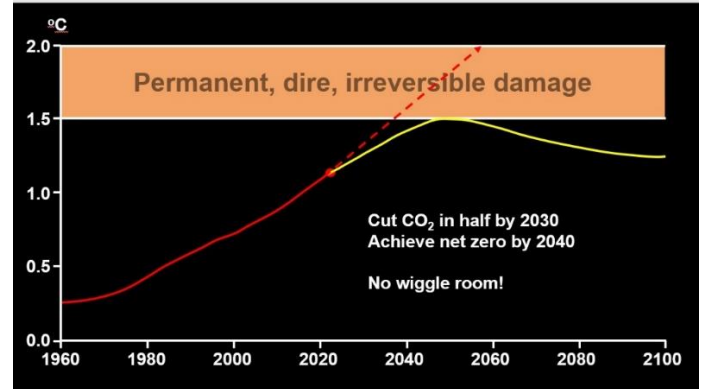


## Becoming Net Carbon Neutral – One Community’s Journey

Do you know your household’s carbon footprint? Dr. Chandu Visweswariah, CEO of Utopus Insights, co-founder of Croton100 and the keynote speaker at last fall’s Climate Boot Camp, believes carbon footprint is a number everyone should know, the same way they know their birthday and social security number. After all, understanding one’s current footprint is the first step towards becoming net carbon zero by 2040.

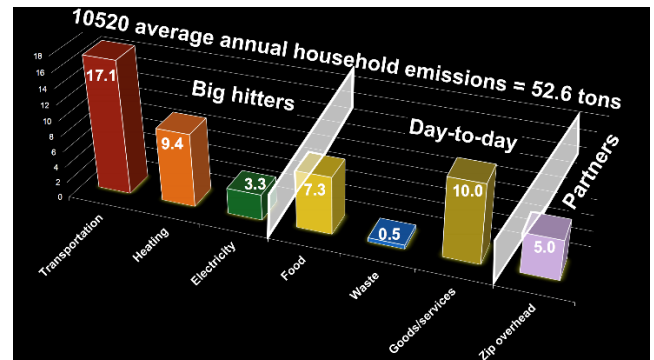
According to Dr. Visweswariah, scientists warn we are at a tipping point and need to move now to decarbonize our economies and lives. If we do not, we risk severe environmental impacts such as sea level rise, more severe weather events and all the resulting human aspects of those disasters such as migration and food shortages. But success in cutting carbon emissions will require concerted effort across the board, i.e., by private and public sectors and individuals.



Croton100, a nonprofit located in Croton, NY, has rolled out an initiative by the same name which helps residents become carbon neutral by reducing emissions 5% per annum over the next 20 years. The group started by identifying sources of local emissions. The average household in ZIP Code 10520 emits 52.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year. Of that, about 60% comes from three big items – transportation, heating and electricity.



Croton100



Cognizant that decisions which can reduce those emissions are only made infrequently, Croton100 provides resources on its web site, [croton100.org](http://croton100.org), to facilitate planning related to upgrades of major home systems such as heat pumps and solar and the purchase of

hybrid, plug-in hybrid or electric cars. In the interim, they recommend steps which are actionable and measurable now, such as switching to LED lightbulbs, improving insulation, and using public transportation. Another third of Croton's carbon emissions comes from "day to day" decisions, i.e., food, waste, and goods and services. Croton100 provides suggestions for reducing those emissions by actions such as buying local, eating a more plant-based diet, and recycling. The remainder of the consumption is represented by "ZIP CODE overhead" which are shared resources such as schools, houses of worship, etc., where the community is working together to reduce emissions by switching to electric vehicles, implementing community solar programs, reducing emissions from building energy use and other initiatives.

Croton100 encourages and empowers individuals to act in measured steps. Residents are asked to take a formal pledge, committing to the community goal of a 50% reduction over 10 years and a 100% reduction by 2040. The pledge includes a commitment to make climate conscious decisions and share data. Sharing household success stories promotes adoption of new technologies and interjects a friendly competitive spirit into the process. Commensurately, Croton100 has developed effective tools for quantifying lifestyle choices. Chief among these is a Carbon Tracker "app" which allows individual households to establish a baseline for their carbon footprint, then monitor their progress towards reduction. The Beta version of the app is available now on the Croton100 website. It has been designed to be scaled and replicated for any zip code in the United States.

Croton100 is now leveraging their grass roots advocacy model and the Carbon Tracker app by building a coalition of like-minded communities under the auspices of CURE100, an acronym for Communities United to Reduce Emissions 100%. Yorktown100 has adopted Croton100's model and licensed the Carbon Tracker and several of the river towns have expressed interest. Or a nonprofit can directly license the Carbon Tracker app for free as Bedford2020 has done.

As we have reported in the past, the stakes for birds are high. Audubon in their 2019 study "Survival by Degrees" projects that two thirds or about 390 species of North American birds are at risk for climate change. The good news is that the technology exists today to reduce our carbon footprints, we just need to commit to action.

For more information, see the following links:

Croton100: <https://croton100.org/>

More on the Carbon Tracker app: <https://croton100.org/blog/f/croton100-carbon-tracker-peering-behind-the-curtain>

More on CURE100: <https://croton100.org/blog/f/croton100s-growing-impact-is-seeded-in-cure100>

*Written by Ann Kilbourne for the Central Westchester Audubon Society  
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