



County of Santa Cruz

COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

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Commission on the Environment 2017 & 2018 Work Plan

Overview

Consistent with its by-laws, the Commission on the Environment (COE) will focus on priority environmental issues, policies and projects, with the intent of taking one or more of the following actions:

- Advise the Board of Supervisors (BOS) on issues related to environmental protection, including establishing specific goals that support implementing the County's Climate Action Strategy to reduce regional greenhouse gas, and assist the BOS in developing policies and programs to meet the goals.
- Work cooperatively with county departments, other county commissions, and public and private agencies to formulate advice to the BOS.
- Serve as an information clearinghouse to the BOS and other County commissions.
- Advise the BOS on potential areas of cooperation with other public and private agencies and organizations.
- Provide a public forum to educate the COE and the community.
- Support the work of County staff in implementing environmental programs.
- Monitor and evaluate implementation of key policies and programs and advise the BOS as needed.
- Proactively identify environmental issues of concern that are not being addressed by other advisory bodies to the BOS.

Prioritized Environmental Issues, Policies and Projects for 2017-2018

(1) County's Climate Action Strategy (CAS) Adaptation & Mitigation Initiatives

Background: The BOS approved the CAS several years ago and directed each County department to implement respective sections of the plan. Annually, each participating department must submit progress on the work assigned to them, which is turned into an annual report to the BOS each spring.

COE Actions:

- (a) Public Forum - Provide a public education forum and monitor progress by receiving regular updates from the Planning Department on major implementation and evaluative milestones. Also review the County Interdepartmental Annual Report due each April to the BOS.
- (b) Advisory - Develop advisory letters as needed to the BOS.

Metrics & Indicators: To Be Discussed

Estimated Time Commitment:

Annual presentation (45 minutes at one COE meeting)

Regular updates (15 minutes at five COE meetings)

Develop BOS advisory letters (COE approves content & designates author)

(2) County's involvement in Monterey Bay Community Power (MBCP), a regional Joint Powers Community Choice Energy Agency

Background: The top initiative identified in the Climate Action Strategy was to investigate the feasibility of forming a regional community choice energy (CCE) agency. Since 2013, the County has led the regional effort to conduct this investigation, which will result in the formation of a regional JPA in April, 2017. During 2017, MBCP will be engaged in organizational capacity-building start-up work, with the intent of providing a clean, renewable energy portfolio to customers starting in April, 2018.

COE Actions:

- (a) Public Forum - Provide a public education forum and monitor progress by receiving regular updates from the Planning Department on implementation milestones as the JPA builds organizational capacity and makes key decisions regarding portfolio offerings. After launch in April of 2018, continue to receive updates on meeting the agency's strategic goals.

- (b) Advisory - Develop advisory letters as needed to the BOS, asking them to empower the County's representatives on the JPA Board to advocate appropriately.

Metrics & Indicators: To Be Discussed

Estimated Time Commitment:

Regular updates (15 minutes at six COE meetings)

Develop BOS advisory letters (COE approves content & designates author)

(3) Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan (SSCCP)

Background: The BOS accepted the SSCCP three years ago, which is a plan developed by the Planning Department to identify opportunities for integrating land use and transportation policies in ways that promote environmental protection through reduced carbon emissions, improved land management, and low impact development. Since that time, the BOS has incrementally approved zoning, code and regulatory modernizations that are consistent with the goals of the SSCCP and its triple bottom line approach. Additional modernizations will be proposed by the Planning Department during 2017-2018.

COE Actions:

- (a) Public Forum - Provide a public education forum and monitor progress by receiving regular updates from the Planning Department on newly proposed modernizations prior to these going before the BOS for consideration.
- (b) Advisory - Develop advisory letters as needed to the BOS.

Estimated Time Commitment:

Annual update (45 minutes at one COE meeting)

Regular updates (15 minutes at five COE meetings)

Develop BOS advisory letters (COE approves content & designates author)

(4) Sustainable Transportation Policies, Programs and Projects

Background: This issue is largely under the jurisdiction of the SCCRTC governing Board, with all five County Supervisors serving on that Board. The Monterey Bay Air Resources Board also has electric vehicle incentive programs and funds other sustainable transportation initiatives with two of the County Supervisors serving on the MBARB Board. The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) is the regional MPO (metropolitan planning organization) and is responsible for developing and implementing the State-mandated Sustainable Communities Strategy. Lastly, the County Public Works Department implements sustainable transportation initiatives.

