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## Easton pledges to cut emissions

Also: Fee will help cover stormwater remediation

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Easton will need to remediate stormwater to remove sediment before it reaches the Lehigh River.

In a resolution that bites back at recent national policy changes, **Easton officials are pledging to reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050.**

Easton is the first city in the Lehigh Valley to adopt a reduction target and set up a climate action plan as part of the **Global Covenant of Mayors.**

"No one has stepped out as a leader to say 'this is our goal,'" Kate Simmons, Science Director at Nurture Nature, said.

Tina Roseberry, Easton Director of Planning, worked with the Nurture Nature Center to understand the city's gas emissions. They unveiled the findings at Wednesday's meeting, which was hosted in West Ward.

But before they could plan on reducing emissions, the team created a baseline using data from city residents, Lafayette College and UGI as well as city and county sources.

**Now pledged, the city has to come up with some opportunities to make positive changes and present a formal action plan by 2019.**

There are some easy ways to hit the target, including **partnerships and energy upgrades**. Institutions are always looking at ways to be more sustainable already, Simmons said.

Lafayette College is working on its own climate action plan with an ambitious goal of 60 percent reduction by 2039. If successful, Lafayette alone could reduce Easton's overall emissions between 4 and 7 percent.

"It is achievable," Simmons said.

Energy efficiency is the biggest, most cost-effective way to reduce emissions and help homeowners get cheaper energy. Average homeowners use up to 20 percent of their annual income on energy, Simmons said.

Stormwater remediation brings new fee Easton officials released a **draft pollution reduction** plan to the public for comment ahead of their July submission deadline.

The plan addresses **strategies for reducing sediment runoff from South Side, Downtown and the West Ward flats**, three main areas of Easton that drain into the Lehigh River.

Municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permits are required from every city over 10,000 residents as of 2003. **But a recent change now requires cities to remove sediment.**

The PA Department of Environmental Protection deemed the Lehigh River, a major outflow for Easton, impaired by sediment and runoff.

With 138 outfalls into the river, **Easton must now reduce its sediment output by 10 percent, or 30.5 tons, within five years in order to keep its MS4 permit.**

Public Works Director David Hopkins estimated the **cost to be between \$7 and 8 million.** New construction is the obvious cost, but the city also maintains 33 miles of underground stormwater sewers as well as aging brick and stone culverts.

"The city just owns a lot of stuff," Hopkins said.

Officials have stated before that the **cost won't be absorbed by grants and loan programs. The balance will be reflected in a new stormwater fee to be included on residents' sewer/trash bills.**

**Public comment on stormwater pollution strategies is open from through June 29.**