

Mendocino County Climate Action Advisory Committee (CAAC)
Coastal Ad Hoc Committee Presentation

March 16, 2020

What has the Coastal Ad Hoc Committee been up to?

- We have conducted three **workgroup meetings**, all with in person and remote participation.
- We have organized a coastal, invitation only “**Think Tank**” on Thursday, March 19, 5:30pm @ Jughandle Farm – *postponed*
- We have created the following **Low Hanging Fruit Document**, with the purpose of providing the County Board of Supervisors (BoS) with a few easily achieved yet meaningful policy actions that help establish the Climate Action Advisory Committee (CAAC) as an effective entity.

Summary of the Low Hanging Fruit Document

1. **Recognize Global Climate Change** (all)
2. **Wildfire Safety through Prescribed Fire** (Tess Albin-Smith)
3. **Wildland Safety Egress** (Tess Albin-Smith, Shai Larsen)
4. **Encourage Renewable Energy by Permit Streamlining** (Marie Jones)
5. **Efficient Energy Use & Accessibility** (Marie Jones, Michael Potts)
6. **Build and Buy for Energy Efficiency** (Marie Jones)
7. **Eliminate Wasteful Paper and Travel** (Jen Mayne)
8. **Create & Maintain a Resiliency Information Portal** (Shai Larsen)
9. **Habitat Protection** (Tess Albin-Smith)
10. **Oak Woodland and Carbon Sequestration** (Tess Albin-Smith)
11. **Energy Security** (Michael Potts)

NOTE: An **online version** of the Low Hanging Fruit document can be found here: <https://headlandsu.org/CAAC/LHF>

Next Steps

- Please review the document and let us know if you have additional ideas. Please send your items to Michael Potts, mpotts@mcn.org.
- With your help, we will try to identify elements, and parts of elements, that can be speedily implemented by the Board of Supervisors.
- Think Tank to be rescheduled.

Appendix

Low Hanging Fruit Items Expanded

1. Recognize Global Climate Change

Resolve that global climate change is a local (county) challenge, and that all measures to reduce the Mendocino County Greenhouse Gas emissions will be a small but worthwhile contribution to mitigating the Climate Crisis.

2. Wildfire Safety through Prescribed Fire (Tess Albin-Smith)

The California Dept of Forestry (CDF) has a Vegetation Management Program (VMP) with highly trained professionals using best management practices (BMPs) to conduct prescribed burns. Yet there are many institutional and social barriers to overcome before such burns can be implemented, and these barriers have in some cases halted burning in some areas of California altogether. Barriers include landowner fears, multi-agency jurisdictional hurdles, insurance hurdles, and even internal resistance due to possible unexpected outcomes and costs associated.

- Mendocino County, should be working with CDF and stakeholders to help identify and schedule burns in the highly flammable dense vegetation types, including the coast Pygmy vegetation on the Mendocino Coast and Inland, where there has never been any prescribed burning and where alternative egress is mostly nonexistent.
- The County should be working with insurance companies to develop a financial carrot for stakeholders to encourage removal of fuels through prescribed burning and other methods.

Low Hanging Fruit Items Expanded

3. Wildland Safety Egress (Tess Albin-Smith, Shai Larsen)

Recent fires, unprecedented in size and impact, resulted in many human deaths due to a lack of warning communication methods, homes built with no thought to fire escape routes, lack of water sources to wet down the areas, and fuel buildup in rural neighborhoods.

At the very least, the County of Mendocino must work with CDF and local fire agencies to provide early warning systems, support firesafe councils for neighborhood safety contacts, and identify or construct multiple evacuation routes in rural neighborhoods. This is especially important in areas with constricted access and high wildfire isolation risk, such as in the highly flammable dense Pygmy vegetation (e.g., Simpson Lane, Roads 408 and 409, Fern Creek Drive (Caspar), Little Valley Road (Inglenook), Comptche-Ukiah Road, Gibney Lane East to Mitchell Ck, and Little River-Airport Road, Albion Ridge and Middle Ridge).

Low Hanging Fruit Items Expanded

4. Encourage Renewable Energy by Permit Streamlining (Marie Jones)

Recognizing that the County currently has regulatory barriers that limit the ability of businesses and residents to implement 21st century energy efficiency technology such as photovoltaic systems, electric vehicle charging stations, and water storage systems, the County shall implement a forward-thinking regulatory framework to address Climate Change at the local level, to include:

- Develop a Programmatic Coastal Development Permit and a programmatic CEQA document to enable more cost and time efficient permitting for roof top and ground mounted solar panels, EV Charging Stations, and water storage tanks. The Programmatic CDP will set forth standard environmental mitigations for the installation of these climate positive technologies in order to enable cost effective installation. Currently, businesses and residences in the Coastal Zone must pay for individual Coastal Development Permits which can cost more than \$8,000 and they must wait for 8 to 12 months to receive approval for these permits.
- Identify and resolve other regulatory barriers to local climate-positive action, for example, the County could allow two parking spaces to be turned into one EV charging station even if it results in the loss of one code required parking space. Explore the zoning code for other similar limitations.
- Seek funding to install one or more EV charging stations in all existing County facilities with parking lots of more than ten spaces, to bring these facilities up to current building standards.

