Carbon Map (posted on DailyKos)

A post on DailyKos makes the very important point that carbon emissions vary vastly within the United States, linking to a terrific Purdue University mapping project on carbon emissions. As the post indicates, reliance on coal is a key factor.

But there are other forces at work as well. In considering the role of the states in regulating climate change, it is important to keep in mind the large contributions by some states to overall GHG emissions, as well as the varied emission trajectories of the states. Between 1990 and 2001, the state with the largest percentage of emissions, Texas, increased its total emissions by 178% while California, comprising the second largest percentage of emissions, increased by 85%. Florida, although only fifth on the list, showed a 347% increase; New York, with a similar level of emissions, actually showed a slight decrease.

There is plenty of room for further progress. American states rank among the least efficient energy users in the world, such as Qatar. The good news is that there seems to be a lot of low-hanging fruit. If U.S. per capita emissions were the same as California’s per capita emissions, total U.S. emissions would be nearly cut in half.