

FCSG Statement on 2018 Fort Collins Climate Action Plan Results

Updated on December 15, 2019

When the City of Fort Collins reports that community-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are 14% below 2005 levels¹, there should be a big asterisk at the end of the sentence. That's because the City does not include fluorinated gases, such as sulfur hexafluoride (SF6), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), and perfluorocarbons (PFCs) in its GHG inventory. One company located in Fort Collins – Broadcom (formerly Avago Technologies) - emits huge quantities of these gases, mainly SF6. Astoundingly, Broadcom's fluorinated gas emissions make it the largest single GHG emitter in the City.²

Since the contribution of fluorinated gases (also known as "F-gases") is generally much smaller than the contribution of carbon dioxide (CO2) and methane (CH4) emissions to greenhouse gas inventories, it is often acceptable to ignore them when counting greenhouse gases. For instance, according to the latest GHG Inventory for the State of Colorado, SF6, HFCs, and PFCs are expected to make up less than 1% of statewide equivalent CO2 emissions in 2020.³ However, the contribution of F-gases is much larger for Fort Collins. In fact, Broadcom's uncounted F-gas emissions in 2018 were equivalent to about 8% of ALL GHG emissions from Fort Collins that year.

If Broadcom's F-gas emissions were counted, then the City's 2018 greenhouse gas emissions would be only about 8% lower than 2005 levels – not 14% lower as claimed by staff. This actual result does not stack up particularly well in comparison either to our peer cities in Colorado or to the United States as whole.

The Fort Collins Sustainability Group (FCSG) has been raising this issue with City staff and Councilmembers for over a year now.⁴ Continuing to exclude Broadcom's F-gas emissions from the community inventory is a stain on the City's mostly laudable efforts to account for and reduce community-wide GHG emissions. We need to start counting F-gases, and we need to start working with F-gas emitters like Broadcom to reduce their output of these climate-wrecking chemicals.

There is a potential upside to following the course of action that FCSG is recommending. The F-gas emissions from Broadcom and other firms are not included in the City's 2005 baseline, and should of course be added in to that baseline if they are to be added into the inventory for other years as we suggest. If the City can work with Broadcom and others to reduce their F-gas emissions to LESS than their 2005 values by the end of next year, this will help us achieve our community GHG emissions goal of 20% reductions compared to 2005 levels. We urge the City to do everything it can to both track and reduce the emission of F-gases.

Note: this is a revised version of earlier statements posted on August 26th and November 3rd of this year. It incorporates recently-released 2018 data for Broadcom's F-gas emissions. We also recognize that the City included mention of Broadcom's F-gas emissions at the very bottom of its of its still more recently-released 2018 Community GHG Report under the heading "supplemental tracking," although these emissions are not actually included in the inventory.⁵

Footnotes

¹ See <https://ftcollinscap.clearpointstrategy.com/>.

² See <https://ghgdata.epa.gov/ghgp/service/facilityDetail/2018?id=1008734&ds=E&et=&popup=true> on the EPA's website reporting emissions from "Large Facilities."

³ Draft Colorado Greenhouse Gas Inventory Including Projections to 2020 and 2030, available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1120LdxmecGTuf7uiI9l6YmjOQonYOnxV/view>.

⁴ See “FCSG Statement on CAP and Local Solar Goals”, dated 5/8/18, available at <http://fcsg.fccan.org/sites/fcsg.fccan.org/files/FCSG%20Statement%20on%20CAP%20and%20Local%20Solar%20Goals%20050818.pdf>.

⁵ The 2018 GHG Inventory Report is available here: <https://www.fcgov.com/climateaction/files/2018data-summary-forweb.pdf?1574094438>.