

ALERT: San Diego Becomes Largest County in U.S. to Commit to Zero Carbon Emissions by 2035

Vote Led by Supervisors Lawson-Remer, Vargas Supports Movement to Create Green Jobs, Advance Social Justice and Environmental Equity

The vote comes after nearly 1,500 San Diego County residents signed a petition urging the County to take this action. “The fact is, climate crisis is an existential threat to our way of life in San Diego and around the globe,” the petition read. “We must face this historic challenge with historic ambitions to match. We must decarbonize San Diego County as quickly as possible.”

Introduced by Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer and Vice Chair Nora Vargas, two of the newest members of the Board, the vote directed staff to start creating a Regional Sustainability Plan that will guide the County toward the “zero carbon” goal.

“Residents are demanding action to fight the climate crisis and decarbonize our region, and this is a new Board that is committed to listening to the public, and putting our children and planet first,” said Supervisor Lawson-Remer. “This is a collective endeavor, and I am proud to work with the community to build on the efforts of grassroots leaders. I thank the thousands across San Diego who have led the way, and this vote is proof that climate action, green jobs and social equity are now a priority for San Diego County.”

A regional approach to climate action will establish a framework to reach the goal of zero carbon focus across the county as quickly as possible, achieving greater greenhouse gas reductions than the County could achieve on its own. The plan will incorporate strategies tailored to the region to achieve zero carbon in key sectors including energy, transportation, and land use.

“Prioritizing a zero-carbon future for San Diego County is a commitment to invest in building healthier and stronger communities,” said Vice Chair Nora Vargas. “For decades, communities of concern have faced the largest consequences due to climate change. While progress has been made through the implementation of various cities’ Climate Action Plans, our region must do more through collaborative action, to make meaningful reductions in GHG emissions. I look forward to working together in a regional collaboration to tackle the climate crisis. Our vote today is a commitment that environmental justice and climate justice is a priority in our county.”

County staff will work in partnership with the University of California San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy. The County is partnering with UCSD to harness its global expertise in decarbonization strategies to develop this framework for the San Diego region.

Adopting a zero-carbon target is expected to bring shared prosperity and new economic vitality to the region. In addition to rapidly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, climate mitigation measures and investments will bring other substantial benefits such as improving public health and quality of life, reducing the burden of transportation costs on working families, addressing the region’s affordable

housing crisis, and providing San Diegans with thousands of well-paying jobs building the infrastructure that will propel the region into the future.

The vote comes two weeks after Supervisor Lawson-Remer and Chair Nathan Fletcher secured support for a plan to begin the development, adoption, and implementation of a new and ambitious Climate Action Plan to dramatically reduce the county's greenhouse gas emissions.

The Regional Sustainability Plan will be integrated with the Climate Action Plan to help align the County's climate efforts with those of jurisdictions throughout the region.

Carbon dioxide, which is increased in the atmosphere by human activity like burning fossil fuels, makes up the majority of greenhouse gas emissions and is a major contributor to climate change and its dangerous effects. San Diego County is uniquely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as sea level rise, coastal erosion, heat, drought, flash flooding, and wildfire.