

California joins Oregon, Washington and British Columbia in climate action plan

Rebecca Bowe
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Gov. Jerry Brown announced a regional agreement Oct. 28 with Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia to align policies for combating climate change.

“This is what is totally unique: We have a problem whose timescale is beyond anything we’ve ever dealt with,” Brown said as he gathered with Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber, Washington Governor Jay Inslee and British Columbia Premier Christy Clark (who joined remotely) to sign the agreement. “So, we have to take action before we see or experience all the problems we’re dealing with.”

In most political venues, “to actually utter the word ‘global warming’ is deviant and radical in 2013,” Brown said. “But you just watch ... this will spread until we have a handle on the world’s greatest existential challenge.”

Called the Pacific Coast Action Plan on Climate and Energy, the pact commits all the jurisdictions to take a leadership role in national and international climate change policy by agreeing to emissions reduction targets; to transition the West Coast to cleaner modes of transportation such as high-speed rail; and to invest in clean energy and infrastructure through actions like streamlining permitting of renewable energy infrastructure and supporting integration of the region’s electricity grids.



Gov. Jerry Brown spoke in San Francisco today at Cisco-Meraki’s Mission Bay headquarters.

GUARDIAN PHOTO BY REBECCA BOWE

Apart from this accord, Brown noted that “California has already signed a memorandum of understanding with several provinces in China,” concerning the need to work together on climate change, “and in fact with the national government itself.”

Meanwhile, a group of protesters gathered outside the Cisco-Meraki offices in Mission Bay, where the event was held, to oppose Brown’s unwillingness to support a statewide ban on fracking, an oil and gas extraction technique that environmentalists fear could contribute to groundwater contamination and increased greenhouse gas emissions.

“It’s starkly hypocritical for Governor Brown to be inking climate agreements while he’s at the same time green-lighting a massive expansion of fracking for dirty oil in California,” said protester Zack Malitz.

Asked to respond to the protesters' concerns, Brown responded, "I signed legislation that will create the most comprehensive environmental analysis of fracking today," referring to a bill that requires environmental review but has been criticized as flawed because it does not impose an outright ban.

"The big issue is the Monterey Shale," he added, referring to an expansive underground oil reserve that environmentalists fear could be opened up to fracking, "and nobody is talking about doing anything there for an extended period of time, and not before the environmental document."