



County of Santa Cruz

COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

701 OCEAN STREET, ROOM 330, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4073

(831) 454-2210 FAX: (831) 454-2710 TDD: (831) 454-2123

Commission on the Environment 2015 & 2016 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, adjusting the target dates as necessary:

- Advise the Board of Supervisors (BOS) in establishing specific goals and objectives and assist the Board in developing policies and programs to support these 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.
- Proactively identify environmental issues of concern that are not being addressed by other advisory bodies to the BOS.

Priority Environmental Issues, Policies and Projects for 2015-2016

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

Background: Although the COE had a presentation on these initiatives several years ago, the COE has yet to focus on recommendations to the BOS related to *climate change adaptation*. (See attachment 1 from the CAS.)

COE Actions:

- Public Forum - Receive a presentation from Planning Department Staff on the Adaptation Initiatives proposed in the Climate Action Strategy at the July 22, 2015 COE meeting.
- Advisory - Develop an advisory letter to the BOS.

- Support Staff - Request a report back from Planning Staff at the September 23, 2015 COE meeting regarding BOS actions taken. Determine if Planning needs additional support or advocacy with the BOS.
- Monitor – Receive regular updates from the Planning Department on major implementation and evaluative milestones. Provide additional public forum opportunities as well as advice to the BOS and staff support as needed.

(2) County’s Climate Action Strategy (CAS) Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) Phase 1 Technical Study Project

Background: The CCA Project is the highest priority initiative of the County’s Climate Action Strategy (CAS). Although a regional Project Development Advisory Committee is actively overseeing implementation of this project, the County of Santa Cruz is the lead partner on behalf of the 21 County and City partners. The COE is the primary advisory body to the Board regarding the County’s specific role and point of influence relative to the project.

COE Actions:

- Monitor – Receive regular updates from the Project Team Manager and the Planning Department on major implementation and evaluative milestones.
- Provide additional public forum opportunities as well as advice to the BOS and staff support as needed.

(3) Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan (SSCCP)

Background: The SSCCP is designed to integrate the County’s land use and transportation policies in ways that promote environmental protection through reduced carbon emissions, improved land management, and low impact development. The Planning Department will be proposing zoning, code and regulatory modernizations that are consistent with the goals of the SSCCP and its triple bottom line approach. These implementation recommendations will also be considered by the Planning Commission prior to going before the BOS for consideration, slated for September/October 2015.

COE Actions:

- Public Forum - Receive a presentation from the Planning Department at the December 2nd, 2015 meeting.
- Advisory - Develop an advisory letter to the BOS.
- Support Staff - Request a report back from Planning Department during the March 2016 COE meeting regarding BOS action on the Plan. Determine if the Planning Department needs additional support or advocacy with the BOS.
- Monitor – Receive an annual report from the Planning Department on major implementation and evaluative milestones. Provide additional public forum opportunities as well as advice to the BOS and staff support as needed.

(4) Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's (SCCRTC) Passenger Rail Feasibility Study

Background: Even though this issue is under the jurisdiction of the SCCRTC governing Board, all five County Supervisors serve on the SCCRTC. Transportation policy 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.

COE Actions:

- Public Forum- Receive a presentation from the SCCRTC at the July 22, 2015 COE meeting.
- Advisory - Develop an advisory letter to the BOS.
- Monitor - Request a report back from the SCCRTC at the December 2, 2015 COE meeting regarding SCCRTC actions taken. Determine the need for additional advocacy with the BOS.

(5) County Economic Vitality Strategy (EVS)

Background: The EVS aligns with the environmental goals and practices articulated in the SSCCP. As part of the 2015/16 fiscal year budget hearings, the Economic Vitality Coordinator (located within the Planning Department) will be proposing priorities to implement key initiatives identified in the EVS. The COE should understand the priorities and monitor the implementation process, especially as it relates to best practices for environmental enhancement.

COE Actions:

- Public Forum- Receive a report from the Planning Department or Economic Development Coordinator at the December 2nd COE meeting regarding the initiatives approved by the BOS in June.
- Monitor – Receive an annual report from the Planning Department on major implementation and evaluative milestones. Provide additional public forum opportunities as well as advice to the BOS and staff support as needed.

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(6) Environmental Ballot Measures - 2016 Fall Election

Background: There are at least two major environmental ballot measures that the BOS will consider during the period of this work plan. Both will be before the BOS in early 2016:

- SCCRTC – Transportation Sales Tax Measure for local projects, including passenger rail and the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (“Rail Trail”).
- Open Space District – Establishment of an OSD within Santa Cruz County and a parcel tax measure to fund the District.

COE Actions:

- Public Forum - Attend the Board of Supervisor's Special Study Session on August 18th, 2015. Possibly receive a follow-up presentation from the Parks Open Space and Cultural Services Director, Jeff Gaffney, at the September 23, 2015 COE meeting.
- Advisory - Develop advisory letters to the BOS.
- Monitor - Request a report back from County Staff at the March 2016 COE meeting regarding BOS actions taken. Determine the need for additional advocacy with the BOS.

(7) 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.

COE Actions:

- 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.
- 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.
- Monitor - Request a report back from the proposing party regarding legislative actions taken. Determine the need for additional advocacy with the BOS.

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

COE Actions:

- 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.

- Advisory - Develop advisory letters as necessary to the BOS.
- Monitor - Receive reports back on major implementation and evaluative milestones. Provide additional public forum opportunities as well as advice to the BOS and staff support as needed.
- Schedule an annual joint meeting with the Fish & Wildlife Commission and the Water Commission to discuss priorities for each Commission as well as any joint efforts.
- Share all COE meeting minutes with the Fish & Wildlife Commission and the Water Commission.

(9) Proactively identify environmental issues of concern that are not being addressed by the COE or other advisory bodies to the BOS.

Background: Each of the COE appointees has a high level of expertise and are active in the community on environment issues. It is important to provide an opportunity for Commissioners to bring forward environmental issues for the COE's consideration and action.

COE Actions:

- Public Forum- Sufficient time will be set aside 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.
- Advisory - Develop advisory letters as necessary to the BOS.
- Monitor - Receive reports back on major implementation and evaluative milestones. Provide additional public forum opportunities as well as advice to the BOS and staff support as needed.