



Community Development Department
675 Wildwood Avenue
Rio Dell, CA 95562
(707) 764-3532

For the Meeting of October 1, 2024

☐ Consent Item; ☒ Public Hearing Item

To: City Council

From: Kevin Caldwell, Community Development Director

A blue handwritten signature, likely of Kevin Caldwell, consisting of a stylized 'K' and 'C'.

Through: Kyle Knopp, City Manager

Date: September 26, 2024

Subject: Regional Climate Action Plan Update.

Recommendation:

That the City Council:

1. Receive an update regarding the Draft Regional Climate Action Plan and the associated Environmental Impact Report (EIR) from County staff; and
2. Open public comment and receive comments from the public; and
3. Close public comment; and
4. Provide comments and ask questions.

Discussion

As the Council is aware the County and the seven incorporated cities, Arcata, Blue Lake, Eureka, Ferndale, Fortuna, Rio Dell, and Trinidad have been working collaboratively on a

Regional Climate Action Plan for the past few years. The Draft RCAP has been completed and the Draft EIR is being prepared. As such, the participating legislative bodies are being asked to provide comments on the RCAP and generally accept it subject to minor changes resulting from public comments.

Attached are copies of the staff report for the Board of Supervisors' recent update, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs') and PowerPoint Slides.

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Board of Supervisors Staff Report; and

Attachment 2: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs'); and

Attachment 3: PowerPoint Slides.

To: Board of Supervisors
From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Departmental

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

The Humboldt Regional Climate Action Plan EIR and Regional Implementation.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive update on the Humboldt Regional Climate Action Plan.
2. Comment on the contents of the RCAP.
3. Accept the draft of the Humboldt Regional Climate Action Plan as the project for preparation of the EIR.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Plan.

Area of Focus: Sustainable Natural Resources & Infrastructure Stewardship

Strategic Plan Category: 5001 - Enhance climate adaptation landscapes and communities

DISCUSSION:

Executive Summary

The Board of Supervisors is being asked to provide comment on the draft Regional Climate Action Plan (RCAP), to accept this RCAP as the project description for preparation of the EIR and to give preference for how to approach formation of a Regional Climate Committee. The work on the RCAP has reached the point of preparing the EIR and prior to finalizing the draft RCAP the participating legislative bodies are being asked to provide comments on the RCAP and to accept it (subject to minor changes resulting from public comment) as the project description for the EIR. The RCAP meets the objective of being a CEQA Qualified CAP, and includes a unique approach of being a truly regional plan.

History of the RCAP

The initial drafting of a CAP began in 2019 through collaboration with the county, all incorporated cities of Eureka, Arcata, Fortuna, Blue Lake Trinidad, Ferndale and Rio Dell, and the Redwood

Coast Energy Authority (the Working Group). A draft CAP was published for public review in 2022, which was intended to be the project for preparation of the EIR. During the EIR start up process the EIR consultant (Rincon) asked for supporting material to show what was used to demonstrate the actions and measures were feasible to meet the intended goals and state targets. The final analysis showed the initial CAP included measures that were highly aspirational and not achievable. This would not allow the CAP to achieve a qualified status. An unqualified CAP would not allow for CEQA streamlining of development projects for GHG Emissions Analysis, and would limit the amount of funding that could be available.

To achieve a qualified CAP, the draft would need to be redone. Rincon Consultants submitted a proposal for redrafting the RCAP, and on October 17, 2023, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors approved reallocating the funds provided to the county, by a Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) grant through HCAOG, to be used for revisions of the CAP so that it could be CEQA-qualified. Rincon conducted two important efforts in development of a CAP, the completion of an emissions inventory and interviews with the working group, RCEA, HTA, HCAOG, and HWMA.

The emissions inventory was completed for 2022 addressing the relevant emissions sources that local jurisdictions have control over within the boundary of Humboldt County, including all incorporated and unincorporated areas. Sectors where the local government has limited influence are excluded from the 2022 GHG emissions inventory as the local governments do not have jurisdictional control to develop measures to impact associated emissions. The 2022 GHG emission inventory includes emissions from the five basic reporting activities that must be reported: residential and commercial energy usage, on-road transportation, off-road transportation, landfilled waste, and water and wastewater.

Upon completion of the inventory, future GHG emissions forecasts and analysis of GHG emission reduction targets in support of state reduction goals were established. After the targets were analyzed, GHG emission reduction measures and supporting actions were designed based on the success of the work done previously in Humboldt, current best practices, and information gathered from interested parties including the County, incorporated Cities, regional partners (e.g., HTA, RCEA, HCAOG), and community groups. Feedback from interested parties were considered to establish a list of priority projects and measures that were then further refined based on feasibility and substantial evidence for GHG reduction capacity.

An interactive community survey was published on May 13, 2024, on the public RCAP website to inform the community on the updates to the plan and to gain understanding of what measures and actions the community would like to see prioritized. Respondents prioritized reducing organic waste sent to landfills, increasing zero-emission vehicle use, and increasing public transit use as the highest priorities. Responses from public officials prioritized increasing zero-emission vehicle use and establishing a region-wide Climate Committee to implement the RCAP as the highest

priorities, with reducing organic waste and increasing public transit use tied as the third priority. These responses show a high alignment between what public officials considered priority compared with the community respondents.

