

# Walking Our Talk

*The Union of Concerned Scientists Sustainability Report  
for Fiscal Years 2013–2014*



**[ Union of  
Concerned Scientists**



**Message from the  
Executive Director**

## Sustainability at the Union of Concerned Scientists

I'm pleased to present the Union of Concerned Scientists' sustainability report, which covers our fiscal years 2013 and 2014 (October 2012–September 2014). This report marks our 12th year of measuring and reporting our carbon emissions, and our first year reporting within a two-year time frame. A two-year time frame allows our all-volunteer Sustainability Task Force to focus on its project-driven work and take a big-picture view of its efforts to reduce our organization's emissions and expand sustainable practices across our offices. These efforts are detailed in the pages that follow.

Our internal sustainability work is a reflection of the work we do to promote a healthier environment at the regional, national, and international levels, and a testament to our staff's embodiment of this work. Oftentimes, our efforts at these levels help improve our practices within our own organization. For instance, during this reporting period, UCS worked to expand the role of clean energy in an increasingly complex and diverse electricity system, developed a blueprint for increasing local access to food, and successfully pressured some of the United States' biggest brands to commit to deforestation-free palm oil. At home, we began planning for the replacement of our rooftop solar array at our Cambridge headquarters, continued our robust CSA and composting programs, and renovated our new Oakland office with sustainable bio-based and recycled materials.

In the years that follow, we look forward to building on these achievements and seeing the effects of our continued progress, both in our office—and yours—and around the country. Visit [www.ucsusa.org](http://www.ucsusa.org) for the latest news and updates on our work, and learn more about our sustainability efforts at [www.ucsusa.org/sustainability](http://www.ucsusa.org/sustainability).

Kathleen Rest  
*Executive Director*

The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) puts rigorous, independent science to work to solve our planet's most pressing problems. Joining with citizens across the country, we combine technical analysis and effective advocacy to create innovative, practical solutions for a healthy, safe, and sustainable future.

In fiscal years 2013 and 2014 (FY13 and FY14)<sup>1</sup> UCS experts took to Germany, Poland, and Qatar to build support for the United Nations' post-2020 international climate agreement. We also spoke with hundreds of electric vehicle supporters in Atlanta, Georgia; engaged with policy makers, industry, labor, and others on economic development in West Virginia in the face of declining coal production; and communicated our work to thousands of scientists at the American Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting in Chicago.

Our work in climate, energy, agriculture, and transportation has helped reduce heat-trapping emissions at the international, national, and state levels. UCS also seeks to reduce emissions from its internal operations, via the UCS Sustainability Task Force (STF). The STF is an all-volunteer group of analysts, advocates, and administrative staff, representing every department and office at UCS. The STF not only helps bring a sustainability focus to UCS's operational decision making, but also monitors and measures office-related emissions for our sustainability reports. The four main sources of emissions measured by the STF are paper use, energy use, business travel, and employee commuting. Details about

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these emissions, and our efforts to reduce them, are presented in the pages that follow.

The STF also oversees initiatives outside of the four areas above to help further sustainable practices within the office and within staff's personal lives. For example, the STF worked with the UCS Food and Environment Program to create sustainable catering guidelines that staff use when choosing prospective vendors for their events. In addition, our

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<sup>1</sup> The UCS fiscal year runs from October 1 through September 30.

Cambridge and Washington, DC, offices host CSA (community-supported agriculture) programs so local farms can deliver produce shares directly to staff, and our Cambridge, Berkeley, and DC offices have implemented composting in kitchens (food) and bathrooms (paper towels). Staff are invited to brown-bag presentations on various sustainability issues; in FY13 the STF hosted a discussion with the City of Cambridge’s Principal Traffic Engineer on the city’s efforts to spur low-carbon commuting among its residents.

Our efforts reach far beyond our Sustainability Task Force. Each new staff member receives a sustainability orientation, and our sustainability report is presented to our entire staff, giving all employees the opportunity for input to help refine and extend our sustainability goals. We hope this report is not only useful for our staff, but for organizations of similar size looking to identify opportunities in the realm of sustainability.

### FY13–FY14 Emissions Overview

In FY13 UCS generated 922 metric tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) emissions. This represents a decrease of about 2 percent compared with FY12 (see Table 1). Our total emissions for FY14 were 1,025 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e, an increase of about 11 percent over FY13, and 9.5 percent over FY12. It is worth noting that per-employee emissions in FY13 and FY14 are lower than in FY12, despite adding 14 full time-equivalent (FTE) staff positions over two years (a 10 percent increase) (Table 2).

