



The California County Platform | Chapter 14
Climate Change

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors November 2024

SECTION 1: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1) CSAC recognizes that sustainable development and climate change share strong complementary tendencies.
- 2) CSAC recognizes that mitigation and adaptation to climate change – such as promoting sustainable energy, improved access and increased walkability, transit oriented development, and improved agricultural methods – have the potential to bolster sustainable development.
- 3) CSAC recognizes that climate change will have a harmful effect on our environment, public health and economy. Although there remains uncertainty on the pace, distribution and magnitude of the effects of climate change, CSAC also recognizes the need for immediate actions to mitigate the sources of greenhouse gases.
- 4) CSAC recognizes the need for sustained leadership and commitment at the federal, state, regional and local levels to develop strategies to combat the effects of climate change.
- 5) CSAC recognizes the complexity involved with reducing greenhouse gases and the need for a variety of approaches and strategies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- 6) CSAC supports a flexible approach to addressing climate change, recognizing that a one size fits all approach is not appropriate for California’s large number of diverse communities.
- 7) CSAC supports special consideration for environmental justice issues, disadvantaged communities, and rural areas that do not have the ability to address these initiatives without adequate support and assistance.
- 8) CSAC supports cost-effective strategies to reduce GHG emissions and encourages the use of grants, loans and incentives to assist local governments in the implementation of GHG reduction programs.
- 9) CSAC recognizes that adaptation and mitigation are necessary and complementary strategies for responding to climate change impacts. CSAC encourages the state to develop guidance materials for assessing climate impacts that includes adaptation options.

- 10) CSAC finds it critical that the state develop protocols and GHG emissions inventory mechanisms, providing the necessary tools to track and monitor GHG emissions at the local level. The state, in cooperation with local government, must determine the portfolio of solutions that will best minimize its potential risks and maximize its potential benefits. CSAC also supports the establishment of a state climate change technical assistance program for local governments.
- 11) CSAC believes that in order to achieve projected emission reduction targets, cooperation, coordination, and data exchange between federal, state and local entities must occur to address the role public lands play in the context of climate change.
- 12) CSAC recognizes that many counties are in the process of developing, or have already initiated climate change-related programs. CSAC supports the inclusion of these programs into the larger GHG reduction framework and supports acknowledgement and credit given for these local efforts.
- 13) CSAC acknowledges its role to provide educational forums, informational resources and communication opportunities for counties in relation to climate change.
- 14) CSAC recognizes that collaboration between cities, counties, special districts, and the private sector is necessary to ensure the success of a GHG reduction strategy at the local level.
- 15) CSAC encourages counties to take active measures to reduce GHG and create energy efficiency strategies that are appropriate for their respective communities.

SECTION 2: FISCAL

The effects of climate change and the implementation of GHG reduction strategies will have fiscal implications for county government.

CSAC recognizes the potential for fiscal impacts on all levels of government as a result of climate change, i.e. sea level rise, flooding, water shortages and other varied and numerous consequences. CSAC encourages the state and counties to plan for the fiscal impacts of climate change adaptation, mitigation and strategy implementation.

- 1) CSAC supports the use of grants, loans, incentives and revenue raising authority to assist local governments with the implementation of climate change response activities and GHG reduction strategies.
- 2) CSAC continues to support its state mandate principles in the context of climate change. CSAC advocates that new GHG emissions reduction programs must be technically feasible for counties to implement and help to offset the long-term costs of GHG emission reduction strategies.

- 3) CSAC advocates that any new GHG reduction strategies that focus on city-oriented growth and require conservation of critical resource and agricultural lands within the unincorporated areas should include a mechanism to compensate county governments for the loss of property taxes and other fees and taxes.
- 4) CSAC supports the allocation of cap and trade revenues to fund programs that help reduce GHG emissions at the local level. Specifically, CSAC supports the creation and sustained funding of programs that acknowledge that investment in mitigation and preparedness are more cost-effective than response programs.
- 5) CSAC supports changes and refinement to the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen) to include criteria that reflects the diversity of disadvantaged communities in California.

