



Agriculture and Conservation Conceptual Measures Workshop

San Diego County Climate Action Plan Update

Introduction

As part of the public involvement process for the **Climate Action Plan Update** (CAP Update), the County of San Diego (County) is conducting intentional engagement centered on conceptual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction measures.



Tuesday July 19, 2022
6:00 p.m.
Zoom

On Tuesday, July 19, 2022, County staff held a virtual public workshop to discuss conceptual measures in the Agriculture and Conservation sector, the fourth in a series of meetings focused on each emissions reduction sector. In advance of the meeting, staff promoted the event through e-blasts, social media posts, and direct emails to relevant and interested stakeholders. During the event, 36 participants joined representing the agriculture community, unincorporated residents, and local resource conservation organizations. This summary documents meeting objectives and format, how input was solicited, and what was learned from the participants.

Objectives

The meeting was organized and conducted to accomplish the following objectives:

- Create a comfortable, engaging environment where all participants have an opportunity to provide meaningful input and share concerns.
- Obtain input to help develop the Climate Action Plan Update GHG reduction measures and the vision statement for the Agriculture and Conservation sector.
- Explore opportunities and challenges related to greenhouse gas reduction measures that may be considered for the Climate Action Plan Update.
- Provide an overview of the Climate Action Plan Update in a clear and easy to understand way, including the purpose, process, outcomes, timeline, and future opportunities to provide input.

Format

At the virtual meeting, community members participated in a staff-led presentation and polling questions. The workshop was centered around three topics: Basics of Agriculture and Conservation sector emissions; Draft equitable, net-zero vision statement for the sector; Strategies and conceptual measures to reach the draft vision. Throughout the workshop, community members were invited to share their perspectives through the chat, polls, and open discussion. The workshop and prompts were designed so that staff could learn more about community members' perspectives about climate change and potential actions to reduce greenhouse gases.

An interpreter was in attendance for community members whose primary language is Spanish. The meeting materials were also offered in Spanish.

Major Themes



Major themes common to all the input received from participants are listed below. The ordering does not reflect importance or frequency.

- Agriculture and agricultural lands have a tremendous potential to address climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Participants were particularly interested in a regional carbon farming program and how that could improve soil health among other benefits.
- Education is a key component of success in this emission sector, especially as it relates to native foods, plants, and seasonal eating.
- Wildlife habitats and open spaces also need to be considered, not just land for human access.
- It is also important to be cognizant of the nexus between agriculture and water use.

Feedback on Conceptual Measures

Nine conceptual measures were presented to participants:

1. Acquire open space conservation lands to increase carbon sequestration benefits.
2. Develop and implement a tree canopy assessment and program to plant trees within the unincorporated area, with priority for underserved communities.
3. Promote and prioritize tree preservation and green infrastructure in residential and non-residential development, and in County projects.
4. Avoid conversion of agricultural lands to developed uses through the placement of easements.
5. Create a food sourcing strategy for County operations that prioritizes local, equitable, and sustainable food suppliers.
6. Incentivize the use of feed additives and/or improve forage quality to reduce emissions from enteric fermentation.
7. Increase energy efficiency of agricultural operations through retrofits and equipment conversion.
8. Work with regional partners to develop a Carbon Farming Program to incentivize the use of climate friendly practices in local agriculture.
9. Work with regional partners to incentivize nutrient management techniques to reduce synthetic fertilizer use.

Stakeholders expressed interest in all conceptual measures, however carbon farming arose as a top interest. Also, participants suggested revisiting conceptual measure number six to ensure its relevancy to the local region. Other topics that came up when asked if there were any other strategies, measures, or actions the County should consider included

- More promotion of the PACE program,
- Support replacement of water needy crops with more drought tolerant varieties.
- Open County-owned land up to prescribed grazing and burns.
- Work on riparian restoration.
- Increase private development tree planting requirements and increase the number of trees in parking lots.
- Strategically place carbon sinks throughout the county.



Poll Everywhere Responses

Staff asked 11 questions throughout the workshop, and a total of 27 workshop participants responded.

Welcome! What brought you here today?

Total responses 19
Unique participants 17

General Interest or Curiosity:

Climate and natural resources enthusiast and finding solutions for everyone

Nature enthusiast

Belong to Fallbrook Climate Action Team and I want to stay up to date on CAP and also as an Avocado Producer want to know what we can do.