TABLE 1. Total Carbon Emissions, FY12–FY14

	Metric Tons CO <sub>2</sub> e		
	FY12	FY13	FY14
<b>Paper Use</b>	275	322	324
<b>Energy</b>	246	253	289
<b>Business Travel</b>	287	243	271
<b>Commuting</b>	138	104	141
<b>Total Emissions</b>	946	922	1,025
<b>Per-Employee Emissions</b>	6.76	6.49	6.66

TABLE 2. UCS Organizational Overview, FY12–FY14

	FY12	FY13	FY14
<b>Staff Size</b>	140	142	154
<b>Donors</b>	89,000	93,000	95,500
<b>Operating Budget</b>	\$23.4 million	\$23.8 million	\$25.8 million

Note: Staff size expressed in terms of full time-equivalent staff positions. Donors are UCS supporters who have given financially to the organization over the past 24 months. Email activists and other supporters are not included in this total.

### Emissions from Paper Use

#### THREE-YEAR PERSPECTIVE

UCS measures emissions from paper use in three areas: publications and member communications, fundraising mailings, and office paper.

Compared with FY12, CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from paper use increased approximately 18 percent in FY13–FY14 (Table 3). As our membership has grown, so has paper costs for member communications and fundraising mailings.

UCS calculates paper emissions data using the Environmental Paper Network’s (EPN’s) Paper Calculator, an online tool originally developed by the Environmental Defense Fund and now managed by the EPN to help organizations make greener paper purchases and more accurately report their paper footprints.

TABLE 3. Paper Use

	Metric Tons CO <sub>2</sub> e		
	FY12	FY13	FY14
<b>Publications/Member Communications</b>	52	60	53
<b>Fundraising Mailings</b>	219	259	268
<b>Office Paper</b>	4	3	3
<b>Total Emissions</b>	275*	322	324

\* These numbers differ from previously published figures. In FY13 and FY14, UCS implemented a new rounding methodology, which was applied retroactively for the sake of comparison in this report.



A sampling of the reports UCS produced in FY13 and FY14. These reports have been used by policy makers, the media, and concerned citizens around the country to promote science-based solutions to today's pressing problems.

## SUCCESSSES IN REDUCING EMISSIONS FROM OFFICE PAPER USE

In FY13 and FY14, total CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from office paper use decreased by approximately 25 percent compared with FY12. On a per-employee basis, emissions from office paper use decreased by approximately 30 percent.

UCS has been successful at minimizing emissions from office paper use for several reasons. We consistently use 100 percent post-consumer recycled, Forest Stewardship Council-certified paper, and set all printers by default to double-sided printing. We continue to use a paperless system for our employee expenses and travel arrangements and we expanded our paperless reporting in FY13 by launching an organizational intranet. By facilitating workflows and including timestamps, this allows us to process transactions that previously required printouts with signatures (such as purchase records); by avoiding the need to mail these documents to our Cambridge headquarters for processing, we also avoided transportation-related emissions (though these are not quantified in this report).

## ADDRESSING EMISSIONS FROM PUBLICATIONS

FY14 publications/member communications-related emissions are about 2 percent higher than FY12. The amount of paper used for analytical publications has dropped sharply—about 35 percent—since FY12, largely due to an organizational switch to using only 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper for all print publications, and the implementation of new protocols that help staff consider all potential audiences/distribution channels for their print projects to tailor their printing to meet those needs and avoid unnecessary printing.

This paper savings was offset by higher paper use for member publications. The primary reason for this increase was increased membership—we mailed to approximately 10 percent more people in FY14 compared with FY12. Member support is critical to our organization's overall effectiveness, and our publications are an important way in which we communicate our activity and impact to our members, thus motivating them to continue their financial support to advance our mission.

In FY12 we mailed 1,913,061 pieces of mail (excluding member publications) to members and prospective members; in FY13, we mailed 2,255,617 pieces, an approximately 18 percent increase. The main cause for the increase was membership growth in FY13 and FY14: In FY12, we had almost 89,000 members; this total jumped to almost 93,000 in FY13 and more than 95,500 in FY14. Throughout this growth period, donor loyalty and retention have remained high. However, we are conscious of the carbon footprint of mailings and are making efforts to reduce it.

## Emissions from Electricity and Natural Gas Use

### THREE-YEAR PERSPECTIVE

Energy-related emissions from UCS offices stem from use of two fuels: natural gas for heating; and electricity for lighting, cooling, powering computers, and more. From FY12 to FY14, emissions from energy use increased 10 percent overall (Table 4). Since emissions from our electricity use stayed essentially flat, that increase is attributable almost entirely to increased natural gas use. Our natural gas-related emissions increased from 46 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e in FY12 to 68 metric tons in FY14, due to both our increased office space (to accommodate a growing staff) and cold winters across much of the country.