SECTION 3: LAND USE, TRANSPORTATION, AND HOUSING

CSAC recognizes that population growth in the state is inevitable, and therefore climate change strategies that affect land use must focus on how and where to accommodate and mitigate the expected growth in California. Land use planning and development play a direct role in transportation patterns, affecting travel demands and in turn vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and fuel consumption. It is recognized that in addition to reducing VMTs, investing in a seamless and efficient transportation system to address congestion also contributes to the reduction of GHG emissions. In addition to serving vehicles and facilitating goods movement, local streets and roads are the primary right-of-way for transit, bicycles, and pedestrians. Continued dedicated funding will be required to maintain local roads and bridges, while also improving safety for all road users, and adding capacity for transit and active transportation where the local context is appropriate.

The provision of housing affordable to all income levels also affects the ability to meet climate change goals. Affordable housing in close proximity to multi-modal transportation options, work, school, and other goods and services is a critical element to reducing GHG emissions in the state. Smart land use planning and growth, such as that required by SB 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008), remains a critical component to achieve the GHG emission reduction targets pursuant to AB 32 (Chapter 488, Statutes of 2006), particularly to address the emissions from the transportation sector (i.e. vehicle, air and train). In order to better understand the link between land use planning, transportation, housing, and climate change further modeling and consideration of alternative growth scenarios is required to determine the relationship and benefits at both the local and regional levels.

- 1) CSAC supports measures to achieve reductions in GHG emissions by promoting housing/jobs proximity and transit-oriented development, and encouraging high density residential development along transit corridors. CSAC supports these strategies through

its support for SB 375 (Chapter No. 728, Statutes of 2008) and other existing smart growth policies for strategic growth. These policies support new growth that results in compact development within cities, existing unincorporated urban communities and rural towns that have the largest potential for increasing densities, and providing a variety of housing types and affordability.

- 2) CSAC supports adding safe facilities for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit use on state highways that serve as local main streets, especially in rural unincorporated communities. The state should bear the costs of constructing and maintaining these improvements rather than putting additional pressure on limited local funds or competitive grant funding.
- 3) CSAC supports a balanced transportation policy that recognizes the need to promote alternatives to driving by improving state and local roadways to add safe access for transit, bicycles and pedestrians, where feasible and appropriate. At the same time, CSAC supports transportation investments that facilitate interregional travel and goods movement.
- 4) CSAC supports continued dedicated state and federal funding for maintenance and rehabilitation of local roadways and bridges as part of a broader climate change strategy. Effective asset management can reduce the lifecycle carbon emissions associated with these facilities.
- 5) CSAC supports policies that efficiently utilize existing and new infrastructure investment and scarce resources, while considering social equity as part of community development, and strives for an improved jobs-housing balance.
- 6) CSAC supports policies intended to reduce traffic-related fatalities and injuries by promoting vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle safety; including policies allowing local governments to reduce speed limits, continued funding for projects under the Highway Safety Improvement Program, enhanced traffic safety enforcement, public education and traffic safety campaigns, and improved availability of road safety data for local agencies.
- 7) CSAC supports the protection of critical lands when it comes to development, recognizing the need to protect agricultural lands, encourage the continued operations and expansion of agricultural businesses, and protect natural resources, wildlife habitat and open space.
- 8) CSAC acknowledges that growth outside existing urban areas and growth that is non-contiguous to urban areas may be necessary to avoid the impacts on critical resource and agricultural lands that are adjacent to existing urban areas.