Low Hanging Fruit Items Expanded

5. Efficient Energy Use & Accessibility (Marie Jones, Michael Potts)

Sonoma Clean Power offers “EverGreen service” that is 100% local AND renewable and costs a small amount (2.5¢/kWh) more. Mendocino County should immediately convert ALL County electrical service to SCP’s 100% local/renewable service, and institute measures to reduce electrical usage in all departments sufficiently to keep the total electricity cost revenue neutral.

Encourage Energy Accessibility:

- Facilitate permitting for EV Charging Stations County-wide
- EV charging stations at all County Points of Presence
- Phone and device charging stations at public locations during PSPS and outages

Low Hanging Fruit Items Expanded

6. Build and Buy for Energy Efficiency (Marie Jones)

The County should maximize opportunities for energy efficiency in all county projects and purchases including:

1. all proposed County remodels and new construction projects; and
2. all major equipment of more than \$2,000.

County Staff should include an energy analysis for all construction projects and equipment purchases of more than \$2,000 in all staff reports that are brought forward to the Board of Supervisors (BoS) for their consideration. The staff report should include both an analysis of the purchase costs and the operating costs related to energy use (taking into account likely rising energy costs) over the life of the construction project and/or equipment. Staff and Department Heads shall also consider energy costs when making purchases or investments which are not referred to the BoS for direction or decision.

Low Hanging Fruit Items Expanded

7. Eliminate Wasteful Paper and Travel (Jen Mayne)

Reduce paper use by posting meeting packets online and eliminating duplicative printing of documents already in circulation. Encourage and enable virtual public meetings by developing a network of internet-ready Brown-act eligible public meeting spaces, and eliminating meetings in venues without internet access.

8. Create & Maintain a Resiliency Information Portal (Shai Larsen)

Develop an information portal for relevant references, resources, and initiatives relating to climate change in and around Mendocino County. The portal will include, among other items, a county-wide clearinghouse of Mendocino County community preparedness best practices, local successes and resources from local fire departments and neighborhoods. (Can this be a part of the County official website? Can CAAC members work with the County to publish and maintain this resource on the County's website? For CAAC discussion: should this portal include a comment / feedback mechanism?)

9. Habitat Protection (Tess Albin-Smith)

Several Mendocino wildlife habitats are imperfectly identified and protected. Oak Woodlands are important for wildlife habitat, watershed stability, and environmental health. Hillslope protection is urgently needed in Mendocino County to protect water quality and downhill property. Good Oak Woodland management offers important opportunities for carbon sequestration.

Low Hanging Fruit Items Expanded

10. Energy Security (Michael Potts)

Distributed electricity is uncertain. This is especially important to County residents when so-called “Public Safety Power Shut-Offs” and seasonal outages make a minimal level of electrical autonomy desirable, if not critical, at County installations as well as businesses and private residences. County policy should be:

- Electrical storage, in support of basic operations at every County facility
- Facilitate acquisition and maintenance of electrical storage capacity for rural homes and businesses
- Proscribe night-time generator use during “PSPSes”
- Require generator permits, fuel storage protections, and noise abatement mitigations for all generator installations
- Work with Sonoma Clean Power and PG&E to eliminate “PSPS” incidents

11. Oak Woodland and Carbon Sequestration (Tess Albin-Smith)

Mendocino County has approximately 374,000 acres of oak woodlands according to the Ca. Dept. of Forestry. This ecotype is home to more than 50% of all vertebrate species, but sadly Oak species have no legal protections in California except in a few cities and counties that chose to protect them. Mendocino County does not have any restrictions to cutting and converting the land to other uses, nor does the county require an erosion control plan for any type of developments. Oak Woodlands are among the most fragile soil types in terms of watershed stability—it is generally highly erodible shallow soils perched on top of bedrock.

The county must protect oak woodlands by restricting cutting of oaks, encouraging planting and regeneration, discouraging conversion of oak woodlands to land uses involving removal of oaks, and requiring erosion control plans for any new land uses permitted on Oak Woodlands.