



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
FY25-26 SUSTAINABILITY GUIDE

July 2025

Introduction

Sustainability is becoming a more prominent focus for the County of San Diego (County) due to increased knowledge of the importance of sustainable practices, the focus on climate change and reducing greenhouse gases, increased interest from the public and elected officials, the need for developing climate resilient infrastructure, protecting our residents and natural resources, and a desire to document key actions departments are doing to address these concerns.

The County's Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice (OSEJ) works with the four business groups (Public Safety Group, Land Use & Environment Group, Finance & General Government Group, and Health & Human Services Agency), and supports departments to develop and track progress for sustainability commitments that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). Specifically, OSEJ requires departments to develop sustainability commitments in categories such as Biodiversity, Energy, Transportation, Materials, Water, Waste, People, and Process.

Background

The County's vision for sustainability is to set the standard for evidence-based efforts for the San Diego region and beyond. Following direction from the Board of Supervisors in May 2021, each County department and office developed their own Department Sustainability Plans (DSPs), guided by the categories of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)¹, which include specific sustainability strategies.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) developed its first sustainability plan for fiscal year 2022-2023 and updated it for fiscal year 2023-2024 (Appendix A). This plan included themes for DPW, top opportunities, documented sustainable measures DPW is already performing, and brainstormed future measures for consideration, including using recycled water in landscaping and construction, using low-impact development strategies, and developing new policies.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to function as a sustainability guide to help DPW in furthering sustainability practices in fiscal year 2025-2026

Department Sustainability Commitments

OSEJ requires departments to identify and develop at least five sustainability commitments: three short-term commitments (1-year or less), one mid-term commitment (1-3 years), and one long-term commitment (over 3 years). These commitments are tracked quarterly and reported on in the Operational Plan and in a Departmental Sustainability Annual Report, which highlights department achievements for each fiscal year. Once a goal is achieved, it needs to then be replaced with a new commitment using the Strategy Library & Metrics document for guidance. Because of this, DPW needs to identify new goals at least annually as goals are met.

¹ GRI is an international independent standards organization that helps businesses, governments, and other organizations understand and communicate their impacts on issues such as climate change. The environmental categories include materials, energy, water, biodiversity, emissions, and waste. [GRI - Home \(globalreporting.org\)](https://www.globalreporting.org/)

Below are summaries of the sustainability commitments and achievements from the Operational Plan for Fiscal Years 2023-2024, 2024-2025 & 2025-2026. OSEJ occasionally requests modifications to the commitment language and the progress on the commitments is constantly changing; the most up-to-date language for each commitment and the progress can be found on SharePoint via the DPW Interim Department Sustainability Plan (DSP) Tracking Tool².

Fiscal Year 23/24 Commitments and Achievements

Short-term commitments for Fiscal Year 2023-2024:

- Investigated options and cost for installation of solar panels and/or battery back-up for outlying facilities at Road Stations and wastewater facilities. DPW and the Department of General Services (DGS) collaborated to evaluate new energy efficiency and sustainability opportunities to reduce overall energy use.
- Worked with DGS to plan the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging equipment at DPW road stations. Phase I included installation of permanent EV charging equipment at the Spring Valley Road Station by June 2024. Phase II includes installation of EV charging equipment at the San Marcos and Ramona Road Stations by December 2024. In addition, a total of 6 portable solar EV charging stations were placed at road stations in Spring Valley (2), San Marcos (1), Ramona (1), Borrego (1), and Campo (1). DPW also worked with DGS and created plans for installation of fixed EV charging stations at the McClellan-Palomar Airport.
- Converted 21 fleet vehicles due for replacement in Fiscal Year 2023–24 to electric.
- Sent all staff with purchasing responsibilities to an Environmental Preferable Purchasing (EPP) training.

Mid- and long-term commitments that can be implemented upon further investigation, cross-departmental collaboration, and identification of possible additional resources:

- Mid-term: Completed and began implementing an Airport Sustainability Management Plan for the County’s eight airports to reduce resource consumption, environmental impacts, and GHG emissions while promoting social responsibility.
- Long-term: Continued to implement a 5-year plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by increasing the department’s fleet to hybrid/electrified vehicles to 37% (148 out of 397) by Fiscal Year 2026–27. Recent Fleet conversion of 21 vehicles included mostly mid-sized Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV) and trucks and some construction equipment, such as forklifts. By the end of Fiscal Year 2023–24, 51 total fleet vehicles have been converted to electric and are in service, which is ahead of the goal to convert 48 vehicles within this time frame.

