

# STAFF REPORT

## *City Council Presentation Item*

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**DATE:** October 7, 2024

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and Council Members

**FROM:** Shari Meads, Community Development Director

**THROUGH:** Amy Nilsen, Interim City Manager

**SUBJECT:** **Humboldt Regional Climate Action Plan, Environmental Impact Report, and Regional Implementation Status**

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the City Council receive an update and provide comments on the Humboldt Regional Climate Action Plan.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The County of Humboldt (County), in coordination with the seven incorporated cities, Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA), and Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG), is developing a Regional Climate Action Plan (RCAP) to reduce countywide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions pursuant to State-adopted targets.

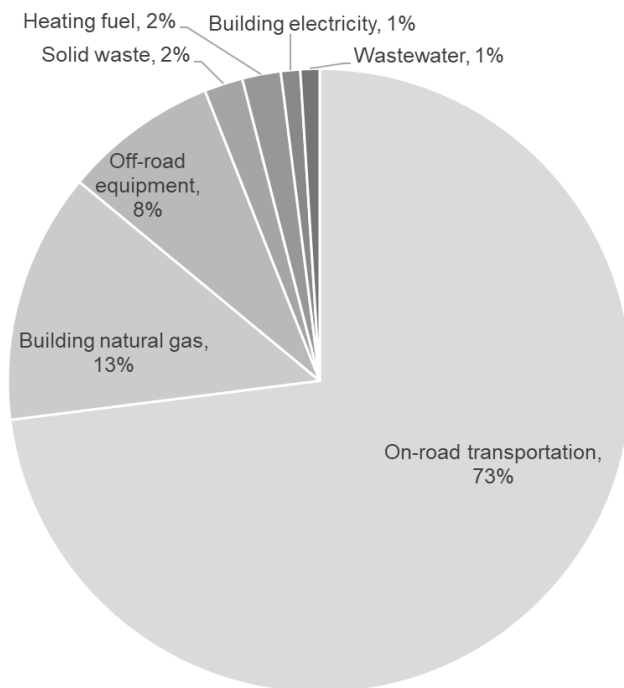
On August 14, 2024, the County released an updated RCAP public review draft (the 2024 Draft RCAP) which can be found on the County's website: <https://humboldt.gov.org/2464/Humboldt-Regional-Climate-Action-Plan>. Input on the draft RCAP can be provided to County planning staff at [planningclerk@humboldt.ca.us](mailto:planningclerk@humboldt.ca.us).

In 2019, all Humboldt jurisdictions adopted a Memorandum of Understanding committing to RCAP participation. In April 2022, the County released a first public review draft of the RCAP (the 2022 Draft RCAP). Shortly thereafter, the County secured funding from HCAOG through a sub-allocation of HCAOG's Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) grant to engage a consultant to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), a necessary step in RCAP adoption. In the summer of 2022, the County contracted with Rincon Consultants, Inc. to begin work on the EIR. Rincon identified concerns with the document and proposed revisions necessary to gain State "qualified" status (a State qualified CAP allows for CEQA streamlining of future development projects). At their October 17, 2023 meeting, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors authorized the reallocation of the REAP grant funds to pay Rincon to redraft the RCAP rather than prepare an EIR. As a result, Rincon has prepared the 2024 Draft RCAP which is now available for public review.

The 2024 Draft RCAP retains the goal to reduce countywide GHG emissions to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 (as required by Senate Bill 32); however, the GHG emissions baseline inventory and forecast have been updated. The updated countywide GHG emissions provides data representing the year 2022 whereas the previous inventory which was used for the 2022 Draft

RCAP was from 2015. The updated GHG emissions inventory excludes emissions from industrial point sources (due to a lack of local influence/control) and agriculture (due to limited local control and a lack of adopted State guidance on quantification methodology). Humboldt’s total 2022 GHG emissions are estimated to be 1,531,167 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (MT CO<sub>2</sub>e), with on-road transportation contributing 73% of these emissions. Figure 1 below shows percentage of GHG emissions by sector.

