



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 9/10/2024

File #: 24-1307

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Departmental

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Humboldt Regional Climate Action Plan Environmental Impact Report and Regional Implementation

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive an update on the Humboldt Regional Climate Action Plan (RCAP);
2. Comment on the contents of the draft RCAP; and
3. Accept the draft of the Humboldt Regional Climate Action Plan (RCAP) as the project for preparation of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Plan.

Area of Focus: Sustainable Natural Resources & Infrastructure Stewardship
Strategic Plan Category: 5001 - Enhance climate adaptation landscapes and communities

DISCUSSION:

Executive Summary

The Board of Supervisors is being asked to provide comment on the draft Regional Climate Action Plan (RCAP), to accept this RCAP as the project description for preparation of the EIR and to give preference for how to approach formation of a Regional Climate Committee. The work on the RCAP has reached the point of preparing the EIR and prior to finalizing the draft RCAP the participating legislative bodies are being asked to provide comments on the RCAP and to accept it (subject to minor changes resulting from public comment) as the project description for the EIR. The RCAP meets the objective of being a CEQA Qualified CAP, and includes a unique approach of being a truly regional plan.

History of the RCAP

The initial drafting of a CAP began in 2019 through collaboration with the county, all incorporated cities of Eureka, Arcata, Fortuna, Blue Lake Trinidad, Ferndale and Rio Dell, and the Redwood Coast Energy Authority (the Working Group). A draft CAP was published for public review in 2022, which was intended to be the project for preparation of the EIR. During the EIR start up process the EIR consultant (Rincon) asked for supporting material to show what was used to demonstrate the actions and measures were feasible to meet the intended goals and state targets. The final analysis showed the initial CAP included measures that were highly aspirational and not achievable. This would not allow the CAP to achieve a qualified status. An unqualified CAP would not allow for CEQA streamlining of development projects for GHG Emissions Analysis, and would limit the amount of funding that could be available.

To achieve a qualified CAP, the draft would need to be redone. Rincon Consultants submitted a proposal for redrafting the RCAP, and on October 17, 2023, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors approved reallocating the funds provided to the county, by a Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) grant through HCAOG, to be used for revisions of the CAP so that it could be CEQA-qualified. Rincon conducted two important efforts in development of a CAP, the completion of an emissions inventory and interviews with the working group, RCEA, HTA, HACO, and HWMA.

The emissions inventory was completed for 2022 addressing the relevant emissions sources that local jurisdictions have control over within the boundary of Humboldt County, including all incorporated and unincorporated areas. Sectors where the local government has limited influence are excluded from the 2022 GHG emissions inventory as the local governments do not have jurisdictional control to develop measures to impact associated emissions. The 2022 GHG emission inventory includes emissions from the five basic reporting activities that must be reported: residential and commercial energy usage, on-road transportation, off-road transportation, landfilled waste, and water and wastewater.

Upon completion of the inventory, future GHG emissions forecasts and analysis of GHG emission reduction targets in support of state reduction goals were established. After the targets were analyzed, GHG emission reduction measures and supporting actions were designed based on the success of the work done previously in Humboldt, current best practices, and information gathered from interested parties including the County, incorporated Cities, regional partners (e.g., HTA, RCEA, HCAOG), and community groups. Feedback from interested parties were considered to establish a list of priority projects and measures that were then further refined based on feasibility and substantial evidence for GHG reduction capacity.

An interactive community survey was published on May 13, 2024, on the public RCAP website to inform the community on the updates to the plan and to gain understanding of what measures and actions the community would like to see prioritized. Respondents prioritized reducing organic waste sent to landfills, increasing zero-emission vehicle use, and increasing public transit use as the highest priorities. Responses from public officials prioritized increasing zero-emission vehicle use and establishing a region-wide Climate Committee to implement the RCAP as the highest priorities, with reducing organic waste and increasing public transit use tied as the third priority. These responses show a high alignment between what public officials considered priority compared with the community respondents.

Development of the CAP strategy showed that the region had greater chances to accomplish goals and achieving GHG reductions when working as a region rather than a collection of individual jurisdictions all implementing the same plan. This would allow a consolidation of resources and then the different jurisdictions are not competing for the same resources. This is a change from the prior draft of the CAP.

