Steam blows off of the Hal C. Weaver Power Plant on Monday morning. The University Campus Planning and Facilities Management is in the midst of conducting its first greenhouse gas emissions inventory since 2009.

Photo Credit: Shelby Tauber | Daily Texan Staff

University Campus Planning and Facilities Management is in the midst of conducting its first greenhouse gas emissions inventory since 2009, but the University has no plan in place to reduce those emissions once they are calculated.

According to Director of Sustainability Jim Walker, data for this inventory will be collected differently than they have been in years before.

As always, the inventory will include data gathered from the University’s on-campus power plant, as well as data derived from the University’s energy supply from Austin Energy. This year, the University will also track indirect emissions in a different way. Walker said most Universities do not account for indirect emissions.

“Most universities only track two [energy sources],” Walker said.
Walker said indirect emissions come from a wide range of sources, including solid waste and student commuting.

“Solid waste and recycling, commuting — how students get to and from school. If a sports team has to fly somewhere for a competition, we add up those miles,” Walker said. “Also, [we track] embodied emissions, so our paper — what kind of forest it came from, how that forest was managed — [is] more honest this way.”

According to Walker, the addition of the new data will probably result in the University releasing higher but more accurate emission figures.

“Our power plant has stayed efficient, so we will stay even on some of [the inventory], but our data collection process has gone up,” Walker said. “We will have other ideas for how people can lower their carbon footprint.”

According to Zach Baumer, Austin Climate Protection Program Manager, Austin has ambitious targets for greenhouse gas emissions.

“[Austin] has a goal of being carbon neutral by 2020,” Baumer said.

The University does not currently have a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, according to Walker.

“We have a goal of zero waste by 2020, but no carbon reduction goal. … If students felt strongly enough about it and there was a campaign, we could make that happen,” Walker said.

According to Emily Mixon, director of the Campus Environmental Center, there are many ways through which students can help reduce the University’s carbon footprint.

“There’s a lot of energy waste that could be reduced by campus users. That’s behavior change, and programs like the Energy Water Conservation Unit are helping with that with stuff like the upcoming Green Offices program and the student volunteer-run Longhorn Lights Out initiative,” Mixon said.

Correction: This article has been corrected since its original posting. Because of a reporting error, the story misstated when it began tracking indirect emissions. UT tracked indirect emissions in 2009.