



ECOS

ENVIRONMENTAL
♦ COUNCIL ♦
OF SACRAMENTO

Post Office Box 1526 | Sacramento, CA 95812-1526

September 25, 2020

Todd Smith, Senior Planner
Sacramento County Planning and Environmental Review
Sent via email

Re: Sacramento County Climate Action Plan

Dear Todd,

The Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS) is glad the County is working on its Climate Action Plan. Since the County promised a CAP in 2011, the world has had the hottest years on record, along with unprecedented damage, death, and misery from heat, storms, fires, floods, and drought. Governor Newsom has declared a climate emergency, with record-breaking heat and rolling blackouts, and wildfires (largely due to climate change) destroying millions of acres. The air here has been “unhealthy” for much of the last two months.

These escalating disasters are due to a global temperature rise since 1850 of 2°F. We are on course for heating far more than that within our children’s lifetimes, and we must dramatically reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to avoid the catastrophic impacts of climate change. With this in mind, ECOS asks our County to give us a robust climate plan that matches the threat we face.

The County has broad authority and influence over GHG-emitting activities, including land use patterns and building practices, and has crucial public health responsibilities. I understand that the CAP is a legally-framed document, responding to State GHG-reduction targets. The County needs to more than the legally-required minimum.

I worked for many years for the Climate Science Research Section at the California Air Resources Board. Whenever CARB proposed a regulation, we were required to estimate the cost to achieve it. Almost always, we overestimated the resulting cost – due to the private sector finding ways to achieve cleaner air more cheaply. And as a result, California became the national leader in pollution-control technology, which is being marketed world-wide. If Sacramento County can become a leader – rather than a laggard – in GHG emissions control, we can similarly become a worldwide industry leader.

Following are reasons why we need a strong Climate Action Plan

According to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we have little more than a decade to stop run-away climate change. This requires unprecedented changes to all aspects of how our society currently operates. Without major GHG reductions, starting now, we’ll trigger irreversible tipping points and catastrophes beyond our ability to solve. The earlier we take action, the less costly and easier it will be to reduce our emissions and transition to a renewable, sustainable society. Prevention is key.

Our County should show how to achieve California's carbon neutrality 2045 goal.

- Our County must do the most possible. We need to exceed mandated 2030 GHG reductions with actions that are effective, enforceable, timely, and funded.
- Our County can achieve the State's 2030 target with little effort, due to the State's regulation of industry and utilities. But our biggest emission sources are traffic and building energy, which are subject to County control. Sacramento County must make meaningful changes.
- To achieve the State 2045 zero-carbon goal, the CAP must show progress beyond 2030.

Climate Change requires a long-term planning effort.

- The CAP needs to consider all feasible alternatives.
- Our County must switch to climate-friendly land uses.
- Traffic is our County's biggest source of GHG emissions, but our County is on course to approve triple the development needed for projected growth. This means not more GHG emissions, long commutes, more traffic, and more cost for County services. Growth must emphasize infill rather than the current suburban sprawl.

The CAP must incorporate social justice.

- The CAP is an opportunity to uplift marginalized and under-invested communities. We can improve both quality of life and our environment by investing in climate change solutions.
- Covid-19 and climate change do not create social inequities, but they expose its effects. Our society can only enjoy peace when climate and social injustice are addressed.

The CAP needs to have meaningful accountability and timely action.

Regular public reporting of implementation and GHG Inventory and CAP updates are essential. Reports on CAP implementation status should be presented annually. GHG inventories and the CAP should be updated at least every four years.

The CAP should be developed with opportunities for public education and participation.

The CAP is our County's most consequential effort for our future health and prosperity. Averting climate catastrophe will require changes to the unsustainable practices in transportation, land use, energy conservation, and building design. These difficult changes demand full public involvement.

Sincerely,



Ralph Propper, ECOS President

CC: Board of Supervisors, Board clerk, and climateactionplan@saccounty.net