

CLIMATE SUMMIT

By Mayor Mike Vandersteen



Last month I attended the North American Climate Summit in Chicago and signed the Chicago Climate Charter. What was the most interesting to me was the participation of several cities from northeast Illinois and northern Indiana. This is the region that produces much of the ozone that drifts over Lake Michigan and due to prevailing wind patterns finds its way to Sheboygan County and other communities on the shore of Lake Michigan. This factor along with the location of the EPA air monitor located in Kohler-Andrae State Park has seen Sheboygan County named a non-attainment county for air quality. We need

this focus on reducing emissions from the region south of Lake Michigan to reduce the ozone that reaches us along the Lake Michigan shore in Sheboygan County.

I participated In the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy to show solidarity with the mayors of these communities to work to accelerate ambitious, measurable climate and energy initiatives that will lead to a low-emission and climate resilient future, working to meet and exceed the Paris agreement objectives. A recent article in the Chicago Tribune ran with this headline, "Smog follows Chicagoans on vacation to Wisconsin, Michigan"

The fact that Sheboygan is a non-attainment county has a large financial impact on local manufacturers. They have worked aggressively to reduce their emissions and have to comply with additional regulations that a similar manufacturer in an adjoining county is not required to implement.

The Sheboygan County Chamber, with many local partners, has led the effort to locate a second air monitor in a location to more correctly collect data on the air in the county rather than the air that drifts in from Lake Michigan. The new monitor has been in place for over three years and the data shows that Sheboygan County is in attainment and restrictions on businesses should be removed. However, the EPA will not recognize the new information and insists that the current monitor will continue to be used to determine Sheboygan's compliance with the Clean Air Act. Senator Johnson and Congressman Grothman have carried our message to the EPA to no avail.

There also is a bill in the State Legislature (AB 588 and SB 466) calling for the State to amend their annual monitoring network plan and prohibit the Department of Natural Resources from including the air monitoring site located at Kohler-Andrae State Park in

Sheboygan County in the annual monitoring network plan, beginning with the plan submitted in 2018. This bill, if approved by the State Legislature, will still need EPA approval of the state's monitoring network plan. A State Senate committee hearing on the bill will be held on Thursday, December 14, at 10:00 a.m. at the Wade House, W7965 Highway 23, Greenbush, WI.

The Climate Summit was hosted by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and featured an appearance by former President Barack Obama. In his 15 minute talk with the mayors, the former president encouraged the mayors to fight climate change outside of the Paris accord. "Obviously we're in an unusual time when the United States is now the only nation on earth that does not belong to the Paris agreement," Obama said. "And that's a difficult position to defend. But the good news is that the Paris agreement was never going to solve the climate crisis on its own. It was going to be up to all of us."

In the coming month's provisions in the Chicago Climate Charter will be submitted to the Sustainable Sheboygan Task Force for inclusion in Sheboygan's Sustainability Plan.