MOUNTAIN TOWNS 2030

WORKSHOP · TUE, OCT 13 · 1:15-2:15 PM

Near-Term Warming, Superpollutants, and What Mountain Communities Can Do About Them

Super pollutants like methane and old refrigerants drive nearly half of current warming, and cutting them is one of the fastest ways to slow it. Tradewater, Boyne Resorts and ZGF Architects explained how refrigerant destruction and orphaned well plugging work, and how towns can help residents and facilities keep these gases out of the air.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Super pollutants are an emergency brake.** Methane is 84 times as potent as CO2 over 20 years; some old refrigerants top 16,000 times. Cutting them slows warming fastest.
2. **Old refrigerant has nowhere to go.** EPA requires recovery when a chiller is decommissioned, but there is no mandate for what happens next. Older lodges and buildings still hold these gases.
3. **Orphaned wells leak methane and toxics.** Wells with no solvent owner sit unplugged because bonds fall far short of costs. Colorado and Utah have legacy wells near mountain towns.
4. **Offsets complement reductions, not replace them.** Boyne targets net zero by 2030 for its own operations; ZGF aims to cut gross emissions 55% by 2030. Both buy credits only for what remains.
5. **Pick credits for integrity and co-benefits.** ZGF chose credits it can explain to staff: refrigerant work ties to buildings, and plugging wells has clear human health benefits.

WHAT LOCAL OFFICIALS CAN DO

- ☐ **Inventory refrigerants in city facilities.** Chiller and HVAC model numbers reveal gas type and amount; Tradewater can assess and recover it.
- ☐ **Add disposal guidance to your city website.** Irvine, California posted steps for residents with Tradewater. Let people know they can be paid for old refrigerant they find in a shed.
- ☐ **Host a refrigerant drop-off event.** Promote it for a week; residents get paid on the spot and Tradewater picks up one large shipment.
- ☐ **Close the rural disposal gap.** Where the nearest drop-off is far, people may vent old fridges. Point residents to mail-in and pickup options.
- ☐ **Price your emissions to build the case.** Offset costs give a reduction project a payback period, which can be all the difference in getting it approved.
- ☐ **Make offsetting travel easy for visitors.** Boyne embeds a trip calculator and shuttle info in pre-arrival emails.
- ☐ **Ask leaders what matters before pitching.** ZGF started with its decision makers' priorities, then built an offset budget around them.

BY THE NUMBERS

~Half
Of current warming driven by non-CO2 gases

84x
Methane's potency vs. CO2 over 20 years

$50/lb
What Tradewater pays for R-12 refrigerant

1.8
Average carbon credits per pound of R-12 destroyed

14M
Americans within a mile of a documented orphaned well

16,000x
Potency of the worst refrigerants vs. CO2

WATCH OUT FOR

- ! Cut emissions first. Presenters stressed a decarbonization plan; credits bought without one can look like greenwashing.
- ! Well bonds are often about $10,000; plugging can cost $100,000 or more.

RESOURCES

Tradewater
Buys and destroys old refrigerants; plugs orphaned wells (tradewater.us)

Boyne Resorts Forever Project
boyneresorts.com/sustainability

Project Drawdown
drawdown.org

Peer community
City of Irvine, California: resident refrigerant disposal guidance

CONTACTS

Meg Baltes
Partnerships Manager, Tradewater

Zack Henderson
Market Development Innovation Manager, Tradewater

Sasha Shunko
Partnerships Associate, Tradewater

Tom Bradley
VP of Sustainability, Boyne Resorts

William Callahan
Chief of Staff, ZGF Architects

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