Figure 1. Humboldt County GHG Emissions 2022 Inventory



The 2022 inventory along with other data sources were used to backcast 1990 emission levels and forecast future (2030) emissions. To meet the RCAP goal (and Senate Bill 32 requirement) to reduce GHG emissions 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 will require the reduction of annual countywide emissions by approximately 218,000 MT CO<sub>2</sub>e. This level of regional reduction can only be achieved through the implementation of specific policies and programs at the local level.

An interactive community survey was released in May 2024 to gain an understanding of what strategies the community would like to see prioritized to meet emission reduction targets. 160 survey responses were received, with respondents’ top priorities including reducing organic waste sent to landfills and increasing zero-emission vehicle and public transit use.

Ultimately, eleven overarching strategies were chosen for the 2024 Draft RCAP, including a “cornerstone” strategy and strategies related to building energy, transportation, solid waste, water supply, wastewater treatment, and carbon sequestration:

**Table 1. GHG Reduction Strategies Grouped by Sector**

Sector	Strategy
Cornerstone	1. Develop a regional climate coalition
Building Energy	2. Increase carbon-free electricity 3. Decarbonize existing construction 4. Decarbonize new construction
Transportation	5. Shift driving to walking and biking 6. Shift driving to public transit or car-share 7. Shift land use to reduce vehicle miles traveled 8. Increase zero-emission vehicle adoption
Waste	9. Reduce organic waste
Water & Wastewater	10. Conserve water and reduce wastewater emissions
Carbon Sequestration	11. Increase carbon sequestration

The 2024 Draft RCAP includes 26 measures to implement the 11 strategies, 14 of which include quantified GHG emission reduction estimates, while the rest are unquantified “supportive” measures. Table 2 depicts the 14 quantified measures which relate to building energy, transportation, and solid waste:

**Table 2. Quantified GHG Reduction Measures**

<b>Building Energy</b>		
Strategy	Measure	GHG Reduction
Increase carbon-free electricity	By 2030, source 90% of grid-supplied electricity from renewable and carbon-free sources.	15,403 MT CO <sub>2</sub> e
Decarbonize existing construction	Reduce existing residential building natural gas consumption by 4% by 2030.	2,603 MT CO <sub>2</sub> e
	Reduce existing nonresidential building natural gas consumption by 5% by 2030.	3,821 MT CO <sub>2</sub> e
Decarbonize new construction	Decarbonize 95% of new residential building construction by 2027.	2,252 MT CO <sub>2</sub> e
	Decarbonize 95% of new nonresidential building construction by 2027.	1,374 MT CO <sub>2</sub> e
<b>Transportation</b>		
Strategy	Measure	GHG Reduction
Shift driving to walking and biking	Increase the mode share of active transportation in <u>urbanized</u> areas from 9% to 12% by 2030.	1,147 MT CO <sub>2</sub> e
	Increase the mode share of active transportation in rural areas from 5% to 6% by 2030.	1,080 MT CO <sub>2</sub> e
Shift driving to public transit or car-share	Increase public transit mode share from 2% to 20% in <u>urbanized</u> areas.	18,055 MT CO <sub>2</sub> e
	Increase public transit mode share from 1% to 10% in rural areas.	20,180 MT CO <sub>2</sub> e
Increase zero-emission vehicle adoption	Decarbonize 15% of passenger vehicle miles traveled by 2030 through increased adoption of low and zero-emission vehicles and development of a regional electric vehicle charging and hydrogen fueling network.	55,726 MT CO <sub>2</sub> e

	Increase commercial zero-emission vehicle use and adoption to 10% by 2030 through a regional charging network and development of hydrogen hubs.	17,441 MT CO <sub>2</sub> e
	By 2030, electrify or otherwise decarbonize 12% of applicable small off-road engines (SOREs) off-road equipment and replace fossil diesel consumption with renewable diesel in 55% of applicable large diesel in alignment with EO N-79-20.	49,143 MT CO <sub>2</sub> e
<b>Solid Waste</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>GHG Reduction</b>
Reduce organic waste	Establish a local waste separation facility and organics management to be able to reduce waste sent to landfills by 75% by 2030.	29,689 MT CO <sub>2</sub> e
	Achieve SB 1383 procurement requirements (0.08 tons recovered organic waste per person) by 2030.	1,532 MT CO <sub>2</sub> e

Of the 12 unquantified “supportive” measures, two call on municipal governments to lead by example by:

- Electrifying or otherwise decarbonizing 50% of municipal fleets by 2030 in alignment with the State’s Advanced Clean Fleet Rule; and
- Decarbonizing 30% of municipal buildings and facilities by 2030.

