

COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

ENERGYWISE PLAN

Designing Energy and Climate Solutions for the Future

November 2011

Adopted by the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors

November 22, 2011 - Resolution 2011- 381

County of San Luis Obispo

Department of Planning and Building

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Climate Change in San Luis Obispo County

When people talk about what can be done about reducing the effects of climate change, many wonder how anything meaningful can be done about something that is global in scope. While it will take worldwide efforts to solve issues relating to climate change, incremental steps to improve the situation must still be taken here at home. For example, if most of us take individual actions to reduce energy use in our homes and the number of car trips we take to get around, we can make significant reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions while saving money at the same time.

Granted, problems that involve the entire planet may be formidable; however, such challenges have been met before with success. An example is the successful international effort to phase-out use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in aerosol sprays and refrigerants, which were destroying the Earth's protective ozone layer. This and other success stories give reason to believe that climate change can also be dealt with effectively if meaningful action is taken soon.

The County of San Luis Obispo acknowledges that climate change could result in significant effects on the Central Coast if significant steps are not taken to reduce GHG emissions. These effects were described in a report prepared by the GEOS Institute and the Local Government Commission (LGC) in November 2010. Based on climate change model projections from three global climate models, as well as peer-reviewed scientific publications, local experts and leaders identified many changes that could occur in San Luis Obispo County by the end of this century. Following are some examples of those changes:

- Hotter, drier, and longer summers
- More severe storms
- Accelerated sea level rise
- Increase in wildfire
- Loss of many oak and pine forests
- Accelerated erosion of coastal bluffs
- Declining wetlands, marshes, and estuaries
- Declines in water quality and flow in streams and rivers
- Increase in erosion and sediment
- Lower groundwater recharge rates
- Less productive range for cattle
- Increase in natural disasters (floods, droughts, fires)

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These consequences not only would affect our region's natural environment, but also would have a significant impact on private properties, public infrastructure, and our local economy, including the tourism industry.

The central premise of this plan is to identify ways to achieve a GHG emissions reduction target of 15% below baseline levels by the year 2020. In so doing, we will realize many other benefits, such as lower utility bills, reduced fuel costs from driving less, and reduced costs of maintaining municipal facilities, to name a few.

Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant

This material is based upon work supported by the Department of Energy under Award Number **DE-EE0000903**.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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