

## County examines global-warming role Consultant pinpointing sources of local greenhouse gases

November 29, 2007

By Dale Rodebaugh | *Herald Staff Writer*

In a meeting where government, health and environmental interests are talking about addressing global warming, Hillcrest resident Tom Campbell stands out - not for his head of white hair and white beard, but because he's the voice of the man-in-the-street.

That's how it was Tuesday when Campbell attended an organizational meeting at the La Plata County courthouse. A consultant explained to about 20 attendees, or "stakeholders," how an ongoing three-month process will identify the sources and levels of greenhouse gases - a source of global warming/climate change - in La Plata County, and forecast future levels.

"We can't wait for government action," Campbell, a semi-retired psychiatrist, said after the meeting. "People have to look at what they're consuming and see if it's possible to reduce the impact."

Hillcrest, an established subdivision of about 100 houses, probably doesn't represent a great threat to global warming, but every reduction of greenhouse gases helps, Campbell said.

"I became interested in the issue when my 18-year-old son began making comments about the waste of a world we were leaving him," Campbell said. "I agree that we're consuming a lot more than we should."

Campbell was among people of a like mind Tuesday.

The meeting was led by Judy Dorsey and Seth Jansen with The Brendle Group, a Fort Collins consulting firm hired by the county to conduct the greenhouse gas inventory. The firm's list of past clients includes the cities of Fort Collins, Boulder and Steamboat Springs, Colorado College and the Poudre School District.

"We'll collect the data," said Dorsey, president of Brendle. "You point us in the right direction."

The Brendle Group, which started its work Nov. 1, is scheduled to wrap up Feb. 1. The gathering Tuesday was the first joint meeting of groups interested in greenhouse-gas inventory. Among the attendees were two representatives each of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, the Sustainability Alliance of Southwest Colorado and 4CORE, a resources efficiency group that is forming. Also there was a banker, a downtown Durango businessman, an environmental consultant and a representative each of La Plata County, the San Juan Basin Health Department and the city of Durango.

Greenhouse gases, which trap heat in the atmosphere, are produced by natural sources and human activity. Among the most common greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide, the result of fossil-fuel consumption and manufacturing; nitrous oxide produced by industrial and agricultural activities; and methane produced by the decay of organic material and agricultural operations.

Governments and other policy-setting groups can use information from a greenhouse-gas inventory to calculate trends and develop strategies to reduce the emissions. Since 1990, the federal Environmental Protection Agency has created an annual greenhouse-gas inventory.

States also maintain greenhouse-gas inventories, as do some corporations. The information gathered in La Plata County will reflect greenhouse-gas producing activities in the county, Jansen said. Sources of greenhouse gases will be identified globally, Jansen said, such as the county as a whole, its political jurisdictions, Fort Lewis College, Durango School District 9-R and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe.

No closer identification of sources of greenhouse gases or their contributions will be made, Jansen said. An effort could be made, he said, to calculate how much tourism contributes to different greenhouse gas levels.

Among other sources of greenhouse gas production mentioned Tuesday were coal-bed methane production, the Three Springs development east of Durango, the expansion of Durango Mountain Resort and the Animas-La Plata Project, a Bureau of Reclamation water development.

Even the 2002 Missionary Ridge Fire, which scorched 70,000 acres, will come under scrutiny - for emissions released during the fire and the decomposition of dead trees.

The baseline for greenhouse gas emissions will be 2005, Jansen said. The exception, because of the availability of data, will be land-use changes that produce greenhouse gases. The baseline for land-use change emissions will be 1990.

Erick Aune, senior long-range planner for La Plata County, said serious interest in learning where the county stands on the greenhouse-gas scale started last year when the county endorsed the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement along with Durango and hundreds of U.S. cities.

The agreement delineates steps for how governments can address climate change.

"This effort involves La Plata County as a group, not just government," Aune said. "It wasn't just signing a paper. We have a commitment to follow through and establish policies and behaviors."

In his Hillcrest neighborhood, Campbell has been talking to neighbors.

"I've talked informally to people," Campbell said. "Many are interested in learning what contributes to greenhouse-gas levels and what they can do to reduce emissions such as carpooling, lowering the thermostat or putting more insulation in the house."

"If you don't do it for the environment, do it to save money," said Campbell, who keeps the thermostat down and puts on another layer of clothes if he's cold.

[Click here to send an email to the author](#)

---

*Contents copyright ?, the Durango Herald. All rights reserved.*