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## New Report Examines Morgantown's Greenhouse Gas Emissions

By [BEN ADDUCCHIO](#) (/PEOPLE/BEN-ADDUCCHIO)

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There are a lot of things that contribute to carbon dioxide emissions that drift into the air. For the first time an inventory of how much greenhouse gas is entering the air in Morgantown has been compiled. The environmental consulting firm Downstream Strategies hopes this particular study will inspire other communities to want to do the same.

On a Sunny afternoon, traffic is bustling through one of the busiest intersections in Morgantown on University Avenue. There are cars, buses, and even industrial trucks rumbling through this congested intersection everyday. These vehicles are all playing some role in emitting carbon dioxide into the air, and a new report from Downstream Strategies tries to track down all of the statistics from the year 2012, to see the breadth of Morgantown's greenhouse gas footprint.

According to the report, activity-based emissions, from vehicle use, solid waste disposal and other factors, contributed to more than 800,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions in 2012. Source based emissions from coal plants, natural gas, and other fuels, emitted nearly 700,000 metric tons. Jeff Simcoe is energy project manager for Downstream Strategies. He co-authored this report.

"We knew that the presence of a power plant would contribute a lot of greenhouse gas emissions in the source based category, we weren't surprised about that," he said.

"What we were surprised about on the activity based side is that we were able to identify electricity use as a large contributor, as well as the transportation sector."

This is the first time Downstream Strategies has attempted to capture the greenhouse gas emissions data from a particular town in West Virginia. Simcoe says he doesn't think it's been tried before in West Virginia, by anyone else, either. Downstream Strategies is attempting to figure out these numbers because it's about to use this study for another project.



(<http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wvpn/files/201403/01-us-largest-coal-fired-power-plant-890.jpg>)

Coal plants and several other factors including electricity use, and vehicle travel, play a role in emitting greenhouse gases.

*Credit Robb Kendrick / National Geographic*

"Phase Two of our project will focus on residential use, switching lighting, sealing your home, those types of things to reduce electricity use in commercial homes and businesses, because we see an opportunity there to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in electricity," said Simcoe.

It's tricky to compare how Morgantown's carbon dioxide emissions rank compared to other towns across the region. That's because Simcoe can't point to any other towns in the region who are doing a similar kind of comprehensive, wide-sweeping greenhouse gas emission study, using all of the data Morgantown used.

"This is a community-based inventory, versus a city-operations-only or a single-entity inventory. We would be able to compare to inventories that used a similar approach," he said.

"As far as the U.S. Community protocol that we used, we know in California it's being recommended that cities and towns use this inventory so they can aggregate the results over larger areas, compare between different cities and start to build a baseline data for an area that they can update over time."

This study started before the Environmental Protection Agency released proposals to states on reducing greenhouse emissions in the next 16 years. Simcoe is hopeful this report will help the state as it looks to reduce emissions. He points to two specific building blocks the EPA wants states to follow to achieve emission goals.

"Projects like this could help with building block three, which is a more renewable energy type approach, and building block four, which is really focused on demand side energy efficiency," he said.

"Our phase two project, which will really identify opportunities for residents and business to reduce energy consumption associated with greenhouse gas emissions, is part of building block four."

Phase Two of the Downstream Strategies project includes conducting a survey to ask Morgantown residents about their energy use. They will also be looking at more energy data. Phase Two will be done by May of next year.

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