Concern over the future

work in enviro policy

Staying up to date on the decarb plan

Here for information due to my work and role.

Climate-Friendly Agriculture:

Concern about agriculturally zoned areas accommodating industrial ag and converting the areas to unsuitable quality of life.

Interested in carbon farming and land conservation for carbon sequestration

Agricultural interest as a resident

work in ag sector

Agricultural interest

I am interested in environmental issues and preserving agricultural land and other open space. I am very concerned about the climate crisis.

I am a rancher and interested in what the plans are in the county as it relates to ranchers.

interested in revitalizing soil and learning more about the agriculture in San Diego

As a farm advisor, I am excited to share how agricultural lands can be a huge asset for carbon sequestration.

interested in preserving ag lands

Habitat & Conservation:

Habitat conservation

I'm a resident and I'm interested in conservation.

I am a...

Total responses 29
Unique participants 21

Responses:

	Count	Percent
resident of the unincorporated county	10	34.48
resident of an incorporated city (e.g., City of San Diego, Poway, Encinitas...)	7	24.14
resident of a Native American reservation	0	0



resident of another area (outside of SD County, on a military base, etc.)	1	3.45
agricultural professional	4	13.79
community-based organization representative	3	10.34
County employee	2	6.9
other	2	6.9

Did we get it right? Does the vision statement, "Natural and agricultural lands are preserved to capture carbon, support the local food and farming community, and provide access to healthy outdoor spaces" reflect your prior comments?

Total responses 17
Unique participants 17

Responses:	Count	Percent
Yes, the vision statement reflects my prior comments	6	35.29
Almost There	9	52.94
Not Quite	1	5.88
No, the vision statement does not reflect my prior comments	1	5.88

For those of you who think we're almost or not quite there, what else do you think should be included?

Total responses 14
Unique participants 8

Education:

Education about native foods and plants
Should include language around educating and promoting seasonal eating and the consumption of less carbon-intensive foods

Agriculture and Climate Impacts:

We need to adapt our landscape management to new climatic conditions with more fire and less water – this transition will require investment
Opportunities to innovate for more effectively addressing climate change

Promoting Working Lands:

Plants that are considered “carbon sinks” should also be encouraged for cultivation
Agricultural lands should not just be preserved but actively promoted and directly supported
Healthy working lands optimize both biodiversity and food production – prescribed grazing is an ideal example
Water and crop waste should be used to the fullest potential
Is “preserved” the most appropriate word to use? We need to invest in and cultivate these landscapes to make sure they are thriving to their fullest potential

Land and Habitat Conservation:

There needs to be specifics around that conserving and restoring natural lands, such as canyons, open spaces, and wetlands/marshlands to sequester carbon, support biodiversity, and promote clean water
Open space and wildlife land purchases. Toughen up the hurdles for development on unincorporated lands
Protection of habitat lands and open space for habitat and biological diversity. Not only human access
Must include restoration of previously degraded habitat areas
Wildlife and habitat connectivity needs to be included



Why is reducing emissions in the Agriculture and Conservation sector important to you?

Total responses 17
Unique participants 14

Carbon Sequestration:

Soil needs to be revitalized and the UN has made a lot of scary predictions that soil degradation can lead to climate change. Therefore, reducing emissions through carbon sequestration is important!

Because they provide some of the most direct and least costs to bury carbon in the ground. Exhaust from diesel equipment is a large emitter.

Because habitats help regulate carbon in the atmosphere and sequestration and it is important to conserve it and biodiversity is so present in our county.

Conservation can help sequester carbon while also providing food & habitat for our native wildlife.

We need to address GHG sequestration through natural solutions because land conservation and biodiversity is really important.

Preservation of natural habitat can help stabilize the climate

Agricultural Industry Considerations:

Ag is a key part of broader conservation efforts and there are various regional and sub-regional opportunities.

Ag is important for so many reasons, as shown in the vision

Sustainable use of land that Preserves Species and biodiversity and is thoughtfully managed for food production to support food security.

Environmental concerns and the fear of agriculture dying as an industry in San Diego

I love our County! Agriculture and Conservation represent the best we have to offer and are a pathway to keeping our County strong through a changing climate.