For the emissions associated with our electricity use, we purchase “green power”—renewable energy credits (RECs)—commensurate with our electricity usage. In addition to

offsetting approximately three-quarters of our total energy-related emissions, REC purchases help drive the further development of wind, solar, and other renewable energy sources.

### ADDRESSING EMISSIONS FROM ENERGY USE

Part of the challenge in making continued progress is that only one of UCS’s offices has dedicated electricity and gas meters (Cambridge, MA). UCS leases building space for its other three offices, and in those offices UCS comprises a small part of a building’s tenant base.<sup>2</sup> This means that our own energy efficiency investments and efforts are less visible in the data, and that increases in energy use by other tenants will affect UCS’s data more appreciably.

Despite these challenges, UCS is committed to investing in energy efficiency whenever possible. In preparing its new California office for occupation, we installed energy-efficient LED lighting where feasible. (We also reduced emissions in other areas by moving to a building directly atop a BART station, thus encouraging staff to take public transit, and by choosing bio-based and/or recycled materials for wallboards, flooring, upholstery, and hard surfaces.) In the one office we own (Cambridge), we completed an audit of our heating system, identifying opportunities for increasing efficiency, and replaced a standard water heater with a higher efficiency hybrid/heat pump unit.

TABLE 4. Energy Use Emissions

	Metric Tons CO <sub>2</sub> e		
	FY12	FY13	FY14
<b>Electricity</b>	200	188	203
<b>Natural Gas</b>	46	55	68
<b>Energy Subtotal</b>	246	243	270
<b>Net Emissions (after green power purchases)</b>	46	55	68
<b>Per-Employee Emissions</b>	0.33	0.39	0.44

Note: May not sum to total due to rounding.



When UCS moved its California office from Berkeley to Oakland, sustainability played a central role in renovation decisions for the new office space. Energy-efficient LED lighting, proximity to public transit, and recycled materials for walls, floors, and counters are just some of the environmentally friendly features of the Oakland office.

<sup>2</sup> In August 2014, UCS relocated its California office from a building in Berkeley where we comprised 70 percent of the building’s square footage to one in Oakland where we comprise less than 4 percent.

## Emissions from Business Travel

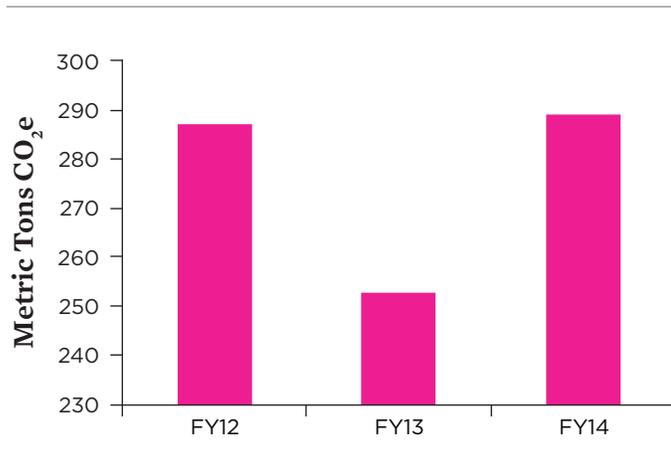
### THREE-YEAR PERSPECTIVE

UCS business travel in FY13 and FY14 generated 253 and 289 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e, respectively, compared with 287 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e in FY12 (see Figure 1). The slight increase in FY14 business travel emissions (compared with FY12) can be partly attributed to increased staff size (see Table 2, p. 4) as well as our engagement in international climate talks. UCS was able to be a key player in building multilateral support for the United Nations' post-2020 international climate agreement—which will be crafted in Paris in 2016—by sending key senior staff to personally present analysis and advocate for countries, especially the United States, to base their climate goals on rigorous science.

### SUCCESSSES IN REDUCING EMISSIONS FROM BUSINESS TRAVEL

To advance our strategic goals, UCS works with leading academic experts, policy makers, the media, and our supporters in the United States and around the world. Maximizing these opportunities often requires staff to travel by air. In FY14, for example, air travel was responsible for more than 96 percent of UCS business travel emissions. UCS has invested significantly in video conferencing technology in staff offices and conference rooms to reduce the need for, and frequency of, interoffice trips. When staff do need to fly, we minimize travel-related emissions by requiring employees to travel coach and encouraging direct flights (even if it is more expensive than a one-stop flight), as takeoff, landing, and ground operations account for a significant portion of air travel emissions.

