

# **Community Requests for ZERO EMISSIONS by 2030**

## **Introduction**

The Santa Cruz Climate Action Network has focused on identifying strategies to reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) and recommending ways both the city and county can address climate change for a number of years, including the recent climate emergency resolutions.

Santa Cruz county's early response to the current global pandemic places the county among one of the least affected in the State. California itself displayed leadership as one of the first to act on the data and take corrective measures to protect its citizenry.

Air pollution from burning fossil fuels causes 7 million deaths annually, from heart, lung, and brain diseases. While the cause and effect relationship between greenhouse gases and the current pandemic is indirect, the similarities between the two threats are pronounced:

1. The SARS-CoV-2 virus and climate change are both global; no single entity can solve the problem; remedy is collaborative; and all communities and jurisdictions need to participate.
2. The spread of the virus and the rise in carbon emissions can be curbed quickly. When people see lives are at stake, they are willing to take dramatic action.
3. For both the pandemic and climate change, denial and waiting to take appropriate action compound the severity of outcomes.
4. Both the pandemic and climate change expose the weaknesses and faults in our economic, political, health care, and transportation systems.
5. Both the pandemic and climate change disproportionately affect the economically disadvantaged—whether individuals, communities, or nations.

It is unlikely that when the economy reopens residents will revert to previous levels of consumption and social behaviors. The current pandemic is in fact a practice run, a full-dress rehearsal for handling global health crises.

The health of humans and the rest of the planet are closely tied together. Experts estimate that reductions in travel and the slowing of production during the coronavirus pandemic is expected to reduce carbon emissions by 5 percent\*. The expected

recession buys valuable time to flatten the rate of global warming, to prevent GHG emissions from rising back as fast. The pandemic has served notice to all governments to make a course correction toward a healthier, more equitable world.

Restoring the economy is a golden opportunity to steer us in the direction of zero GHG emissions. Drawdown, the time when atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels begin to decline, can be achieved by mid-century if ALL existing climate solutions are used.

These solutions can be grouped into those that:

- 1. Conserve energy—and therefore reduce fossil fuel use;
- 2. Replace fossil fuel energy with carbon-free energy;
- 3. Reduce carbon emissions due to human land use—e.g., agriculture and forestry;
- 4. Promote natural carbon sequestration—e.g., in soils and forests.

In Santa Cruz County, the most important emission targets are transportation, meat consumption, food waste, and agricultural and forest practices.

Below is a list of actions to express the continued leadership of our local governing bodies, and a list of county-wide organizations whose support SCCAN will actively recruit.

## **Categories**

- Transportation
- Food
- Energy in Buildings
- Schools
- Human Rights
- Reduce Waste
- Land Use
- Miscellany

## **Transportation**

- Promote telecommuting and video conferencing.
- Outreach on the benefits of car-free commuting.
- Expand bus and train service.
- Electrify buses (school and metro).
- Major employers provide electric van pools for Salinas and Hollister employees.

- Discourage new auto infrastructure, such as more parking garages or highway widening.
- Increase parking revenue to support: free bus passes and incentives for car-pooling, rent-a-bike credits, and grants/low-cost loans to employees for purchasing e-bikes and used EVs.
- For employees who commute by walking, bicycle, bus, or carpool, employers with more than 50 employees provide free transportation in case of emergency.
- Advertise and enforce ordinances against non-emergency vehicles idling more than 90 seconds.
- Locate new housing along transit corridors. Provide new bus routes as needed.
- Reduce building requirements for parking spaces. (Unbundle the cost of parking from the cost of housing.)

## **Food**

- Include diet-based emissions in the Climate Action Strategy.
- Public outreach and incentives for reducing food waste.
- Promote eating less meat and more plants, to reduce GHG emissions.
- Model plant-based eating when elected officials eat together.
- Reduce government purchases of animal products by 50%.
- Encourage government contractors to increase plant-based food purchases and decrease animal product purchases made with funds from public sources.
- Restaurants to provide and highlight low-meat, vegetarian, or vegan options.
- Provide curbside composting for county residents, restaurants, and stores.

## **Energy in Buildings**

- All new or remodeled buildings to be Zero Carbon.
- No new gas hookups in new construction.
- Residential air conditioning to be by heat pump only.
- Require air sealing and insulation.
- Promote smart thermostats or set existing thermostats to 67 in winter, 73 on warmer summer days.
- Require rooftop solar or zero-carbon electricity in new construction.
- Promote heat pumps for heating and cooling and water heating.
- Tax purchase of new gas furnaces and gas water heaters
- Fund financial incentives for energy retrofits of existing buildings
- Support microgrids
- Encourage use of battery-powered tools. Ban gas leaf blowers and lawn mowers.

## **Schools**

- Encourage the Santa Cruz County School Board to adopt a Climate Change Curriculum.
- Promote climate change solutions at schools such as “Car-Free to School Days” that increase the use of bike and "walking buses", instead of lines of idling cars.
- Schools to emphasize plant-based diets
- Solar PV systems and heat pumps for heating and cooling.

## **Human Rights**

- Provide homes to the homeless and health care for all.
- Create a “Second Home Tax” with the funds raising going to homeless services such as allocating empty motel rooms to homeless.
- Plant “food forests” where family supplies of food can be grown.
- Provide shelter to the homeless, so they are not forced to build fires when temperatures drop and the landscape is dry in late fall.

## **Reduce Waste**

- Conserve water with low-flow fixtures, water collection systems, and water recycling for landscaping.
- Stores selling products in bulk to make paper bags available, along with information encouraging use of the paper bags or refillable containers.
- Work with the State to prohibit use of thick plastic bags which bypass the current single use bag ban.
- Provide hydration stations for refilling water bottles, for example.
- Require stores to sell reusable pods next to the single use coffee pods.
- Require optometrist offices to accept and recycle contact lenses.

## **Land Use**

- Education and financial support for regenerative farming. (The transition from conventional to regenerative is a 3-year financial burden for farmers.)
- Incentives for extensive tree planting, especially coast redwoods, with funding to cover watering in the first 3 summers as needed.
- Wildfires in California are a major source of GHG emissions and 95% of wildfires are human caused. Promote county planning that reduces new construction at the urban-wildland interface and minimizes human caused wildfires.

- Phase out lawns and increase landscaping with native plants that support pollinators and biodiversity.

### **Miscellany**

- One-hour EN-ROADS workshops for county employees—to help them understand that all our actions can add up to meaningful, helpful responses to the climate crisis and we need to do everything possible.
- A current inventory of county carbon emissions and sequestration.

### **Signatories**

- Santa Cruz Climate Action Network