

Mayors come to Utah for warming summit

Robert Redford, Rocky Anderson and others hope new ideas can be gleaned from meetings

By Rosemary Winters

The Salt Lake Tribune

Salt Lake Tribune

Article Last Updated:11/13/2006 12:35:35 AM MST

Close to 30 mayors from around the country are at Sundance Resort this week to discuss local tactics for combating a global problem.

Citing a lack of leadership at the federal level, many of them plan to rein in greenhouse gas emissions city by city, town by town. Others are just at the second annual Sundance Summit on climate protection to see what all the fuss is about.

"It's probably 60 percent [of the mayors attending who] are skeptics," says organizer Michelle Wyman, executive director of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI).

Her group is co-hosting the event with environmental champions Robert Redford and Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson. They've attracted an impressive list of speakers, including former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, former Colorado senator and presidential candidate Gary Hart and nationally known scientists. The summit, which runs through Tuesday, is closed to the public.

Wyman, Redford and Anderson hope to engage the diverse group of mayors, representing cities ranging from San Francisco to Warwick, R.I., in discussions on ways to cut the amount of fossil fuels consumed, both by city governments and by the residents they serve.

"We've seen those at the national and international level have policy dialogues that take a very long time to actually translate into action," Wyman says. "Mayors have direct and immediate access to design and implement actions that begin to quantifiably reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

For instance, 70 U.S. cities have reported to ICLEI that, in 2005, they collectively reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 23 million tons - and saved more than \$535 million in the process.

Salt Lake City is one of more than 300 cities nationally that have committed to at least meet greenhouse gas reduction goals set by the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement the U.S. government has declined to sign.

Salt Lake City met its goal in 2005, cutting its greenhouse gas emissions by 21 percent from 2001 levels. The city, under Anderson's leadership, made changes such as eliminating sport-utility vehicles from the city's fleet and buying natural gas vehicles. Salt Lake also captures methane gas released at the city's wastewater treatment plant and landfill for electricity generation.

Anderson also switched all the light bulbs in City Hall to energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs, and invested some of the \$33,000 in annual electricity savings in a wind power purchase.

"We're headed for worldwide disaster if we don't all do our share," Anderson says. "It's not just an economic and environmental imperative, it's

the greatest moral imperative that applies to leaders everywhere - whether in religion, education, [science] or government. We're already seeing drastic consequences from global warming."

Mayor Kevin Burns of North Miami, Fla., worries that his coastal city could be among the first to experience disaster as a result of climate change, including more frequent and more powerful hurricanes and rising sea levels that could put part of his city under water.

North Miami is in the process of establishing a "no idling" policy for non-emergency vehicles, adding fuel-efficient vehicles to its fleet, and rewriting zoning and building codes to include incentives for green buildings.

"There's a lot of things we can do locally," Burns says, adding that he hopes to glean new ideas from other mayors at the summit. "We all don't need to reinvent the wheel. If something is working in another community, maybe it can work in mine."

rwinters@sltrib.com