Development of the CAP strategy showed that the region had greater chances to accomplish goals and achieving GHG reductions when working as a region rather than a collection of individual jurisdictions all implementing the same plan. This would allow a consolidation of resources and then the different jurisdictions are not competing for the same resources. This is a change from the prior draft of the CAP.

Proposed RCAP

The title of this CAP is Regional Climate Action Plan because the primary implementation measure is to form a Regional Climate Committee responsible for administering the measures in the CAP. This committee would include representatives from municipalities across Humboldt County as well as representatives from regional agencies such as the HTA, HCAOG, HWMA, and RCEA, and other partner organizations. The purpose of this coalition is to foster collaboration and coordination among the region to address climate-related challenges and implement effective climate action strategies. This committee could be newly formed by the County or has several JPA's (such as HACO) that would fit this definition.

The Regional Climate Committee would be facilitated by a Regional Manager to facilitate the work of the committee. An oversight committee and a single regional manager will not achieve all that needs to be done to implement this RCAP. In the short-term, staff from local jurisdictions and agencies will be needed to support this work. This may turn out to be a good workable model, or over time as additional grant funds are available, it may be that additional support can be added within the committee to support staff.

It would be helpful for the Board to provide any comments you have on the RCAP approach and if this would fit within an existing organization or whether a new organization should be formed.

The redrafting of the CAP has achieved the intended result. The RCAP does achieve the status of a Qualified CAP including the substantial evidence demonstrating how it will meet state targets for GHG emissions reductions. Targets of the RCAP include reaching forty percent (40%) below 1990 levels of GHG emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. An Executive Summary of the Humboldt RCAP has been included in this staff report as Attachment 1 and the entire RCAP is included as Attachment 5.

The RCAP includes 29 measures related to carbon-free energy, building energy use, transportation, waste, water/wastewater, and carbon sequestration (a list of these measures and goals is included in Attachment 1). The RCAP addresses a constraint that was not addressed in the previous draft which is to recognize the constraints and opportunities between rural and

urban development patterns. The RCAP identifies limitations to meet certain goals in the rural areas, and measures outlined are specific to rural vs urban areas as to not overcommit certain areas to infeasible actions.

Current Process of the RCAP

The updated RCAP was released for 30-day public review on Wednesday, August 14, and a public meeting will be held Tuesday, September 10 at 6 p.m. at the Wharfinger Building in Eureka to present the plan to the community. Public review period for the RCAP will end on Friday, September 20. Any changes that come out of public comments will form the final draft of the RCAP that will be used for preparation of the EIR. The goal is to inform and educate the public and decision makers on the RCAP and to insure the RCAP is hitting the mark for the community before the DEIR is prepared.

The Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the EIR was filed and released on Friday, August 30, and a subsequent public scoping meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 17 at 3:30 p.m. at the Agricultural Center in Eureka. Comments on the filed NOP will be accepted until September 30, 2024. Final adoption of the RCAP EIR is anticipated to occur in June of 2025.

A full timeline for the RCAP EIR is included in Attachment 2.

Requested Action

The progress on the previous draft of the CAP left off after each jurisdiction had accepted the draft as the project description for preparation of the EIR. The RCAP is now at that point, and it is important that all participating jurisdictions comment on the RCAP and be comfortable with the regional approach. Staff is requesting you provide comments on the RCAP, accept this draft with minor changes (which may result from public comment) as the project to be analyzed and provide preferences as to where the Regional Climate Committee should be.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Revisions to the RCAP was paid for by Regional Early Action Planning grant funding obtained from Humboldt County Association of Governments. The RCAP EIR and staff time will be paid for by the existing budget allocation for Long-Range Planning.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

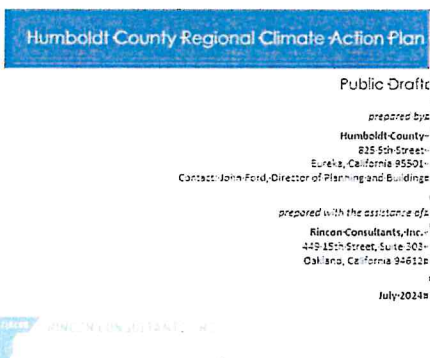
Implementation of the RCAP will require staff time to implement. Depending on where the Regional Manager is located there may be budget implications but this is not yet a decision point and it is not possible to project potential costs.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

As stated above, the preparation of the Humboldt RCAP has been a collaborative effort that has involved:

Attachment 2

Frequently Asked Questions – Regional Climate Action Plan



What is the Humboldt Regional Climate Action Plan (RCAP)?

The RCAP is a long-range planning document that guides the Humboldt region towards long-term greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction in accordance with the State's goal to reduce GHG emissions by 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2045.

