

1.1 Project Overview and Background

In 2009, the Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA) was formed to coordinate countywide climate change protection efforts among Sonoma County's (County's) multiple agencies and nine incorporated jurisdictions to establish a clearinghouse for greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction efforts throughout the County. The RCPA is composed of 10 jurisdictions, including Sonoma County, the Town of Windsor, and the following incorporated cities: Cloverdale, Cotati, Healdsburg, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, and the City of Sonoma.

The RCPA and participating jurisdictions are proposing to adopt the *Climate Action 2020: Community Climate Action Plan (CAP)* in order to implement measures to reduce GHG and adapt to climate change within the eight incorporated jurisdictions¹ and the unincorporated areas within Sonoma County. The proposed CAP would include both regional measures (to be implemented by the RCPA and other regional agencies with local government support) and local measures (to be implemented by local governments with RCPA and regional agency support and on their own) to reduce GHG emissions. The proposed objectives of the CAP are to:

- Identify specific actions that the RCPA, other regional agencies, each participating jurisdiction, and individual residents and businesses can implement to reduce GHG emissions consistent with and even exceeding the goals established in Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32); **specifically, the CAP target is to reduce countywide GHG emissions by 25% below 1990 levels by 2020.**
- Promote consistency with the land use policy direction and growth anticipated in local general plans.
- Allow for continued economic growth to provide opportunities for businesses and residents.

The draft CAP is being prepared by the RCPA, in consultation with each of the participating jurisdictions and other regional agencies and programs. The other regional agencies and programs, which are currently implementing and will have a role in future implementation of certain regional measures, include: Sonoma Clean Power, Sonoma County Water Agency, Sonoma County Transportation Authority, the Sonoma County Energy Independence Program, and the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency.

The draft CAP will be released before or during the public review period for this draft environmental impact report (draft EIR). The draft CAP may be revised in response to public input throughout the public review process prior to consideration for adoption by the RCPA and by the participating jurisdictions.

¹ The City of Santa Rosa (Santa Rosa) has completed a separate CAP (*Santa Rosa Climate Action Plan*, adopted June 5, 2012). This draft EIR will not analyze the impacts of the GHG-reduction measures developed by Santa Rosa under the *Santa Rosa Climate Action Plan*. Santa Rosa is currently developing a supplemental EIR for their 2012 CAP, to be integrated in their General Plan Update.

1.2 Environmental Review Process

1.2.1 California Environmental Quality Act Requirements

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) applies to all discretionary activities proposed to be implemented by California public agencies, including state, regional, county, and local agencies (California Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.). CEQA requires lead agencies to quantify and evaluate the environmental impacts of their proposed project actions, avoid or reduce significant environmental impacts when feasible, and to consider the environmental implications of their actions prior to making a decision. CEQA also requires lead agencies to inform the public and other relevant agencies of proposed actions and consider public comments in the evaluation and decision-making process. The State CEQA Guidelines are the primary source of rules and interpretation of CEQA (PRC Sections 21000 et seq.; 14 CCR 15000 et seq.).

1.2.2 Purpose of the EIR

The purpose of this draft EIR is to provide the information necessary for the RCPA Board, other regional agencies, and the city councils of each participating jurisdiction to consider the potential approval and implementation of the CAP. The RCPA is acting as the CEQA lead agency, given its role to support climate action planning in the County. The participating jurisdictions are responsible agencies who will be considering whether to adopt specific GHG-reduction measures for their individual jurisdictions. Other regional agencies play a role in implementing certain GHG reduction measures.

This draft EIR has been prepared in compliance with CEQA to achieve the following goals:

- Identify potential direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts associated with the implementation of the CAP.
- Describe feasible mitigation measures intended to avoid or reduce potentially significant impacts to a less-than-significant level.
- Disclose the environmental analysis, including the potential impacts of the implementation of the CAP and proposed mitigation measures, for public and agency review and comment.
- Discuss potential alternatives to the CAP that avoid or reduce identified significant impacts of implementation of the CAP.

Once the public review period for this draft EIR is complete, the RCPA will prepare a final EIR to include all the comments received on the draft EIR pertaining to environmental issues, responses to those comments, and any necessary revisions to the draft EIR. CEQA requires the RCPA's decision-making body to review and consider the information in the EIR before making a decision on the CAP. Participating jurisdictions will also need to consider the information in the EIR before making decisions whether or not to approve specific GHG-reduction measures for their jurisdictions.

