

Chapter 3

Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures

As described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA) proposes to adopt the *Climate Action 2020: Community Climate Action Plan (CAP)*. Participating jurisdictions propose to adopt local measures applicable within their jurisdictions that are articulated in the CAP. The intent of the CAP is to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions within the County through targeted reductions in the sectors of building energy, transportation and land use, solid waste generation, water conveyance and wastewater treatment, livestock and fertilizer, and advanced climate initiatives. The CAP includes a variety of regulatory, incentive-based, and voluntary GHG-reduction measures for city and county governments, communities, residents, and businesses that will reduce GHG emissions from both existing and new development in Sonoma County.

This chapter provides an environmental analysis of the physical impacts that could occur as a result of implementing the measures in the CAP. The chapter is organized into separate sections for each resource topic analyzed, as listed below.

- 3.1, *Effects Found To Be Not Significant*
- 3.2, *Aesthetics*
- 3.3, *Agriculture and Forestry Resources*
- 3.4, *Air Quality*
- 3.5, *Biological Resources*
- 3.6, *Cultural Resources*
- 3.7, *Geology and Soils*
- 3.8, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*
- 3.9, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*
- 3.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality*
- 3.11, *Land Use and Recreation*
- 3.12, *Noise*
- 3.13, *Public Services, Utilities, and Energy*
- 3.14, *Transportation and Traffic*

The following subsections are included in each resource section:

- *Environmental Setting* describes the existing or baseline conditions of the resources in the study area (Sonoma County).
- *Regulatory Setting* describes applicable plans, policies, and regulations.

- *Impacts Analysis* describes the methodology used for the analysis, the criteria used to determine the significance of potential impacts, and a corresponding discussion of CAP impacts. For each potential impact, a significance determination is made (less than significant, less than significant with mitigation, or significant and unavoidable). If required to reduce a significant impact, feasible mitigation measures are identified.

A discussion of the CAP's potential contribution to cumulative impacts is included at the end of each resource section in this chapter, but the conclusions and a summary discussion are presented in Chapter 4, *Other CEQA-Required Discussions*.

3.0 Analysis Approach Used to Evaluate Impacts of the CAP

The CAP is not a land use plan and does not alter the existing land use designations or zoning in the Sonoma County General Plan or the local general plans for the incorporated cities. The County and incorporated cities have already adopted policies aimed to promote city-centered development patterns to direct future growth to existing urbanized areas and to protect the surrounding agricultural and resource lands. Implementation of the CAP would continue to promote these existing development patterns adopted by the County and local jurisdictions.

It is possible that in the future local jurisdictions may expand or intensify city-oriented development and land use policies in consideration of reducing GHG emissions or in consideration of other factors, such as reducing traffic, supporting multiple modes of transportation, promoting affordable housing, creating walkable neighborhoods, reducing air pollution, and preserving agricultural land and open space. However, it is speculative to identify the potential land use and zoning changes that may be adopted by individual jurisdictions at that time. Land use planning must balance a wide variety of interests and impacts, among which GHG emission reductions are but one consideration. Future proposed changes in local land use policies or land use plans (general plans, area plans, specific plans, zoning, etc.) would be subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and would fully disclose potential secondary environmental impacts of any such future proposal.

The CAP also does not include entitlements for the construction of any structure or facilities. Therefore, the CAP does not provide for development of areas previously not considered for development by the County and incorporated cities and would not directly result in physical environmental effects caused by the construction and operation of facilities. However, in implementing the proposed policies and actions, the CAP encourages actions that could lead to the construction of facilities that could, in turn, result in physical environmental effects. This draft environmental impact report (draft EIR) focuses on the overall effects of the proposed CAP within the County and does not conduct a site-specific examination of the projects that may occur in the future in furtherance of the CAP. The nature of the CAP is such that many proposed policies are intended to be general, with details to be determined during implementation. This draft EIR assumes that specific development projects or infrastructure improvement proposals submitted to the County or the incorporated cities with jurisdiction will require an independent environmental assessment consistent with the requirements of CEQA. Therefore, many of the impacts and mitigation measures are described in this draft EIR in general terms. Depending on the issue area, the significance criteria are identified as quantitative, qualitative, or performance thresholds beyond which the CAP would be considered to result in a significant effect. Site-specific construction and

operational impacts could only be considered at the time of specific project proposals. Therefore, as described in Chapter 1, *Introduction*, this draft EIR provides a program-level impact analysis.

3.1 Effects Found To Be Not Significant

As discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the intent of the CAP is to reduce GHG emissions within the County. The CAP was prepared with environmental factors in mind and is intended to be self-mitigating to the extent possible. To achieve this, the CAP includes many GHG-reduction measures that are designed to mitigate environmental impacts. Therefore, the GHG-reduction measures in the CAP not only reduce GHG emissions associated with existing and future uses in the County, but would also provide mitigating effects in other issue areas, such as reductions in single-occupancy vehicle use and associated traffic and air pollution emissions, reductions in solid waste generation and landfilling, water conservation, and a corresponding reduction in wastewater treatment.

Based on a review of the CAP, RCPA has determined that there was no substantial evidence that the CAP would cause or otherwise result in significant environmental impacts associated with the resource areas discussed below.

3.1.1 Mineral Resources

Implementation of the CAP would not affect the availability of known mineral resources of value or locally important mineral resource recovery sites. The CAP measures promote and/or propose improvements to existing infrastructure and limited new facilities that would occur primarily within areas that are already developed and are not likely to contain mineral resources; the measures do not propose construction of extensive new facilities. Therefore, there would be no impacts on mineral resources.

3.1.2 Population and Housing

Implementation of the CAP would not result in an increase in population more than what was accounted for in the buildout of the Sonoma County General Plan 2020 or in the local general plans because the CAP does not propose changes in current land use policy. Rather, the CAP encourages a pattern of settlement that concentrates this population growth in city centers and along transit corridors, rather than spread out across the county. The CAP supports the siting of development in transit-oriented, urban areas, as reflected in existing land use plans. Further, implementation of the CAP would not result in the displacement of people or demolition of structures leading to the displacement of people. Therefore, there would be no impacts on population and housing.

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