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## Schweik Receives Funding to Create an Online ‘Carbon Calculator’

Charles M. Schweik, Associate Professor of Natural Resources Conservation and Public Policy and Associate Director of the National Center for Digital Government, has been awarded a grant from the USDA Forest Service to develop an online carbon calculator.

The Boston CarbonPlus Calculator will allow users to estimate their personal carbon footprints, or tons of Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) produced by their travel, homes, and businesses each year. Once users learn about their personal CO<sub>2</sub> production, the Calculator will also provide guidance on reducing and off-setting those emissions. For instance, once a user discovers his/her CO<sub>2</sub> production level, the Calculator will provide him/her with actions he/she could take to reduce those levels such as upgrading to Energy Star appliances, turning down thermostats, planting trees, and increasing recycling. The Calculator will also compute how much CO<sub>2</sub> the user could avoid each year by making these simple changes.

“A key feature of the Carbon Calculator is its relevance to local populations,” Schweik said. “Users can log on and estimate their *personal* CO<sub>2</sub> production by answering simple questions about their cars and homes. They will then receive guidance on planting trees in their *local* community, find out about *local* alternative energy projects, and receive information about changing *individual* habits that produce CO<sub>2</sub>. We’re creating this project on a local level in order to make CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and reduction more relevant and important to the average person.” The Calculator is currently designed for residents of Boston, MA, but Schweik and his team have included components that will allow the Calculator to be tailored for other cities in the future.

“Finally,” Schweik notes, “this isn’t the first web-development effort we at NCDG have participated in. We’ve done projects in the past with other government organizations like the National Park Service and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. A primary reason we take on these kinds of projects is to help ground our research in reality. We learn a great deal in these kinds of projects that complements and informs the more theoretical research we are doing in the domain of Digital Government.”

Partners in the carbon calculator project include the City of Boston, the Boston College Urban Ecology Institute, the Urban Ecology Collaborative, the USDA Forest Service, the Northern Research Station, Davey Tree Expert Company, and the National Center for Digital Government.

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