1.2.3 Program-Level Analysis and Tiering

The State CEQA Guidelines encourage lead agencies to prepare a programmatic—or program-level—EIR in circumstances that involve a series of projects that are related and can therefore be grouped under one “program.” A program-level EIR provides the framework for “tiering,” which

allows for the streamlining of future environmental analyses; more specific analysis for the individual projects would be tiered off the more general analysis in the program-level EIR. The concept of tiering is described in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15152:

- a) “Tiering” refers to using the analysis of general matters contained in a broader EIR (such as one prepared for a general plan or policy statement) with later EIRs and negative declarations on narrower projects; incorporating by reference the general discussions from the broader EIR; and concentrating the later EIR or negative declaration solely on the issues specific to the later project.
- b) Agencies are encouraged to tier the environmental analyses which they prepare for separate but related projects... This approach can eliminate repetitive discussions of the same issues and focus the later EIR or negative declaration on the actual issues ripe for decision at each level of environmental review.

Tiering reduces repetitive analysis of issues that may be common to multiple projects. In this case, use of a program-level EIR allows the lead and responsible agencies to characterize the proposed program as the “project” being analyzed and approved and to consider broad policy alternatives and program-wide mitigation measures early in the planning effort for the program.

This is a program-level EIR that analyzes a series of actions that are related geographically and that are likely to have similar environmental effects that can be mitigated in similar ways (CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(a)). The program-level analysis focuses on the environmental impacts of implementing GHG-reduction measures in the sectors of building energy, on-road transportation, off-road transportation and equipment, solid waste management, wastewater treatment, water conveyance, livestock and fertilizer, and agriculture.

This EIR is the first tier of environmental documentation. It would be augmented by second-tier environmental documents as appropriate when additional details for specific public or private projects necessary for CAP implementation are developed. Any required project-level environmental documents would incorporate by reference appropriate information from this EIR regarding secondary effects, cumulative impacts, broad alternatives, and other relevant factors. These environmental documents would focus solely on site-specific issues that have not been considered in this EIR. If activities were later found to have effects that were not examined in this EIR, additional CEQA review would be required. If the lead and responsible agencies finds that implementation of a later activity would have no new effects and that no new mitigation measures would be required, that activity would require no additional CEQA review.

This EIR also provides a second form of tiering for GHG analysis for discretionary development projects. As discussed in Chapter 1 of the CAP, the cities of Cloverdale, Cotati, Healdsburg, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Sebastopol, Sonoma, the Town of Windsor, and Sonoma County intend to use the CAP to comply with project-level GHG impact analysis requirements under CEQA. Santa Rosa will continue to use its adopted CAP for this purpose. The State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15183.5) allow the GHG impacts of future projects to be evaluated using an adopted emissions reduction plan, like the CAP, provided that the plan meets specific requirements. The six requirements specified in the State CEQA Guidelines are listed below, with the CAP’s compliance described in *italics*.

1. Quantify GHG emissions, both existing and projected over a specified time period, resulting from activities within a defined geographic area. *The CAP quantifies GHG emissions from all primary sectors within County jurisdictions for 1990, 2010, 2015, 2020, 2040, 2030, and 2050.*
2. Establish a level, based on substantial evidence, below which the contribution to GHG emissions from activities covered by the CAP would not be cumulatively considerable. *The CAP establishes*

a countywide GHG emissions target of 25% below 1990 levels by 2020, a target that goes well beyond the requirements of AB 32 and puts Sonoma County on a trajectory to achieve the even greater GHG reductions needed in the future. The CAP includes a GHG emissions budget for new development that will ensure that the countywide reduction target is met, even with projected population and economic growth. The GHG reduction measures in the CAP will reduce project-specific emissions and thereby ensure that the new-development share of total future emissions is not exceeded. Reducing and limiting emissions from new development is part of an overall strategy that substantially reduces emissions countywide and, therefore, contributions from new development that is consistent with the CAP would not be cumulatively considerable.