- 9) CSAC supports providing incentives for regional blueprints and countywide plans, outside of SB 375, to ensure that all communities have the ability to plan for more strategic growth and have equitable access to revenues available for infrastructure investment purposes. It is CSAC's intent to secure regional and countywide blueprint funding for all areas.
- 10) CSAC supports new fiscal incentives for the development of countywide plans to deal with growth, adaptation and mitigation through collaboration between a county and its cities to address housing needs, protection of resources and agricultural lands, and compatible general plans and revenue and tax sharing agreements for countywide services.
- 11) CSAC recognizes that counties and cities must strive to promote efficient development in designated urban areas in a manner that evaluates all costs associated with development on both the city and the county. Support for growth patterns that encourage urbanization to occur within cities must also result in revenue agreements that consider all revenues generated from such growth in order to reflect the service demands placed on county government. As an alternative, agreements could be entered into requiring cities to assume portions of county service delivery obligations resulting from urban growth.
- 12) While local governments individually have a role in the reduction of GHG emissions through land use decisions, CSAC continues to support regional approaches to meet the State's GHG emission reduction and climate change goals, such as efforts which build upon existing regional blueprint and transportation planning processes. CSAC continues to support regional approaches over any statewide "one size fits all" approach to addressing growth and climate change issues. Further, CSAC supports countywide approaches to strategic growth, resource and agricultural protection, targeting scarce infrastructure investments and tax sharing for countywide services.
- 13) CSAC finds it critical that state and federal assistance is provided for data and standardized methodologies for quantifying GHG emissions for determining and quantifying GHG emission sources and levels, vehicle miles traveled and other important data to assist both local governments and regional agencies in addressing climate change in environmental documents for long-range plans.

SECTION 4: ENERGY

Reducing energy consumption is an important way to reduce GHG emissions and conserve. Additionally, the capture and reuse of certain GHGs can lead to additional sources of energy. For example, methane gas emissions, a mixture of methane, carbon dioxide and various toxic organic and mercuric pollutants, from landfills and dairies have been identified as potent GHGs.

Effective collection and treatment of these gases is not only important to the reduction of GHG emissions, but can also result in an additional source of green power.

CSAC continues to support efforts to ensure that California has an adequate supply of safe and reliable energy through a combination of conservation, renewables, new generation and new transmission efforts.

Energy Efficiency

- 1) CSAC supports energy conservation and energy efficiency, along with broader use of renewable energy resources. Counties are encouraged to undertake vigorous energy action programs that are tailored to the specific needs of each county. When developing such action programs counties should:
 - (a) Assess available conservation and renewable and alternative energy options and take action to implement conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy development when feasible;
 - (b) Consider the incorporation of energy policies as an optional element in the county general plan; and,
 - (c) Consider energy concerns when making land use decisions and encourage development patterns which result in energy efficiency.
- 2) CSAC supports incentive based green building programs that encourage the use of green building practices, incorporating energy efficiency and conservation technologies into state and local facilities. A green building is a term used to describe structures that are designed, built, renovated, operated or reused in an ecological and resource-efficient manner. Green buildings are designed to meet certain objectives using energy, water and other resources more efficiently and reducing the overall impact to the environment.
- 3) CSAC supports the state's development of green building protocols sustainable building standards, including guidelines for jails, hospitals and other such public buildings.
- 4) CSAC supports the use of grants, loans and incentives to encourage and enable counties to incorporate green building practices into their local facilities.
- 5) CSAC supports the use of procurement practices that promote the use of energy efficient products and equipment.

Methane Emissions

- 1) CSAC supports state efforts to develop a dairy digester protocol to document GHG emissions reductions from dairy farms. CSAC supports funding mechanisms that support the use of dairy digesters to capture methane gas and convert it to energy.
- 2) CSAC supports state efforts to capture methane gases from landfills and waste treatment facilities, and supports development of a reasonable regulatory measure with

a feasible timeline to require landfill gas recovery systems on landfills that can support a self-sustaining collection system.

- 3) CSAC supports the development of a guidance document for landfill operators and regulators that will recommend technologies and best management practices for improving landfill design, construction, operation and closure for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions.
- 4) CSAC also supports funding mechanisms, including grants, loans and incentives to landfill and waste management operators to help implement these programs.

SECTION 5: WATER

According to the Department of Water Resources, projected increases in air temperature may lead to changes in the timing, amount and form of precipitation, changes in runoff timing and volume, sea level rise, and changes in the amount of irrigation water needed. CSAC recognizes the need for state and local programs that promote water conservation and water storage development.