FIGURE 1. Total Carbon Emissions from Business Travel, FY12–FY14



**UCS has invested significantly in video conferencing technology in staff offices and conference rooms to reduce the need for, and frequency of, interoffice trips.**

### ADDRESSING EMISSIONS FROM AIR TRAVEL

UCS is looking beyond travel-related emissions reductions as an organization and exploring ways to reduce emissions from air travel in general. One way is through public education, working in partnership with peer nonprofits and businesses to ask the airline industry to provide consumers with information about the carbon emissions of their flight options. Another way is by working with regulators to limit the carbon intensity of aviation fuel; for example, UCS has advocated for both the US Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Energy to improve the prospects of low-carbon aviation biofuels—fuels that are made from plants instead of petroleum and that generate less global warming pollution. In particular, we are encouraging the development of biofuels from plants or algae that don't compete with our food supply and can be grown on degraded lands.

## Emissions from Employee Commuting

### THREE-YEAR PERSPECTIVE

UCS employee commuting data are obtained through an annual employee survey administered by the STF at the end of each fiscal year. Based on these data, employee commuting in FY13 and FY14 generated 104 and 141 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e, respectively (Table 5, p. 8).

Emissions from employee commuting increased approximately 10 percent from FY12 through FY14, but remained relatively flat on a per-employee basis. The decrease in emissions in FY13 is largely attributed to a significant decrease in car miles traveled, which highlights the impact that alternative transportation can have on reducing emissions. While car travel accounted for only 38 percent of UCS commuter miles in 2014, it accounted for 65 percent of UCS's commuting-related emissions (Figure 2, p. 8).

**While UCS employees are predisposed to factor environmental sustainability into their transit decisions as much as possible, UCS also encourages low-carbon commuting.**

TABLE 5. Employee Commuting, FY12–FY14

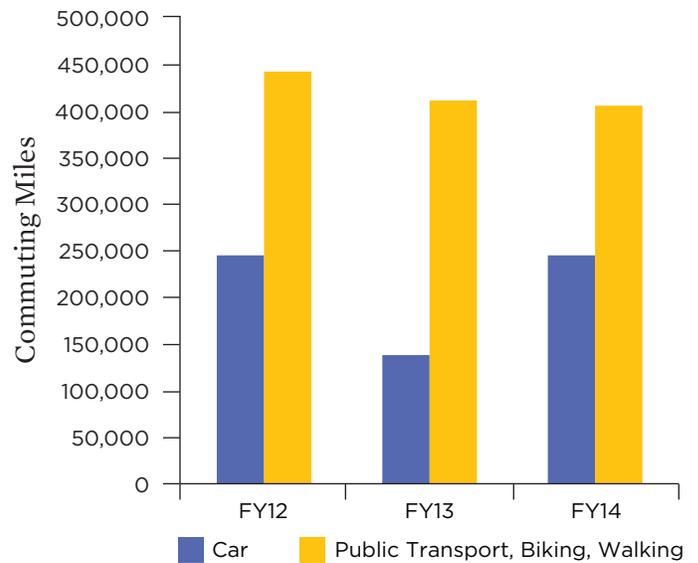
	FY12*	FY13	FY14
<b>Total Miles Traveled</b>	683,355	547,989	649,349
<b>Total Emissions (metric tons CO<sub>2</sub>e)</b>	138	104	141
<b>Per-employee Emissions (metric tons CO<sub>2</sub>e)</b>	0.99	0.73	0.92

\* These numbers differ from previously published figures; an error in FY12 commuting data was discovered and is corrected here. In addition, in FY13 and FY14, UCS implemented a new rounding methodology, which was applied retroactively for the sake of comparison in this report.

**ADDRESSING EMISSIONS FROM EMPLOYEE COMMUTING**

As Figure 2 shows, UCS employees largely favor low-carbon forms of transportation. While UCS employees are predisposed to factor environmental sustainability into their transit decisions as much as possible, UCS also encourages low-carbon commuting. For instance, all UCS offices are located close to public transportation, and UCS offers pre-tax public transportation passes. Additionally, UCS does not subsidize parking spaces for staff (to discourage car commuting), but provides bike parking at each office location. Lastly, the STF sponsors “Bike-to-Work Month” each May, which focuses on biking but also encourages shifting to other low-carbon commuting options such as walking and public transportation. Participation is incentivized through prizes, parties, in-office bike maintenance, and presentations to staff on such topics as biking in inclement weather and biking with children.

FIGURE 2. UCS Commute Miles, by Mode of Transport



**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

UCS would like to recognize the tremendous effort of the members of the Sustainability Task Force and other members of UCS staff who collected and analyzed data for this report and participated in the writing process. The Sustainability Task Force is an all-volunteer group of UCS staff representing every department and office, who go above and beyond their normal roles to ensure that UCS emissions reporting is as rigorous and transparent as possible, and that UCS continues to be a leader in discussions surrounding sustainable workplaces.

**Union of Concerned Scientists**

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