

Greenhouse gas emissions drop in short term, rise in long term

Joey Peters, *Environment & Energy Publishing*, 4-19-11

The year 2009 marked a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions in the United States from the year before, according to an annual inventory from U.S. EPA released yesterday.

A decline in electricity and fuel use led to the decrease in overall emissions, which dropped by 6.1 percent from 2008 to 2009, according to the inventory. A consumer shift to low-carbon fuels played another role as prices for coal went up and prices for natural gas went down, according to the inventory.

Emissions of the six main greenhouse gases for 2009 totaled the equivalent of 6.633 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide, the lowest amount since 1995. The six gases are carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulfur hexafluoride.

Still, overall emissions between 1990 and 2009 have climbed by more than 7.3 percent, or an average annual rate of 0.4 percent. The findings, published in the "Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2009," also add up the amount of carbon dioxide emissions removed from the atmosphere by "sinks" like forests, vegetation and soil.

Preliminary numbers released in February show that land-use changes to sinks resulted in an 18 percent carbon emissions offset and a 15 percent offset in total greenhouse gas emissions for 2009.

The 2009 numbers are the most up-to-date data available from EPA.