal regulations. This is an improvement from 2023 by 10%.
- 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 – conducting 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 2024-25 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](#).

Since 2011, 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), and inventory listing of equipment is compiled.

ECASD also participates in [Government Surplus Auctions](#) as means to sell surplus equipment. This has created a revenue for ECASD of \$335,000 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, in order 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.

The District has made significant gains in this area:

- In 2022-23, 499 tons went to landfill, a 12% reduction.
- In 2023-24, 435 tons went to landfill, a 13% reduction.
- The last 6 remaining elementary schools will begin composting by January 1, 2025.
- All elementary schools will be on the composting program by the end of this year.
- There will be six more elementary schools beginning composting in the 2023-24 school year. Eau Claire County will audit our recycling program by April of 2025 to offer specific direction on our improvements, yet another partnership to assist in these efforts.
- The District is continually seeking successful methods to separate organic material from trash for recycling.

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. Since July 1, 2021 ECASD received over \$3000 in revenue connected to the recycling of metals from our buildings.

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

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

<p>Action Step #1</p> <p>Establish an energy committee with the following community parties 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.</p>	<p>Highlighted Accomplishments of Action Step #1:</p> <p>This is ongoing, and we include members of the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• City of Eau Claire• University of Wisconsin Eau-Claire• XCEL Energy• ECASD Staff and Students• Community Members• Student Transit
<p>Action Step #2</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Highlighted Accomplishments of Action Step #2:</p> <p>We have successfully engaged a third party for a carbon footprint study and completed the data collection to set a baseline for the District.</p>
<p>Action Step #3</p> <p>Develop and follow an internal District rubric or index for environmental diversity on District properties to gauge present use and improve environmental stewardship.</p>	<p>Highlighted Accomplishments of Action Step #3:</p> <p>District Biodiversity Rubric developed; implementation began in the 2022-23 school year.</p>

Action Step #4

Publish the programs, agreements, and grants in which the District participates and applies annually.

Highlighted Accomplishments of Action Step #4:

- CESA Energy Innovation Grant
- CVTC – Wisconsin Technical College System General Purpose Revenue grants
- Xcel Energy’s Peak Energy Curtailment Program
- Use of ESSER II / III Funding to improve aging infrastructure at Longfellow, Northwoods, and Northstar.
- Partners with Focus on Energy – received \$124,000 in rebates.

Action Step #5

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:

[Audit process](#) established

[Checklist to guide audit](#) developed

Reports now being conducted in five schools: Flynn, Manz, Memorial, Northstar, and Putnam. Example of Manz 2023-2024 link.

Action Step #6

Improve our energy efficiency in all existing schools and buildings, new construction (solar-ready) and major renovations.

Highlighted Accomplishments of Action Step #6:

- 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 2025.
- 2022 Referendum work on Northstar, Locust Lane, Northwoods, and Meadowview includes updates to air handling system to lower emissions and energy usage.
- The energy systems at South and Montessori were inefficient and have been replaced with a system that provides better control. Memorial and Putnam systems upgraded to the same platform this year.
- Sam Davey aging electrical panels replaced
- South roof replacement, which increases the r-value to the district standard.
- Memorial roofing replaced summer 2023 to meet the district’s insulation standards.
- New solar panel arrays will be installed at Putnam and North on the new additions.
- Replacement of heating systems at Northstar, Meadowview, and Manz to condensing boilers to reduce energy usage

<p>Action Step #7</p> <p>Commit to adding a process of determining location-efficient properties and transportation routes that are innovative and efficient.</p>	<p>Highlighted Accomplishments of Action Step #7:</p> <p>Demo and Trends: Guiding Principle #7 – Minimization of transportation and time costs.</p> <p>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”</p>
<p>Action Step #8</p> <p>Conduct a feasibility to ECASD fleet vehicle purchases of electric and alternative fuel vehicles.</p>	<p>Highlighted Accomplishments of Action Step #8:</p> <p>ECASD Fleet feasibility study conducted in November 2021. In 2023-24, around 90% (increase from 80% in 2023) of Student Transit’s bus fleet operates under the 2006 ‘Diesel Exhaust Fluid (DEF)’ guidelines, with the remaining 10% (improvement of 10%) of the fleet population slowly timing out and being replaced by new, updated buses.</p>

This coming year – 2024-25

Re-establish the Energy Committee’s purpose and principles for operation; seek more participation and expertise from the community in our District’s efforts and support our students’ efforts in our commitment.

- Current:** *60% carbon free / *33% 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*