Fiscal Year 24/25 Commitments

Short-term commitments for Fiscal Year 2024-2025:

- DPW has collaborated with DGS to investigate options and cost for installation of solar panels and/or battery back-up for outlying facilities at Road Stations and wastewater facilities and identify new energy efficiency and sustainability opportunities to reduce overall energy use. The evaluation determined that options for upgrading existing facilities to be more energy efficient is a cost-effective and sustainable solution and is more beneficial long-term for DPW facilities than installing a solar panel system. DPW will work with DGS to perform energy efficiency analyses of all DPW road station facilities to provide specific

² All sustainability commitments, reporting, and related documents are located in the COSD-Sustainability SharePoint and access can be granted by reaching out to DPW’s OSEJ liaison.

recommendations for the upgrades.

- Continue to work with DGS to plan and install EV charging equipment at DPW road stations in alignment with department implementation plans. Phase I included installation of permanent EV charging equipment at the Spring Valley Road Station by June 2024. Phase II includes installation of EV charging equipment at the San Marcos and Ramona Road Stations by December 2024.

Mid- and long-term commitments that can be implemented upon further investigation, cross-departmental collaboration, and identification of possible additional resources:

- Mid-term: Continue to implement a 5-year plan to reduce GHG by increasing the department's fleet to hybrid/electrified vehicles to 37% (148 out of 397) by Fiscal Year 2026–27. Fleet conversion will include mostly mid-sized Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV) and trucks and some construction equipment, like forklifts, and is dependent on availability.
- Long-term: Develop the new North County Mitigation Site to offset wetland and habitat impacts from future DPW projects. The goal is to have all approvals in place by Fiscal Year 2027–28 to allow the project to move forward with implementation of the mitigation site the following year.

Fiscal Year 25/26 Commitments

During FY 24-25 The Department of Public Works was required to add a new commitment for FY 25-26, which is labeled "New" below.

Short-term commitments for Fiscal Year 2025-2026:

- DPW has collaborated with DGS to investigate options and cost for installation of solar panels and/or battery back-up for outlying facilities at Road Stations and wastewater facilities and identify new energy efficiency and sustainability opportunities to reduce overall energy use. The evaluation determined that options for upgrading existing facilities to be more energy efficient is a cost-effective and sustainable solution and is more beneficial long-term for DPW facilities than installing a solar panel system. DPW will work with DGS to perform energy efficiency analyses of all DPW road station facilities to provide specific
- Continue to work with DGS to plan and install electric vehicle (EV) charging equipment at DPW road stations in alignment with department implementation plans. Phase I included installation of permanent EV charging equipment at the Spring Valley Road Station by June 2024. Phase II includes installation of EV charging equipment at the San Marcos and Ramona Road Stations by December 2024.
- "New" In FY 2025-26, as lead for DPW Sustainability, DPW Environmental Services Unit staff will foster internal collaboration and enhance sustainability awareness by actively participating in relevant task forces, frameworks, and training opportunities. ESU will attend x trainings by the end of FY 25-26, with at least x team members in attendance. This will allow DPW to stay informed about the latest sustainability trends, best practices, and regulatory changes.

Mid- and long-term commitments that can be implemented upon further investigation, cross-departmental collaboration, and identification of possible additional resources:

- Mid-term: Continue to implement a 5-year plan to reduce GHG by increasing the department's fleet to hybrid/electrified vehicles to 37% (148 out of 397) by Fiscal Year 2026-27. Fleet conversion will include mostly mid-sized Sports Utility Vehicle (SUVs) and trucks and some construction equipment, like forklifts, and is dependent on availability.

- Long-term: Develop the new North County Mitigation Site to offset wetland and habitat impacts from DPW projects. The goal is to have all approvals in place by FY 27/28 to allow the project to move forward with implementation of the mitigation site the following year

Annual Additional Sustainability Commitments

- Remove 50,000 sq ft of turf per year to reduce water use and improve water quality.
- Implement storm water projects on public and private property to capture or treat stormwater runoff from an additional 250 acres annually.

DPW Sustainability Responsibilities/Tasks

The following list of tasks was compiled to document the responsibilities related to sustainability. Each identifies the approximate timing, as available, anticipated staffing needs to accomplish, and responsible party(ies).

