



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

Legislation Text

File #: 22-699, Version: 1

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Departmental

SUBJECT:

Acceptance of Public Review Draft of Humboldt County Regional Climate Action Plan for Preparation of the Environmental Document; Case Number PLN 2019-15593

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive and consider the staff report and Public Review Draft Humboldt County Regional Climate Action Plan (CAP);
2. Open the public hearing, and accept public comment;
3. Close the public hearing; and
4. Direct Planning and Building Department staff to proceed forward with environmental review of the CAP.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

The Humboldt County Association of Governments has secured \$150,000 in funding from the state's Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) grant program to complete the environmental review of the Draft Humboldt County Regional Climate Action Plan which will be combined with an additional \$125,000 REAP grant specifically targeted for transportation analysis. Also, there is another \$10,000 in REAP funding for CAP development and adoption, \$35,000 for an implementation coordinator, and \$45,000 is available for technical assistance for under-resourced cities.

DISCUSSION:

This item requests the Board of Supervisors evaluate the draft CAP to determine if it is complete enough to be "The Project" for purposes of preparation of the Environmental Impact Report under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CAP partners are presenting the draft CAP to their decision-makers by the end of May or beginning of June 2022 to determine whether member jurisdictions are comfortable with commencing environmental review under CEQA.

It is important that the preparation of the EIR include a stable project description. If the project description changes significantly during the public review period, the environmental review process may need to be restarted. Therefore, it is critical the county provide comments now if the Board

identifies a fatal flaw in a key element of the document, such as the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory scope, the overall reduction goal, the planning horizon, or the county's GHG emissions reduction commitment. Other less substantive issues, such as the overall readability of the document, can be addressed later without delaying the CEQA process.

There will be extensive public engagement during this next environmental review phase. Further review of the document will occur when the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors hold public hearings considering adoption of the CAP after environmental review is completed in September 2023.

Background

Policy AQ-P9 in the 2017 General Plan calls for the development of a “multi-jurisdictional Climate Action Plan to achieve reductions in greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the state Global Warming Solutions Act [AB 32].” In early 2019, staff from the Planning & Building Department convened a group of staff from the seven cities within the county and RCEA to begin work on a regional CAP. Later that year, the Board of Supervisors adopted a Memorandum of Understanding with the seven cities, committing the county to working with the seven cities to develop a CAP with a greenhouse gas target, inventory and reduction measures.

The primary goal of the CAP is to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from local sources because the scientific consensus is that significant reductions in human-caused GHG emissions are needed by the mid-21st century to prevent the most catastrophic effects of climate change.

The CAP begins with an inventory of baseline GHG emissions for the region in 2015 which leads to an understanding of where emissions are being generated and begins to reveal where effective emission-reduction strategies might be targeted. The inventory shows most local emissions come from transportation (53%), a difficult sector to address. Most of the remaining emissions are from livestock (13%), stationary combustion sources such as the use of natural gas and propane within buildings (12%), and electricity consumption (11%).

Geographically, emission sources loosely follow population figures, so Humboldt County with more than half of the region's population contributes the most (61%), followed by the cities of Eureka (18%) and Arcata (12%). All the other cities combined contribute less than 10% of the countywide GHG emissions.

Based on the inventory results, the CAP makes forecasts of what county-wide GHG emissions will be in the future out to the year 2040. It compares the projected emissions to the statewide target and proposes measures that can be implemented locally to hit that target. The primary GHG reduction measures identified in the CAP will result in measurable, quantifiable reductions in emissions. Supporting measures are qualitative measures that are difficult to quantify but will still contribute to achieving local GHG reductions.

The top five measures in the CAP that achieve the most local GHG emissions reductions by the year 2030 include:

- Measures 1.1.1.2 and 1.1.1.3: Replacing gas powered vehicles with electric vehicles will reduce annual emissions by 69,301 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO₂e).
- Measures 3.2.1.1 and 3.2.1.2: Replacing gas/propane residential water heating systems with electrically-powered systems will reduce emissions annually by 38,623 MTCO₂e.
- Measure 3.2.6.1: Replacing gas/propane commercial heating systems with electrically-powered systems will reduce emissions annually by 20,928 MTCO₂e.

While the measures included in the CAP are geared towards reducing GHG emissions, many will also result in environmental or economic “co-benefits,” including improvements to public health.

