

**RESOLUTION
ROCK COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

Supervisors Stephanie Aegerter
and Kaelyb Lokrantz
INITIATED BY



Supervisors Stephanie Aegerter
and Kaelyb Lokrantz
DRAFTED BY

County Board Staff Committee
& Land Conservation Committee
SUBMITTED BY

March 12, 2020
DATE DRAFTED

IN SUPPORT OF EFFECTIVE FEDERAL CARBON FEE & DIVIDEND LEGISLATION TO
MITIGATE THE CLIMATE CRISIS

1 **WHEREAS** the Rock County Board of Supervisors recognizes that rising carbon emissions are
2 exposing and will continue to expose Rock County citizens to the risks of increasing extreme heat in
3 the summers, heavier rainstorms, as well as more frequent and severe flooding; and
4

5 **WHEREAS**, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Rock County, being part of the
6 State of Wisconsin, has warmed about two degrees Fahrenheit over the past century, and annual
7 precipitation has increased five to ten percent over the last half century; and
8

9 **WHEREAS**, according to the National Weather Service, flooding in Rock County near the Rock River
10 is likely due to recent warming trends over the last 30 years, with historic high water crests in 2008,
11 2013, 1993, 2018 and five recent high crests in 2018 and 2019. The information is based on Rock
12 River recording stations at Lake Koshkonong, Newville and Afton. High groundwater levels, increased
13 snow pack and increased rainfall events will accentuate the probability of increased future flood events.
14

15 **WHEREAS** climate change is having and will increasingly have adverse effects on Rock County's
16 infrastructure, recreational opportunities, and area aquatic and land ecosystems, as well as the area's
17 tourism and agricultural industries; and
18

19 **WHEREAS**, action is needed at the national level to address climate change in a timely and effective
20 manner;
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22 **WHEREAS** economists overwhelmingly support carbon fee and dividend legislation as sound
23 economic policy in its own right and the most effective, most efficient way to reduce emissions; and
24

25 **WHEREAS** carbon fee and dividend legislation would create jobs, grow the economy, save lives, and
26 reduce greenhouse gas emissions here in Rock County,
27

28 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Supervisors of Rock County does
29 hereby urge the United States Congress to pass effective carbon fee and dividend legislation without
30 delay; and
31

32 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board of Supervisors of Rock County send copies of this
33 resolution to Senator Tammy Baldwin, Senator Ron Johnson, and Representative Bryan Steil and
34 Representative Marc Pocan, as well as the County's State Legislative Delegation and Governor Tony
35 Evers.
36

Respectfully submitted:

COUNTY BOARD STAFF COMMITTEE

/s/ Kara Purviance
Kara Purviance, Chair

/s/ Richard Bostwick
Richard Bostwick

/s/ Tom Brien
Tom Brien

/s/ Kevin Leavy
Kevin Leavy

Dissent
Louis Peer

Dissent
J. Russell Podzilni

Dissent
Alan Sweeney

Dissent
Bob Yeomans

/s/ Jeremy Zajac
Jeremy Zajac

LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

/s/Richard Bostwick
Richard Bostwick, Chair

/s/ Stephanie Aegerter
Stephanie Aegerter

/s/ Wes Davis
Wes Davis

/s/ Kaelyb Lokrantz
Kaelyb Lokrantz

/s/ Mike Mulligan
Mike Mulligan

Dissent
Alan Sweeney

/s/ Jeremy Zajac
Jeremy Zajac

/s/ James Quade
James Quade

FISCAL NOTE:

No fiscal impact in and by itself.

/s/ Sherry Oja

Sherry Oja
Finance Director

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE:

Matter of Policy.

/s/ Josh Smith

Josh Smith
County Administrator

LEGAL NOTE:

The County Board is authorized to take this action pursuant to §§ 59.01 and 59.51, Wis. Stats.

s/ Richard Greenlee

Richard Greenlee
Corporation Counsel

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rock County citizens are growing increasingly alarmed by the effects of climate change on their way of life. Citizens are aware that our changing climate is affecting Rock County agriculture, tourism, infrastructure, health, and the overall quality of life here. Rock County citizens are experiencing difficulty in planting and harvesting crops, and they are observing more frequent flooding of area rivers and streams as well as damage to roads and bridges and to business and residential structures. They are struggling to adjust to temperature extremes that threaten traditional winter and summer recreational and economic activities. Citizens understand the broader global impacts of climate change, and they want the government to act.

In a 2019 Yale Climate Opinion poll, an estimated 70% of Rock County residents agreed that fossil fuel companies should be required to pay a carbon tax; 75% of county residents agreed that carbon emissions should be regulated by the government. At two recent Janesville farmers' markets in 2019, over 200 citizens took time to write letters to their Congressmen asking for federal legislation to enact a tax on carbon. In January, 2020, the Janesville city council, in response to citizen pressure, passed a resolution calling on Congress to pass effective climate legislation.

Municipalities and counties throughout the state and country are taking steps toward sustainability and toward building resiliency in the face of our changing climate, but only a federal response can quickly and effectively reduce the carbon dioxide emissions that are causing the rise in global temperatures, a rise that, unchecked, will result in serious and irreversible threats to our way of life here in Rock County.

American economists overwhelmingly support a tax on carbon as the best approach to addressing the climate crisis. Over 3500 American economists have signed a statement endorsing carbon fee and dividend legislation as the most effective way to quickly reduce carbon emissions. Carbon fee and dividend plans put a fee on fossil fuels at the source (the port, the mine, the well). The money from this tax would be distributed regularly to citizens as a dividend. There are a number of carbon fee and dividend proposals now in the House of Representatives. All involve a rising tax on carbon. They differ in how steep that rise might be, on how that dividend money should be allocated, and on specifics of the border adjustments that are necessary to ensure American competitiveness.

All would represent what many scientists and economists see as a basic first step in a government response to the climate crisis.

In supporting this resolution, The Rock County Board of Supervisors would join the many municipalities and counties across the state and nation that have already endorsed such legislation and would amplify local citizens' calls for a meaningful response to a serious threat to our way of life.