Appendix C of the 2024 Draft RCAP includes details on the substantial evidence (case studies, scientific articles, calculations, etc.) used to quantify the GHG emissions reductions attributable to each measure. For each of the 26 GHG emissions reduction measures, the 2024 Draft RCAP also lists a number of implementing actions and includes an Implementation Work Plan which identifies the responsible parties and timeframe for each action.

One key difference between the 2022 and 2024 Draft RCAPs’ reduction measures is that the 2024 Draft RCAP includes different transportation and building energy measures for urban and rural areas of the County, such as requiring a higher percentage of car trips to be replaced by biking/walking in urban areas. The City of Fortuna, based on population size, is classified as an urban area. Another key difference is that unlike the 2022 Draft RCAP, the 2024 Draft RCAP does not break down reduction targets by jurisdiction in recognition that the County and each of the seven Cities must work together to meet regional GHG emission targets.

The 2024 Draft RCAP calls for a Regional Climate Committee to facilitate its implementation, including representatives from municipalities across Humboldt County as well as representatives from regional agencies such as HCAOG, Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA), Humboldt Waste Management Authority (HWMA), and Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA). City staff is advocating for thoughtful consideration of how RCAP implementation can be weaved into existing regional governance, partnerships, and coordination efforts to avoid redundancy given limited resources and capacity.

For example, Councilmember Johnson is currently Chair of the HCAOG Board of Directors and the City Engineer is Chair of the HCAOG Technical Advisory Committee. Mayor Trent serves on the Humboldt Transit Authority Board, and Councilmember Mobley represents the City on the Redwood Coast Energy Authority Board. The Interim City Manager and Deputy City Engineer, in

collaboration with other Humboldt County jurisdictions and the Humboldt Waste Management Authority, are developing a regional approach to implement Senate Bill 1383 (which, in part, established requirements organics waste recycling and other waste reduction and diversion requirements).

Significant staff time will be required to carry out the RCAP's implementing actions, track progress on the reduction measures, regularly update the GHG emissions inventory, administer the Regional Climate Committee and seek grant funding to build capacity, etc. The RCAP calls for the creation of at least one dedicated staff position to lead the regional coordination efforts, referred to in the RCAP as a "Climate Program Manager." The City of Fortuna (alongside all other participating jurisdictions) will likely be asked to contribute funding to this regional staff position in addition to allocating City staff time to support RCAP implementation. Allocating City staff time may include adding an additional position for the City of Fortuna to address all of the state-mandated compliance activities that will be required through Senate Bills 32 and SB 1383.

A RCAP EIR Notice of Preparation (NOP) was filed on Friday, August 30, 2024. A subsequent public scoping meeting was held on Tuesday, September 17 at 3:30 p.m. at the Agricultural Center in Eureka. Comments on the NOP will be accepted until September 30, 2024. The Draft EIR is anticipated to be published in early February 2025, with a public comment period running through late March. The County Board of Supervisors would then potentially adopt the Final EIR and RCAP in late June 2025, with the City of Fortuna and all other participating jurisdictions to consider RCAP adoption thereafter.

#### **RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:**

Receive update and provide comments on the Humboldt Regional Climate Action Plan.

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- **2024 Draft RCAP Executive Summary**
- **2024 Draft RCAP** which is also available at [https://humboldt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/131636/Humboldt-RCAP\\_Public-Draft\\_w-Appendices?bidId=](https://humboldt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/131636/Humboldt-RCAP_Public-Draft_w-Appendices?bidId=)
- **RCAP Frequently Asked Questions**