



COUNTY OF SOLANO CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

FOCUS GROUP MEETING/ COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

County Administrative Center
1st Floor Multi Purpose Room 1610/1620
675 Texas Street, Fairfield

February 8, 2010
6 – 8 pm

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome

Matt Walsh welcomed and introduced the focus group participants and consultants. There were no members of the public.

Focus Group Members:

Moira Burke, Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) (organics)
Brian McLean, City of Vacaville City Fleet and Transit Manager
Ozzie Hilton, City of Vacaville Traffic Engineering
Robert Macauley, STA Director of Planning
Bruce Brazelton, AAC, Farm Bureau (orchards/field crops)
Steve Lessler, The Lessler Group, Professional Business Services
James Dunbar, Potrero Hills Landfill
Leslie Fay, Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce
David White, City of Fairfield (Public Works), Sustainability Initiatives
Jim Immer, Lewis Planned Communities
Ben Wallace, Solano Land Trust
Russ Lester, Dixon Ridge Farms, AAC (orchards/processing)
Mike Amman, Solano Economic Development Corp.

Focus Group Members not present:

Bonnie Hays, enXco
Mike Marcus, City of Benicia (Sustainability Planner)
Al Medvitz, Ag Advisory Committee (sheep)
Jeff Dittmer, Ag Advisory Committee (cattle)

Consultants: Jeff Goldman, Jeff Henderson, Yanna McLaughlin, and Culley Thomas (AECOM)

2. Context: Climate Action Plan

Jeff Goldman presented the context and work plan for the Climate Action Plan (CAP) and Sea Level Rise Strategic Program (SLRSP) as established within the General Plan. During the presentation, the following comments and questions were received from the audience:

- ▶ *Will this CAP only be for the unincorporated areas of Solano County?*
This CAP is addressing all uses in the unincorporated area of Solano County, with a focus on the sectors most represented in the unincorporated area and the character of Solano County. There is a statewide reduction goal; however cities and counties can set their own targets. Many cities are working on inventories and CAPs.



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- ▶ *We should share strategies and collaborate with the Cities. This would make it more relevant to all.*
- ▶ *If the cities have their own targets, how can we bring it together?*
- ▶ *A County-wide CAP would be preferable.*
- ▶ *How are Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) measured?*
GHG emissions are measured by examining the level of emissions-generating activities (e.g. vehicle trips) occurring within the community. Emission rates (e.g. tons of GHGs per mile of vehicle trip) for each activity are used to calculate the total amount of GHGs released into the atmosphere.
- ▶ *Are GHG's the same as smog?*
GHGs are different than smog. Smog consists of air pollutants such as particulate matter, ozone, sulfur dioxide, and carbon monoxide that have local or regional effects on human health, including respiratory and cardiovascular disease. While some components of smog also contribute to global warming, the primary GHGs include carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. The chief concern regarding GHG emissions is their potential to affect global climate stability.
- ▶ *Many people pass through Solano County on I-80. How are those emissions accounted for?*
Pass-through trips (trips that neither begin nor end in Solano County) will not be attributed to the unincorporated County baseline.
- ▶ *A better way to think of "climate change" or "global warming", is to describe it as "climate weirdness" – a greater variability of extreme weather events - unpredictable weather patterns that bring too much or too little precipitation, or to too high/low temperatures at the "wrong" time, especially for agricultural purposes.*
- ▶ *What does climate adaptation involve?*
The County will develop policies and implement actions that increase the community's ability to adapt to the effects of climate change (e.g. sea level rise, reduced water supply). The County will be developing a Sea Level Rise Strategic Plan as part of its adaptation efforts.

