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1195 Third Street, Suite 210
Napa, CA 94559
www.co.napa.ca.us

Main: (707) 253-4417
Fax: (707) 253-4336

Hillary Gitelman
Director

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Proposed Climate Action Plan for Unincorporated Napa County

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What's the purpose of this plan?

The proposed Climate Action Plan quantifies green house gas (GHG) emissions from all sources in unincorporated Napa County as of 2005 and proposes emission reduction measures designed to reduce emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, consistent with the goal of California Assembly Bill (AB) 32 from 2006. Although the plan is not required by State law, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) has concluded that development projects that are consistent with a "qualified" Climate Action Plan would not result in "significant" GHG emissions in the context of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Preparation and adoption of a Climate Action Plan was included as action item in the Napa County General Plan, adopted in June of 2008.

2. What happens if we don't adopt a plan or meet the goal of AB 32?

There are no penalties if the County fails to adopt a Climate Action Plan or meet the goal set by AB 32, however the County and applicants who propose projects within the County would increasingly be exposed to the risk of delay and litigation. The County would not be fulfilling obligations contained in its General Plan, and some project applicants who propose projects within the County (particularly vineyard projects) would find it difficult to demonstrate definitively that their projects would avoid or mitigate potentially significant GHG emissions.

3. Why are development projects required to reduce their emissions less than vineyard projects?

The proposed Climate Action Plan suggests that development projects must reduce their annual emissions by 5.5% and that vineyard projects must reduce or off-set their one-time construction emissions by 51.5%. The reason these percentages are different relates to the nature of the emissions (i.e. annual emissions versus one-time emissions). Also, the percentages have been established to ensure that vineyard developers are not required to address emissions from other development and vice-a-versa.

4. How can development projects reduce their emissions and meet the plan's requirements?

If the draft Climate Action Plan is adopted as currently proposed, discretionary development projects would be required to: (a) comply with the current building code (CalGreen Tier 1); (b) replace all vegetation that is removed from the site and implement best practices when siting new buildings to maximize energy conservation; and (c) choose from among all other potential measures included on the County's checklist of voluntary measures to achieve an additional GHG emission reduction of 5.5%. Measures that could be selected for implementation by project applicants include on-site energy generation (e.g. solar, wind), additional energy conservation strategies consistent with CalGreen Tier 2 or 3, implementation of transportation demand management measures, etc. *County staff would like to know how the draft Climate Action Plan and the checklist can be revised to clearly articulate these requirements and to assist applicants.*

5. How can vineyard projects reduce or offset their emissions and meet the plan's requirements?

If the draft Climate Action Plan is adopted as currently proposed, discretionary vineyard projects (i.e. new vineyards on slopes of >5%) would be required to: (a) calculate the GHG emissions associated with their project using a worksheet included in the Plan; (b) implement "best practices" such as mulching rather than burning debris, using cover crops, etc.; and (c) implement one or more other measures to reduce or off-set one-time construction emissions by 51.5%. Measures that could be selected for implementation by project applicants include on- or off-site habitat restoration, on- or off-site reforestation, on- or off-site avoided deforestation, or participation in a program demonstrated to off-set project emissions.

6. Can't we get "credit" for all the best practices we currently implement?

Because the plan's goal is to reduce emissions to 15% below 2005 levels, the community can collectively benefit for any activities and "best practices" implemented since 2005. Similarly, project applicants can get "credit" for any emission reduction strategies that can be shown to be effective.

7. When will the plan become effective?

The proposed Climate Action Plan will be revised as necessary in response to public comments, and will then be forwarded to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors for their consideration. It will only become effective upon adoption by the Board.

8. What kind of input would be most meaningful, and how can I provide my comments?

County staff would particularly like input on how worksheets can be crafted to assist project applicants in identifying feasible emission reduction strategies for incorporation in their project. Written comments and questions should be emailed to hillary.gitelman@countyofnapa.org, or mailed to Hillary Gitelman at the County's offices, 1195 Third Street, Napa, CA 94559 by the close of business on March 7, 2011. The Planning Commission will also accept oral comments at their meeting scheduled for 9AM on February 16, 2011 in Room 305, 1195 Third Street in downtown Napa.