3. Identify and analyze the GHG emissions resulting from specific actions or categories of actions anticipated within the geographic area. *The CAP analyzes community emissions, by sector, for the partner communities, including emissions from projected growth and development expected by 2020 and beyond.*
4. Specify measures or a group of measures, including performance standards that substantial evidence demonstrates, if implemented on a project-by-project basis, would collectively achieve the specified emissions level. *The CAP includes specific measures to achieve the overall reduction target.*
5. Establish a mechanism to monitor the CAP's progress toward achieving the GHG emissions level and to require amendment if the CAP is not achieving the specified level. *The CAP includes periodic monitoring of plan progress.*
6. Adopt the GHG emissions reduction plan in a public process following environmental review. *This draft EIR has been prepared for the CAP, and the CAP itself will be adopted first by the RCPA, followed by adoption of community-specific portions by each local participating jurisdiction. The adoption process will include public outreach and public hearings.*

Once the CAP is adopted, it may be used in the cumulative impacts analysis of later projects. Tiering the GHG analysis from the CAP potentially eliminates the need to prepare a quantitative assessment of GHG emissions on a project-by-project basis, which can help streamline the environmental review and permitting process for these projects. To accomplish this, future project-specific environmental documents must identify all applicable CAP measures and ensure they are binding and enforceable by incorporating measures into the project design and/or identifying CAP measures as project mitigation measures. Future projects that comply with the CAP will have a less-than-significant cumulative impact on GHG emissions and climate change (unless substantial evidence warrants a more detailed review of project-level GHG emissions).

1.3 Public Participation

Public participation is an important component of the environmental review process. CEQA encourages “wide public involvement, formal and informal... in order to receive and evaluate public reactions to environmental issues” (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15201).

The RCPA has provided, and will continue to provide, opportunities for the public to participate in the environmental review processes. These opportunities are summarized below.

1.3.1 Notice of Preparation and Scoping

Scoping refers to the process used to assist the lead agency in determining the focus and content of an EIR. Scoping solicits input on the potential topics to be addressed in an EIR, the range of project alternatives, and possible mitigation measures. Scoping is also helpful in establishing methods of assessment and in selecting the environmental effects to be considered in detail.

The scoping process for this draft EIR was formally initiated on September 28, 2015, when RCPA submitted the notice of preparation (NOP) to the California State Clearinghouse for distribution to state agencies and to the Sonoma County Clerk for public posting. Additionally, the NOP was sent to the cities and town which the CAP would encompass, including Cloverdale, Cotati, Healdsburg, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, the City of Sonoma, and the Town of Windsor. The purpose of the NOP is to solicit participation from relevant agencies and from the public in determining the scope of an EIR. The NOP was distributed for a 30-day comment period that ended on October 27, 2015. Comments on the NOP were considered in the preparation of the draft EIR.

The RCPA held a public scoping meeting to introduce the proposed CAP to interested members of the public and to solicit public input. The public meeting was held on October 13, 2015 at 4:00 p.m. at the Permit and Resource Management Department, County of Sonoma, 2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA.

Appendix A contains the NOP and the written comments received during the scoping process.

1.3.2 Draft EIR Public Review

CEQA requires the lead agency (the RCPA) to prepare an EIR that reflects the independent judgment of the agency regarding the impacts of a project, the level of significance of the impacts both before and after mitigation, and mitigation measures proposed to reduce the impacts. A draft EIR is circulated to responsible agencies, trustee agencies with resources affected by the project, and interested agencies and individuals. The purposes of public and agency review of a draft EIR include sharing expertise, disclosing agency analyses, checking accuracy, detecting omissions, discovering public concerns, and soliciting counterproposals.

Reviewers of this draft EIR should focus on the sufficiency of the document in identifying and analyzing the possible impacts on the environment and ways in which the significant effects of the project might be avoided or mitigated. Comments are most helpful when they suggest additional specific alternatives or mitigation measures that would provide better ways to avoid or mitigate significant environmental effects.

The draft EIR has been released for a 45-day public review period, beginning on March 21, 2016 and ending May 6, 2016. Comments on this draft EIR must be received by RCPA no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 6, 2016, and can be submitted by any of the following methods:

- **Mail:** Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Authority
Attn: Lauren Casey
490 Mendocino Ave, Ste. 206
Santa Rosa, CA 95407
- **Email:** lcasey@sctainfo.org

A public meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 20, 2016, at 5 p.m. at the County of Sonoma Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD) Public Hearing Room at 2550 Ventura Ave, Santa Rosa, CA. Comments on the draft EIR will be received during the public meeting.

1.4 Scope of this EIR

The focus of this draft EIR is to evaluate the potential environmental consequences of the implementation of the CAP described above. Consistent with Appendix G and Appendix F of the State CEQA Guidelines, this draft EIR evaluates the following resource topics:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and forest resources
- Air quality
- Biological resources
- Cultural resources
- Geology and soils
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Hazards and hazardous materials
- Hydrology and water quality
- Land use and planning
- Mineral resources
- Noise
- Population and housing
- Public services
- Recreation
- Transportation and traffic
- Utilities and service systems
- Energy

Resources areas identified above that would result in no impacts or less-than-significant impacts (mineral resources and population and housing) are discussed in Section 3.1, *Effects Found Not to be Significant*, of this draft EIR. The remaining topics are discussed in their separate sections in Chapter 3, *Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures*.