CSAC recognizes that climate change has the potential to seriously impact California's water supply. CSAC continues to assert that adequate management of water supply cannot be accomplished without effective administration of both surface and ground water resources within counties, including the effective management of forestlands and watershed basins.

- 1) CSAC supports the incorporation of projections of climate change into state water planning and flood control efforts.
- 2) CSAC supports water conservation efforts, including reuse of domestic and industrial wastewater, reuse of agriculture water, groundwater recharge, and economic incentives to invest in equipment that promotes efficiency.
- 3) CSAC continues to support the study and development of alternate methods of meeting water needs such as desalinization, wastewater reclamation, watershed management, the development of additional storage, and water conservation measures.

SECTION 6: FORESTRY

With a significant percentage of California covered in forest land, counties recognize the importance of forestry in the context of climate change. Effectively managed forests have a lower probability of releasing large amounts of harmful GHG emissions into the atmosphere in the form of catastrophic wildfires. Furthermore, as a result of natural absorption, forests reduce the effects of GHG emissions and climate change by removing carbon from the air

through the process of carbon sequestration. CSAC also recognizes the benefits of biomass energy as an alternative to the burning of traditional fossil fuels, as well as the benefits of carbon sequestration through the use of wood products.

- 1) CSAC supports encouraging sustainable forestry practices through the existing regulatory process, and encouraging continued reforestation and active forest management on both public and private timberlands.
- 2) CSAC supports responsible optimum forest management practices that ensure continued carbon sequestration in the forest, provide wood fiber for biomass-based products and carbon-neutral biomass fuels, and protect the ecological values of the forest in a balanced way.
- 3) CSAC supports the state's development of general forestry protocols that encourage private landowners to participate in voluntary emission reduction programs and encourage National Forest lands to contribute to the state's climate change efforts.
- 4) It is imperative that adequate funding be provided to support the management of forest land owned and managed by the federal government in California in order to ensure the reduction of catastrophic wildfires.
- 5) CSAC supports additional research and analysis of carbon sequestration opportunities within forestry.

SECTION 7: AGRICULTURE

The potential impacts of climate change on agriculture may not only alter the types and locations of commodities produced, but also the factors influencing their production, including resource availability. Rising temperatures, changes to our water supply, and shifts in soil composition all could have significant impacts on California's crop and livestock management. Additionally, agriculture is a contributor to GHG emissions in form of fuel consumption, cultivation and fertilization of soils and management of livestock manure. At the same time, agriculture has the potential to provide offsets in the form of carbon sequestration in soil and permanent crops, and the production of biomass crops for energy purposes.

- 1) CSAC supports state efforts to develop guidelines through a public process to improve and identify cost effective strategies for nitrous oxide emissions reductions.
- 2) CSAC continues to support incentives that will encourage agricultural water conservation and retention of lands in agricultural production.

- 3) CSAC continues to support full funding for UC Cooperative Extension given its vital role in delivering research-based information and educational programs that enhance economic vitality and the quality of life in California counties.
- 4) CSAC supports additional research and analysis of carbon sequestration opportunities within agriculture.

SECTION 8: AIR QUALITY

CSAC encourages the research and development and use of alternative, cleaner fuels. Further, air quality issues reach beyond personal vehicle use and affect diesel equipment used in development and construction for both the public and private sector.

- 1) CSAC supports state efforts to create standards and protocols for all new passenger cars and light-duty trucks that are purchased by the state and local governments that conform to the California Strategy to Reduce Petroleum Dependency. CSAC supports state efforts to revise its purchasing methodology to be consistent with the new vehicle standards.
- 2) CSAC supports efforts that will enable counties to purchase new vehicles for local fleets that conform to state purchasing standards, are fuel efficient, low emission, or use alternative fuels. CSAC supports flexibility at the local level, allowing counties to purchase fuel efficient vehicles on or off the state plan.
- 3) CSAC supports identifying a funding source for the local retrofit and replacement of county on and off road diesel powered vehicles and equipment.
- 4) CSAC opposes federal standards that supersede California's ability to adopt stricter vehicle standards.
- 5) Counties continue to assert that federal and state agencies, in cooperation with local agencies, have the ability to develop rules and regulations that implement clean air laws that are both cost-effective and operationally feasible. In addition, state and federal agencies should be encouraged to accept equivalent air quality programs, thereby allowing for flexibility in implementation without compromising air quality goals.
- 6) CSAC also recognizes the importance of the Air Pollution Control Districts (APCDs) and Air Quality Management Districts (AQMDs) to provide technical assistance and guidance to achieve the reduction of GHG emissions.
- 7) CSAC supports the development of tools and incentives to encourage patterns of product distribution and goods movement that minimize transit impacts and GHG emissions.