Executive Leadership Involvement

Sustainability is a County-wide initiative being implemented at the department-level, involving investment of resources, such as staff time, and implementation of specific goals, which could include projects that need to be funded. Thus, leadership at the DPW executive level is essential throughout these processes to ensure that DPW staff and Program leads are clear on direction from DPW leadership. It may be helpful to identify an executive “champion” for ongoing, consistent leadership. It is recommended that regular briefings (i.e., **monthly or quarterly**) be scheduled with the DPW sustainability lead(s) and DPW executive lead(s). This is critical to ensuring that DPW’s commitments and expectations are thoroughly vetted including but not limited to staffing time and budgets.

Program Sustainability Leads

Each DPW Program should identify a lead on their team to participate in sustainability efforts for the department. This could include attendance at regular meetings throughout the year and tracking sustainability measures specific to their program.

Tracking of Sustainability Commitments

This is due **quarterly** to OSEJ (reach out to OSEJ liaison for specifics). The Programs are responsible for tracking any measures under their purview. The team collecting the data will then reach out to DPW Programs to request updates on their progress for each goal. Knowledge of Program functions is helpful. Reporting data is entered in SharePoint via the DPW Interim DSP Tracking Tool;* the SharePoint site also contains other resources like Strategy Library & Metrics document, Xerox Paper Use reports, and Teleworking and GHG emissions reports.

*Note that OSEJ is currently building a digital reporting tool that will replace the spreadsheet. *This could be completed by an analyst or planner in collaboration with the programs.*

Recording Upcoming Fiscal Year Commitments

This task is due to OSEJ before the end of the fiscal year, typically by the end of February. Programs are responsible for recording all new and rollover commitments for the upcoming fiscal year. The team collecting the data will go over commitments within the DPW Interim DSP Tracking Tool and see which commitments will be continued into the new fiscal year (Rollover). If the team decides on developing a new commitment, then the

below instructions on development of new sustainability commitments should be followed. Once all rollover and new commitments have been established, the data should be entered into the DPW FY Sustainability Commitments Tracking Tool. *This could be completed by an analyst or planner with manager oversight.*

Development of new Sustainability Commitments

As goals are met, they need to be replaced. Development of new goals or commitments should begin by **December** so they can be vetted and included in the Op Plan narrative (**February**), ultimately to be implemented with the new fiscal-year (**July**). This task involves coordination with DPW Program leads and DPW Executives to develop options, screen them with Programs to see if they are viable, get Executive approval, and also work with OSEJ to ensure they are SMART goals, or comparable. *This task should be led by a manager with analyst or planner support, in addition to executive participation.*

Operational Plan Reporting and Sustainability Fact Sheet

This task is completed in **February** of each year and involves writing Op Plan narrative updates for Sustainability Commitments for both the current year's Accomplishments, and the future year's Commitments. *This should likely be completed by a manager or executive; the DPW Programs could also author their own updates.*

Sustainability Budget

During Operational Plan development (**February**) and Five-Year Forecast (**July/August**), the budget for sustainability efforts needs to be gathered and be made available. This would need to be developed in close coordination with the programs that are lead on each of the sustainability objectives. *This should be led by a manager or executive in coordination with program leads and fiscal staff.*

Threading with Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice

Ongoing threading with LUEG's OSEJ's Group Program Manager (liaison to DPW) is necessary to report on, implement, and develop new goals. OSEJ is also lead in reporting for the Departmental Sustainability Annual Report and may request additional information from DPW at that time. The 2024 Department Sustainability Report was released in Fall 2024. *This task should be led by a manager with support from analyst staff.*

Lead on Sustainability Impact Statements in DPW Board Letters

This task is **ongoing** and involves reviewing each DPW Board Letter and completing or updating the Sustainability Impact Statement consistent with the Sustainability Impact Statement Guidance (ARUP, August 2022). This helps ensure consistency in these statements across all DPW Divisions and Programs. *This task could be led by an analyst or planner.*

Monthly Sustainability Task Force Meetings

These are **monthly** meetings hosted by PDS Sustainability team and includes invitees from various Departments. They meet to share upcoming events and announcements, sustainability and CAP updates/stories, grant/funding opportunities, present on key topics, and sustainability updates from the various departments. *It would be beneficial for all sustainability staff to attend when available.*