Proposed RCAP

The title of this CAP is Regional Climate Action Plan because the primary implementation measure is to form a Regional Climate Committee responsible for administering the measures in the CAP. This committee would include representatives from municipalities across Humboldt County as well as representatives from regional agencies such as the HTA, HCAOG, HWMA, and RCEA, and other partner organizations. The purpose of this coalition is to foster collaboration and coordination among the region to address climate-related challenges and implement effective climate action strategies. This committee could be newly formed by the County or has several JPA's (such as HACO) that would fit this definition.

The Regional Climate Committee would be facilitated by a Regional Manager to facilitate the work of the committee. An oversight committee and a single regional manager will not achieve all that needs to be done to implement this RCAP. In the short-term, staff from local jurisdictions and agencies will be needed to support this work. This may turn out to be a good workable model, or over time as additional grant funds are available, it may be that additional support can be added within the committee to support staff.

It would be helpful for the Board to provide any comments you have on the RCAP approach and if this would fit within an existing organization or whether a new organization should be formed.

The redrafting of the CAP has achieved the intended result. The RCAP does achieve the status of a Qualified CAP including the substantial evidence demonstrating how it will meet state targets for GHG emissions reductions. Targets of the RCAP include reaching forty percent (40%) below 1990 levels of GHG emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. An Executive Summary of the Humboldt RCAP has been included in this staff report as Attachment 1 and the entire RCAP is included as Attachment 5.

The RCAP includes 29 measures related to carbon-free energy, building energy use, transportation, waste, water/wastewater, and carbon sequestration (a list of these measures and goals is included in Attachment 1). The RCAP addresses a constraint that was not addressed in the previous draft which is to recognize the constraints and opportunities between rural and urban development patterns. The RCAP identifies limitations to meet certain goals in the rural areas, and measures outlined are specific to rural vs urban areas as to not overcommit certain areas to infeasible actions.

Current Process of the RCAP

The updated RCAP was released for 30-day public review on Wednesday, August 14, and a public meeting will be held Tuesday, September 10 at 6 p.m. at the Wharfinger Building in Eureka to present the plan to the community. Public review period for the RCAP will end on Friday, September 20. Any changes that come out of public comments will form the final draft of the RCAP that will be used for preparation of the EIR. The goal is to inform and educate the public and decision makers on the RCAP and to insure the RCAP is hitting the mark for the community before the DEIR is prepared.

The Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the EIR was filed and released on Friday, August 30, and a subsequent public scoping meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 17 at 3:30 p.m. at the Agricultural Center in Eureka. Comments on the filed NOP will be accepted until September 30, 2024. Final adoption of the RCAP EIR is anticipated to occur in June of 2025.

A full timeline for the RCAP EIR is included in Attachment 2.

Requested Action

The progress on the previous draft of the CAP left off after each jurisdiction had accepted the draft as the project description for preparation of the EIR. The RCAP is now at that point, and it is important that all participating jurisdictions comment on the RCAP and a comfortable with the regional approach. Staff is requesting you provide comments on the RCAP, accept this draft with minor changes (which may result from public comment) as the project to be analyzed and provide preferences as to where the Regional Climate Committee should be.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Revisions to the RCAP was paid for by Regional Early Action Planning grant funding obtained from Humboldt County Association of Governments. The RCAP EIR and staff time will be paid for by the existing budget allocation for Long-Range Planning.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Implementation of the RCAP will require staff time to implement. Depending on where the Regional Manager is located there may be budget implications but this is not yet a decision point and it is not possible to project potential costs.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

As stated above, the preparation of the Humboldt RCAP has been a collaborative effort that has involved:

City of Eureka City of Blue Lake	City of Arcata City of Trinidad	City of Ferndale Dell Redwood Coast	City of Fortuna Energy Authority	City of Rio Dell Redwood Coast	Humboldt County Association of Governments Humboldt Waste Management Authority
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ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Board Discretion.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1 - Humboldt RCAP Executive Summary
- Attachment 2 - Frequently Asked Questions
- Attachment 3 - Full Humboldt Regional Climate Action Plan with Appendices

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: October 17, 2023
File No.: 23-1371

File #: 24-1307

Meeting of: June 7, 2022
File No.: 22-699