- 8) CSAC supports further analysis of the GHG emission contribution from goods movement through shipping channels and ports.

SECTION 9: SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING

The consumption of materials is related to climate change because it requires energy to mine, extract, harvest, process and transport raw materials, and more energy to manufacture, transport and, after use, and dispose of products. Recycling and waste prevention can reduce GHG emissions by reducing the amount of energy needed to process materials, and reducing the amount of natural resources needed to make products.

CSAC continues to support policies and legislation that aim to promote improved markets for recyclable materials, and encourages:

- 1) The use of recycled content in products sold in California;
- 2) The creation of economic incentives for the use of recycled materials;
- 3) Development of local recycling markets to avoid increased emissions from transporting recyclables long distances to current markets;
- 4) The expansion of the Electronic Waste Recycling Act of 2003 and the Beverage Container Recycling Program;
- 5) The use of materials that are biodegradable;
- 6) Greater manufacturer responsibility and product stewardship.

SECTION 10: HEALTH

CSAC recognizes the potential impacts of land uses, transportation, housing, and climate change on human health. As administrators of planning, public works, parks, and a variety of public health services and providers of health care services, California's counties have significant health, administrative and cost concerns related to our existing and future built environment and a changing climate. Lack of properly designed active transportation facilities have made it difficult and in some cases created barriers for pedestrians and bicyclists. Lack of walkability in many communities contributes to numerous chronic health related issues, particularly obesity which is an epidemic in this country. Heat-related illnesses, air pollution, wild fire, water pollution and supply issues, mental health impact and infectious disease all relate to the health and well-being of county residents, and to the range and cost of services provided by county governments.

CSAC recognizes that there are direct human health benefits associated with improving our built environment and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, such as lowering rates of obesity, injuries, and asthma. Counties believe that prevention, planning, research, education/training, and preparation are the keys to coping with the public health issues brought about by our built environment and climate change. Public policies related to land uses, public works, climate change and public health should be considered so as to work together to improve the public's health within the existing roles and resources of county government.

- 1) CSAC supports efforts to provide communities that are designed, built and maintained so as to promote health, safety and livability through leadership, education, and funding augmentations.
- 2) CSAC supports efforts to improve the public health and human services infrastructure to better prevent and cope with the health effects of climate change through leadership, planning and funding augmentations.
- 3) CSAC supports state funding for mandated local efforts to coordinate monitoring of heat-related illnesses and responses to heat emergencies.
- 4) CSAC supports efforts to improve emergency prediction, warning, and response systems and enhanced disease surveillance strategies.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Climate change

A change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Carbon Sequestration

Carbon sequestration refers to the provision of long-term storage of carbon in the terrestrial biosphere, underground, or the oceans so that the buildup of carbon dioxide (the principal greenhouse gas) concentration in the atmosphere will reduce or slow. In some cases, this is accomplished by maintaining or enhancing natural processes; in other cases, novel techniques are developed to dispose of carbon.

US Department of Energy

Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

US Environmental Protection Agency

Greenhouse Gas

A gas that absorbs radiation at specific wavelengths within the spectrum of radiation (infrared radiation) emitted by the Earth's surface and by clouds. The gas in turn emits infrared radiation from a level where the temperature is colder than the surface. The net effect is a local trapping of part of the absorbed energy and a tendency to warm the planetary surface. Water vapor (H₂O), carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrous oxide (N₂O), methane (CH₄) and ozone (O₃) are the primary greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere.

United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change