Sustainable Land Use Framework

This is an **ongoing** effort led by PDS's sustainability team. Feedback on the Goals and Objectives from the DPW Programs was gathered and provided to PDS in May 2024. A follow-up meeting was held in September 2024 where a proposed timelines was presented. The timeline includes analyzing gaps, identifying approaches, and mechanisms, and identifying preferred approaches before going to the Board of Supervisors in 2026. This item and the timeline is still evolving, and consistent coordination is essential to ensuring DPW's feedback is incorporated and any investment of DPW resources is understood. *This should likely have support at a manager level; an analyst or planner could help with outreach to DPW Programs and tracking of comments. Each DPW Program should have a designee.*

Outreach on Sustainability Accomplishments

This task is to socialize internally and to the public to share the excellent things DPW is doing for Sustainability, **frequency TBD**. An example of this is the Earth Day Fair at the COC in April. In 2025 a Sustainability Fact Sheet was developed by ESU. The fact sheet gives an overview of sustainability as it relates to DPW ([Sustainability Fact Sheet](#)). *This would be an ongoing effort and likely should be led by a manager with support from a planner and outreach specialist.*

Evolving Department Sustainability Approach

DPW may choose to prepare a formal Department Sustainability Plan to help provide direction for the Department's sustainability path, goals, implementation, and internal and external outreach, among other things. Or the Sustainability Guide could be updated annually to guide each fiscal year. Coordination with other departments at the forefront of sustainability such as General Services and Planning and Development Services may be helpful. Additionally, OSEJ would be an excellent resource as they have developed a library of sustainability goals (Strategy Library and Metrics) that departments can choose from. The approach should be vetted through the DPW Executive team to ensure leadership is on board with the approach. *Depending on the approach, this could involve coordination with a consultant or be handled internally by a manager with analyst, planner, or other applicable specialist support.*

List of Potential New DPW Sustainability Commitments

The below potential commitments have not been vetted by DPW Programs or the DPW Executive team. These would also need to be converted into SMART Commitments. These options should be considered as potential future commitments when the need arises or during development of a formal sustainability plan.

- Increase the use of recycled asphalt in paving projects.
- Reduce water use by using recycled water on DPW landscaping projects.
- Reduce synthetic fertilizer use and limit pesticide use on DPW facilities.
- Develop infrastructure asset management plans and lifecycle analysis to reduce costs/materials to maintain DPW infrastructure.
- Cool Roads (reduce ambient heat on the road and surroundings by not heating up as much and by reflecting more long wave radiation back out through the atmosphere)
- Placing bike paths strategically so that they can also be used as escape routes during catastrophic events such as fires or floods. This also allows bike path projects to qualify potentially for additional funding. Purchase an electric street sweeper (Currently in the process of purchasing)
- Reapply for RGP-53 permit in 2026. The RGP-53 permit allows DPW to maintain existing culverts to

prevent flooding in the surrounding communities.

- Apply for grants to improve or construct wildlife crossings of County maintained roads.
- Hire Native American monitors on County projects as needed.
- Conduct a cool pavement study within East County to determine its potential to reduce ambient temperatures.
- Offer incentive programs to DPW employees who use alternative ways of commuting to work. Ex: Ride train/bus/rideshare/bike to work.
- Apply for active transportation grants for bike lanes.
- Apply for grants to increase methane gas capture from closed landfills.
- Use Bioengineering techniques in lieu of hardscape riprap for scour control on County projects.
- Achieve 80% landfill diversion rate by 2030 and 90% by 2045.
- Incorporate recycled asphalt shingles (RAS) into pavement pilot projects to support material reuse and waste diversion goals
- Apply locally produced compost to one closed landfill to suppress the growth of weeds and non-native plant species, improve soil health, and support organic waste diversion efforts.
- Utilize compost socks for sediment and pollutant control on County projects.
- Organize and host three community cleanup events annually.
- Implement low waste or zero waste practices at County-hosted public events and internal functions.

- **County of San Diego Strategic Plan/Sustainability Initiatives**

This section is included to assist DPW in aligning goals with the County's Strategic Plan.

ECONOMY

- Align the County's available resources with services to maintain fiscal stability and ensure long-term solvency.
- Create policies to reduce and eliminate poverty, promoting economic sustainability for all.

CLIMATE

- Actively combat climate change through innovative or proven policies, green jobs, sustainable facility construction or maintenance and hazard mitigation.

ENVIRONMENT

- Protect and promote our natural and agricultural resources, diverse habitats, and sensitive species.
- Cultivate a natural environment for residents, visitors, and future generations to enjoy.

RESILIENCY

- Ensure the capability to respond and recover to immediate needs for individuals, families, and the region.