The CAP also discusses some GHG reduction measures that have not yet been quantified, but with further study may make important contributions to meeting the GHG reduction targets. For example, wetland restoration and enhancement projects such as those in the sloughs around Humboldt Bay are highly effective in sequestering additional carbon over time and holding it out of the atmosphere for long periods. Wetland restoration and enhancement projects also achieve the co-benefits of improvements in aquatic diversity and ecosystem health and productivity and increase the resilience of these biologically rich systems to climate warming and sea level rise.

Implementation of the measures in the CAP will require the jurisdictions adopt new ordinances, programs and projects. Monitoring is an important aspect of the CAP to ensure the region is on track to achieve the GHG reduction targets. The CAP assumes regular updates of the baseline information at least once every five years to track the community’s progress on CAP implementation.

If statewide targets are met, jurisdictions may use the CAP to streamline the analysis of project-level GHG emissions during environmental review, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.5. Projects that are consistent with the CAP have no further GHG impact analysis requirements, which could save applicants thousands of dollars in permitting large projects.

Public Involvement

A series of public workshops were held to help identify the proposed GHG reduction measures for the CAP and staff has presented the draft CAP to a number of city councils as listed below:

CAP workshops and presentations

Arcata public workshop	5/20/19
Farm Bureau presentation	5/30/19
Redway presentation	6/4/19
McKinleyville presentation	6/18/19
Willow Creek presentation	6/18/19
RCEA presentation	6/26/19
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute presentation	10/5/19
Eureka Transportation Advisory Committee	10/22/19

Eureka public workshop	1/15/20
Fortuna city council presentation	7/23/21
Rio Dell City Council presentation	1/13/22
Ferndale City Council presentation	2/16/22
Farm Bureau presentation #2	5/10/22
RCEA presentation #2	5/10/22

Public comment and suggestions from these meetings have been incorporated into the draft CAP. Also, the environmental review phase of the CAP will include a broad public engagement effort with agencies, community organizations, Native American Tribes and community members to ensure the CAP measures have as much public support as possible heading into the environmental review phase.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The cost for drafting the Humboldt County Regional Climate Action Plan (CAP) has been funded in a joint effort by the county, all the incorporated cities and the Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA) under a 2019 Memorandum of Understanding between all parties with the following contributions:

Jurisdiction	2015 Proportional Share of GHG Contribution	Contribution Toward Consultant Costs
Unincorporated County	63.4%	\$50,000*
Arcata	10.3%	\$9,389
Blue Lake	0.4%	\$480
Eureka	16.0%	\$20,000
Ferndale	0.6%	\$720
Fortuna	5.4%	\$6,480
Rio Dell	1.1%	\$1,320
Trinidad	0.5%	\$120
Unallocated	2.3%	--
Total**	100%	\$88,509

*This amount does not include the \$25,500 Civic Spark planner cost currently being paid for by the County.

**This amount represents the total costs contributed by the County and seven cities and does not include RCEA's \$25,000 match contribution.

Additionally, staff from all the cities, RCEA and the county have been participating in monthly organizational meetings and have individually reviewed and edited the draft document. Humboldt County's share of the cost was funded by the General Fund contribution to the Advance Planning Division of the Planning and Building Department (budget unit 1110-282).

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

This action supports your Board's Strategic Framework by building interjurisdictional and regional cooperation, facilitating public/private partnerships to solve problems, facilitating the establishment of

local revenue sources to address local needs, and creating opportunities for improved safety and health.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

In addition to coordination with RCEA and all the cities, environmental review of the draft CAP will include Native American Consultation pursuant to SB 18 and AB 52, and an extensive outreach effort to interested agencies such as CalTrans, as part of the environmental review for the project.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board could direct staff to work with the cities to revise the public review draft prior to initiating the environmental review phase. The Board would select this alternative if it believes the current draft is incomplete or requires major modifications. Staff does not recommend this alternative because the draft CAP has been developed with considerable public input and reconciles all the different perspectives expressed by the public to date into a coherent document that would work well as a foundation for environmental review. Also, the environmental review phase will include a deliberative and stepwise approach with extensive public outreach and funding that will provide a useful presentation of alternatives the Board may want to consider.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Public Review Draft Humboldt County Regional Climate Action Plan

Attachment 2: Links to appendices not included in the Public Review Draft

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: Click or tap here to enter text.

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