The following topics are also analyzed in this draft EIR.

- Cumulative impacts
- Significant unavoidable impacts
- Significant irreversible changes in the environment
- Growth inducement
- Alternatives

1.5 Lead and Responsible Agencies Actions and CAP Approval

This EIR will be used by several responsible or trustee agencies that also have review authority over the proposed CAP. As stated in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15231:

A final EIR prepared by a lead agency or a negative declaration adopted by a lead agency shall be conclusively presumed to comply with CEQA for purposes of use by responsible agencies which were consulted pursuant to Sections 15072 or 15082 unless one of the following conditions occurs:

- (a) The EIR or Negative Declaration is finally adjudged in a legal proceeding not to comply with the requirements of CEQA, or
- (b) A subsequent EIR is made necessary by Section 15162 of these Guidelines.

The RCPA Board will use this draft EIR in the consideration of whether to adopt the proposed CAP (*Climate Action 2020 and Beyond: Community Climate Action Plan*). If the RCPA approves the CAP, it will recommend that the participating agencies adopt the local GHG reduction measures that apply to their individual jurisdictions. Only the local agencies have the authority to adopt local GHG reduction measures. The participating responsible agencies that will also use the draft EIR are identified below:

- City of Cloverdale
- City of Cotati
- City of Healdsburg
- City of Petaluma
- City of Rohnert Park
- City of Sebastopol
- City of Sonoma
- Town of Windsor
- County of Sonoma

In addition to the incorporated jurisdictions and the unincorporated County areas, there are other regional agencies that would be involved in implementation of regional CAP measures. These additional responsible agencies, which are listed in Chapter 5 of the CAP, include the following:

- Sonoma Clean Power
- Sonoma County Energy Independent Program
- Sonoma County Transportation Authority
- Sonoma County Transit
- Petaluma Transit
- Sonoma County Waste Management Authority
- Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District
- Bay Area Air Quality Management District

- Sonoma County Water Agency
- Municipal water service providers
- Municipal wastewater service providers

Some of the individual implementing actions of the CAP may involve construction of facilities that may require approvals of other agencies, but such actions will require project-level CEQA evaluations for which those agencies would be involved as the lead or approving agency.

1.6 Organization of this Document

This draft EIR and supporting information are presented in the chapters and appendices listed below.

- Chapter 1, *Introduction*, provides an overview of the scope, content, and organization of this draft EIR and the environmental review process.
- Chapter 2, *Project Description*, provides a comprehensive description of the proposed CAP, including details on the location, objectives, and required approvals.
- Chapter 3, *Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures*, describes the environmental setting, provides an analysis of the environmental impacts of the CAP, and identifies mitigation measures for any significant impacts.
- Chapter 4, *Other CEQA-Required Discussions*, provides a discussion of significant environmental impacts that cannot be avoided, significant irreversible environmental effects, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts (cumulative impacts are discussed in each resource section in Chapter 3 but summarized in Chapter 4).
- Chapter 5, *Alternatives*, provides an evaluation of project alternatives.
- Chapter 6, *List of Preparers*, identifies the individuals involved in the preparation of this document.
- Chapter 7, *References*, provides a list of the printed references and personal communications cited in this document.
- Appendices
 - Appendix A, *NOP and Scoping Comments*, provides the NOP and scoping comments that were received in response to the NOP.
 - Appendix B, *CAP Measures*, summarizes the state, regional, and local measures included in the CAP to reduce GHG emissions.
 - Appendix C, *Local General Plan Goals, Objectives, and Policies*, provides a list of the goals, objectives, and policies in the local general plans of the participating jurisdictions related to the resources areas analyzed in this draft EIR.
 - Appendix D, *USFWS Species List*, provides the official USFWS list of threatened and endangered species in the County.

- Appendix E, *Local Lane Use and Noise Compatibility Standards and Noise Ordinances*, provides the land use and noise compatibility standards and noise ordinances for each jurisdiction.

The draft CAP is separately available on the RCPA website and is incorporated in its entirety as part of this draft EIR.

This Page Intentionally Left Blank