An example in how to turn ag into resource- cow bedding straw has up to 10 times more energy than cow manure.

I believe the biggest emitters from the agricultural community could be turned into a big resource in cleaning the environment- ag waste to renewable fuels and diesel generators can be fueled by renewable diesel

General Comments:

Every sector of society must reduce GHG to reduce impacts of climate change.

To slow and/or reverse the impacts of climate change.

Improve quality of life

"Passive" measures + active measures for addressing climate change.

What are other actions the County could take to sequester carbon?

Total responses 20
Unique participants 14

Responses:

	Upvotes	Downvotes
Include a strong native plant ordinance and preserving habitat outside of the MSCP given the only one has been adopted so far	4	0
Prioritizing habitat health by keeping connectivity	3	0
Include restoration of natural lands in addition to acquisition	3	0
Require developers to plant trees and increase the number of trees in parking lots	3	0
Restore degraded sites with native landscaping	2	0
Riparian restoration	2	0
Having "carbon sinks" planted strategically throughout the county	2	0



Investigate air carbon capture and sequester technologies and if they work, adopt them. Use fallowed ag land for new solar and wind farms.	1	0
On-site water reuse where possible. Maybe community water reuse to restore nitrogen in soil	1	0
Prescribed burns to restore native oak woodland	1	0
Promoting and adding to the urban forests. Involving homeowners and apartments to create carbon sinks	1	0
Open up more county owned land to prescribed grazing to increase carbon sequestration. This is required in brittle/semi-brittle environments	1	0
Much like the State Agricultural Healthy Soils Program: Compost application on crop land, Mulch application on orchards, Rotational grazing on rangelands	1	0
Do a much better job of promoting the PACE program. Come up with more concrete actions the county can take to get more farmers to sign up for it.	0	0
Replace older water needy crops on farms with newer more drought tolerant varieties, a la Crop Swap	0	0
Provide financial incentives to implement GHG activities to Ag producers and growers	0	0
Shrubs and other plants can also sequester carbon, not everyone has space for a tree	0	0
Whatever you do must be coordinated with the water conservation and supply section of the CAP update	0	0
Plant fallow crops and incorporate into soil	0	0
Build soil health- give incentives to landowners and farmers	0	0

How interested are you in these actions (easements, food sourcing strategy) for the County to preserve agricultural lands?

Total responses 16
Unique participants 16

Responses:	Count	Percent
Very interested	13	81.25
Somewhat interested	2	12.50
Neutral	0	0
Not really interested	0	0
Not interested at all	1	6.25

Of the measures relating to climate farming practices, which one is most exciting to you?

Total responses 16
Unique participants 16

Responses:	Count	Percent
Regional carbon farming program	13	81.25
Increase energy efficiency	2	12.50
Reduce synthetic fertilizer	1	6.25
Incentivize feed additives	0	0
Other	0	0

Total responses 1



Are there any other Agriculture and Conservation strategies, measures, or actions the County should consider? Unique participants 1

Prescribed grazing:

The county needs to open up more land to grazing. We are swimming in dead plants that are ready to burn. The land must be grazed to prevent a massive release of carbon.

Given what we just discussed, which co-benefits are important to you? Select all that apply Total responses 108
Unique participants 16

Responses:	Count	Percent
Improve community health	11	10.19
Conserve farmland	11	10.19
Save money on utility bills	3	2.78
Save public tax dollars	5	4.63
Improve air quality	12	11.11
Increase energy security/resilience	6	5.56
Conserve water	15	13.89
Conserve habitat	12	11.11
Create green jobs	11	10.19
Reduce noise	1	0.93
Promote environmental and social justice	11	10.19
Improve access to electric vehicles	4	3.7
Improve walking, biking, rolling, and transit options	6	5.56

Given the following list, what other criteria are important to you when evaluating measures? Rank the following: support co-benefits; support equity and environmental justice; reduce GHG emissions quickly; reduce costs to residents and businesses; save taxpayer money Total responses 13
Unique participants 13

Responses:	Rank
Support co-benefits	1
Support equity and environmental justice	3
Reduce GHG emissions quickly	2
Reduce costs to residents and businesses	4
Save taxpayer money	5