Transportation has a substantial impact on carbon emissions and other environmental

concerns and the County does not have a dedicated transportation advisory body other than the COE to give the BOS input into the policies, projects and programs that these four agencies develop and implement.

COE Actions:

- (a) Provide a public education forum and monitor progress by receiving annual presentations from various regional agencies:

From the SCCRTC staff regarding their Regional Transportation Improvement Plan and implementation of Measure D-funded initiatives, focusing on the sustainable transportation policies, programs and projects;

From the County Public Works staff regarding their sustainable transportation initiatives;

From MBARB regarding its greenhouse gas reduction initiatives relative to sustainable transportation; and

From AMBAG regarding its Sustainable Communities Strategy, focusing on implementation progress and greenhouse gas reduction goals as mandated by the State.

- (b) Advisory - Develop advisory letters as needed to the BOS.

Metrics & Indicators: To Be Discussed

Estimated Time Commitment:

Four annual presentations (45 minutes each at four COE meetings)
Develop BOS advisory letters (COE approves content & designates author)

(5) PROPOSED Open Space District

Background: For the past few years, an Open Space District has been discussed by the BOS, which directed the County's Parks Director, Jeff Gaffney, to continue discussions with various regional partners.

COE Actions:

- (a) Provide a public education forum and monitor progress by receiving an annual update, or more frequently as needed, from the Parks Department on the status of the ongoing discussions.
- (b) Advisory - Develop advisory letters as needed to the BOS.

Estimated Time Commitment:

Annual presentation (45 minutes at one COE meeting)

Develop BOS advisory letters (COE approves content & designates author)

(6) State and Federal Legislation

Background: Information regarding pending State and Federal legislation may be submitted from time to time by individual Commissioners, County staff members or organizations in which the County is a member, such as the California State Association of Counties, or the League of Cities, with a request that the COE consider submitting an advisory letter to the BOS.

- (c) Public Forum - Sufficient time will be set aside at each COE meeting for discussing pending State and Federal Legislation. *Individual COE Commissioners, County staff members or organizations in which the County is a member are responsible for developing a brief summary of pending legislation for the COE's consideration.* For time management purposes, extensive discussion beyond a 10 minute time allotment will be scheduled for future COE meetings in consideration of other priority meeting topics, unless a majority vote by the COE approves additional time.
- (d) Advisory - Develop advisory letters as necessary to the BOS to support proactive management of the underlying environmental concerns and assure effective compliance with State and Federal mandates and regulations.
- (e) Monitor - Request a report back from the proposing party regarding legislative actions taken. Determine the need for additional advocacy with the BOS.

Estimated Time Commitment:

Regular discussion time (15 minutes at six COE meetings)

Develop BOS advisory letters (COE approves content & designates author)

(7) Ad hoc Inter-Commission Coordination

Background: From time to time as needed, two or three designated COE commissioners will be directed to meet with members of other advisory bodies to the BOS on an "ad hoc" basis. The purpose of these informational meetings will be to identify environmental issues at the intersection of various advisory body responsibilities and determine those that need coordination or strategic focus. In addition, this allows an opportunity for commissioners to proactively identify environmental issues of concern that are not being addressed by the COE or other advisory bodies to the BOS.

The designated commissioners will report back to the full COE with relevant information.

COE Actions:

- (a) Public Forum - Time will be set aside as needed at each COE meeting for discussing issues identified. *Designated COE Commissioners are responsible for developing a brief summary of each issue to be discussed.* For time management purposes,

extensive discussion beyond a 10 minute time allotment will be scheduled for future COE meetings in consideration of other priority meeting topics, unless a majority vote by the COE approves additional time.

- (b) Advisory - Develop advisory letters as necessary to the BOS.
- (c) Monitor - Receive reports back on major implementation and evaluative milestones.
- (d) Schedule a biannual joint meeting with the Fish & Wildlife Commission and the Water Commission to discuss priorities for each Commission as well as any joint efforts.
- (e) Share all COE meeting minutes with the Fish & Wildlife Commission and the Water Commission.

Estimated Time Commitment:

Regular discussion time (15 minutes at six COE meetings)

Develop BOS advisory letters (COE approves content & designates author)

Subtotal Estimated Time Commitment:

Annual presentations- 7 @ 45 minutes each = 315 minutes

Regular Updates- 28 @ 15 minutes each = 420 minutes

Total = 735 minutes/60 = 12.25 hours (6 meetings of 2 hours each)