

Fiona Sheehan

This comment is being submitted for a class.

WAC 173-446-335, otherwise known as the Climate Commitment Act, is being implemented next year to help Washington achieve its 2050 emissions reduction goals. The basic framework of this carbon trading program is that polluters buy credits from the state for each ton of GHG that they produce, with an annually diminishing and increasingly expensive supply of credits which ostensibly serves to push facilities to invest in clean energy alternatives.

Lawmakers should seriously consider the ethical implications in greater detail before passing such a bill. Several local environmental justice groups, including GotGreen and Puget Sound Sage, have made it known that they take issue with the potential harm this legislation could wreck in their communities. While the allowances part of the law enables corporations to buy the rights to continue to pollute (which may not be enough of a motivator to change for some), having offsets as part of the pollution trading market, even if it is less than 5% in some cases, perpetuates environmental injustices in communities where extractive offset projects are located. Additionally, tying community investments to the market mechanisms doesn't uplift economic self-determination for communities. Vulnerable communities need a voice. Community self-determination and wealth redistribution should be the cornerstone of any policy that purports to support environmental justice. It's easy to remember: by and for the community.

Sources:

<https://ecology.wa.gov/Air-Climate/Climate-change/Reducing-greenhouse-gases/Climate-Commitment-Act>

<https://www.pugetsoundsage.org/opposing-cap-and-trade/>