3. Overview: Existing 2005 GHG Emissions

Jeff Henderson presented a profile of existing (2005) GHG emissions in unincorporated Solano County, by sector. The following comments were received:

- ▶ *Are you incorporating Travis AFB?*
- ▶ *Need to look into both landscape GHG generation and sequestration.*
- ▶ *Nitrous oxide emissions depend on how nitrogen fertilizer was applied. UC Davis research studies on nitrous oxide emissions and carbon sequestration potentials are starting up now. We need to incorporate the results in future inventories.*



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- ▶ *What are the applied fertilizer rates and fertilizer application methods?*

4. Discussion: Your Ideas for the Climate Action Plan

Jeff Henderson summarized climate change policies and programs from the General Plan by emissions sector/action area and how these might be implemented within the CAP. During the discussion, the following comments and questions were received from the audience:

Energy

- ▶ Fuel is needed for transportation of agricultural goods and industry. We produce for a global market.
- ▶ We are trying to include more renewable energy through wind farming. Narrow-minded regulators are posing a problem in making it happen.
- ▶ What is a person's individual food carbon footprint? Will that be included too?

Agriculture, Water

- ▶ Look at the effects on the inventory from application of chemicals (pesticides and herbicides) in comparison to Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Add them to the emissions inventory.
- ▶ What is the carbon sequestration potential of pasture lands? How much of the emissions are associated with livestock vs. row crops in County? Need to capture methane emissions too. Break it down between confined versus range livestock.
- ▶ The inventory is looking at emissions from activities. Also look at emissions from the perspective of land use. Identify land uses that are contributing to the GHG reductions.
- ▶ Ultimately we need to look at agricultural business models to make sure that the business model works. Farm-generated revenues need to be an indicator.
 - o We are not looking at what kinds of crops farmers should grow. We are looking at processes to support farmers to do better business. Are revenues up or down?
 - o Processing needs to track with crop types. Look at processing within the regional transportation model.
 - o More vineyards and wineries in Suisun Valley? Wineries produce CO₂...this could be a challenge. Value-added agriculture needs to remain a valuable goal even in face of a low-carbon mandate.
 - o As you look at interim goals, we need some scenarios for alternative actions. We may also need to look at closer-in marketing/processing scenarios (market locally versus globally).



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- o Need to look at rural-urban connections (RUCs). Also: Suisun Valley Strategic Plan begins to look at connection to local markets.
- ▶ The General Plan is a 30-year plan. Need to find the balance between the vision, lowering GHG emissions, and creating profit.
- ▶ Recognize the contributions of the agricultural sector. We will need to start paying for what food actually costs. Many costs are currently externalized. Biggest bang for the buck may come in energy and water conservation.
- ▶ We are starting with the residential sectors and government facility improvements.
- ▶ Show how the agricultural sector can also provide mitigation for emissions, as opposed to just being counted as an emitter. Some agricultural activities may be net negative emitters, which may help with urban areas.
- ▶ There is a partnership to be achieved in looking at urban/rural areas together. Solano County still has a viable agricultural economy. How can we create those valuable benefits and synergies?
- ▶ Striking a balance: Technology will change too. Something that is unprofitable now may very well be profitable in the future.
- ▶ A centralized custom grape crush facility is a good idea to manage emissions.
- ▶ Regulators are too focused on the traditional criteria pollutants. They are missing the forest for the trees.

Transportation

- ▶ Calculate in the transportation and processing of agricultural goods and associated fuel costs.
- ▶ Connect rural communities with urban populations.

5. Homework: CAP Presentation and Comment Cards

Yanna McLaughlin provided the Focus Group with outreach tools (a presentation on CD, comment sheets that can be mailed and a sheet with FAQs (frequently asked questions)) about the Climate Action Plan. Focus Group participants were asked to assist in collecting community input by using the outreach tools and encouraging their families, friends and constituents to provide comments. Input will be provided at the beginning of the next Focus Group meeting.

6. Closing Remarks and Next Steps

Jeff Henderson and Matt Walsh thanked the participants, closed the meeting and reminded attendees of the next community meeting on March 8, 2010 from 6:00-8:00 PM.