The RCAP creates a Regional Climate Committee to maximize regional efficiencies, overcome challenges facing rural areas, attract funding, build a green economy, mitigate emissions, and increase resilience. By prioritizing collaborative efforts and tailored strategies, the RCAP aims to address the unique needs of the rural communities in the region while advancing comprehensive GHG reduction and economic development goals.

What does the RCAP do?



Provides a plan for the County, cities of Arcata, Blue Lake, Eureka, Ferndale, Fortuna, Rio Dell, and Trinidad, Humboldt County Association of Governments, Redwood Coast Energy Authority, Humboldt Transit Authority and Humboldt Waste Management Authority to work collaboratively to more efficiently achieve greenhouse gas reductions.



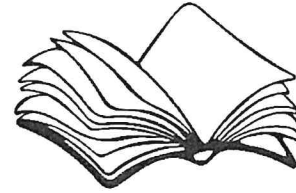
Creates a Qualified CAP for the entire county by identifying strategies, measures, actions, and tracking mechanisms to provide a foundation for sustainable development and resilient infrastructure in the region.



Allows county and cities to use the RCAP to satisfy GHG analyses to streamline future California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) assessments of projects and plans.

What is in the RCAP?

The RCAP has been structured to allow the reader to understand the purpose and objective of the RCAP, to provide sufficient information to educate the reader on the issues being addressed, to give a summary of Humboldt County's context and to identify what will be done to address GHG emissions. It is broken down into the following sections:

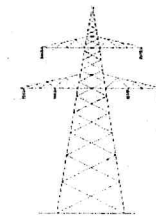


- ✓ Chapter 1: The introduction provides the Vision, and purpose of the RCAP with background on the unique context of Humboldt County and describes the process for development of the RCAP.
- ✓ Chapter 2: Describes the Scientific and Policy context for Climate Change.
- ✓ Chapter 3: Identifies GHG emissions inventory, forecast, and emission targets.
- ✓ Chapter 4: Outlines the GHG emission reduction strategy, measures, and actions.
- ✓ Chapter 5: The RCAP finishes with tracking, monitoring, and reporting and the Implementation plan.

What are the GHG Reduction Strategies?

The RCAP has a series of basic implementation strategies to accomplish GHG reduction objectives:

1. Development of a Regional Climate Committee, supported by a Program Manager to track, report and achieve regional goals.
2. Increase use of carbon-free electricity. Working with RCEA and PG&E.
3. Decarbonization of existing buildings. This includes a reduction of natural gas, propane, and diesel consumption in existing structures and decarbonizing 30% of municipal buildings and facilities by 2030.
4. Decarbonization of new construction. Decarbonize 95% of new building construction by 2027.
5. Modify commute patterns by shifting from driving to walking and biking.
6. Modify commute patterns by shifting from driving to public transit or car-share.



7. Shift land use patterns to reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). (e.g Increase mixed-use development in infill priority areas.)
8. Increase zero-emission vehicle usage, including expanding regional electric vehicle charging network and development of hydrogen hubs. Includes goals for off-road engines and to decarbonize 50% of municipal fleets by 2030.
9. Reduce organic waste in the landfill. Establish a local waste separation facility and organics management to reduce waste sent to landfills by 75% by 2030.
10. Conserve water and reduce wastewater emissions.
11. Increase carbon sequestration. Including developing a county-wide natural and working lands GHG inventory baseline by 2027 to understand existing and future GHG sequestration.

What has been the process for Developing the RCAP?



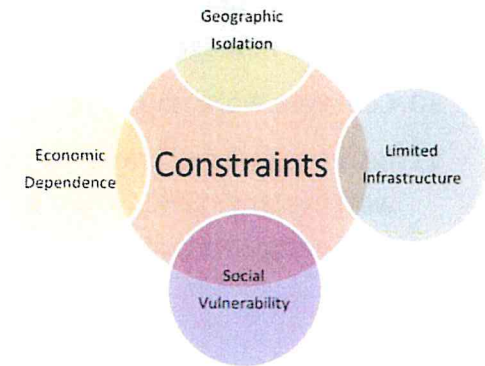
The RCAP has been developed over a period of years and has been an intentionally collaborative and evolutionary process.

- Jurisdictional Collaboration began in 2019 with support from the Redwood Coast Energy Authority leading to an initial draft produced in 2023.
- This process included numerous community outreach events and campaigns with presentations to each of the Cities, the Board of Supervisors, and other stakeholder groups.
- Unfortunately, the initial draft could not achieve a qualified status, and the process was redirected to hire a consultant to prepare a qualified CAP. Rincon was hired to prepare the qualified CAP.
- Rincon took the following actions:
 - + Established a Baseline GHG emission inventory.
 - + Developed feasible goals and strategies.
 - + Collected feedback through an interactive community survey published on the RCAP website. 160 submissions were received.

- ✚ Identified that the region would have more success obtaining grant funds and achieve GHG reduction goals as a region rather than as individual jurisdictions and proposed the Regional Climate Committee.

What are the Regional Constraints?

The Humboldt region is largely rural with some significant economic constraints to achieving climate goals.



- 1. Geographic Isolation and Accessibility**
The rural character of the region presents challenges in terms of increasing cost-effective public transportation, reducing vehicle miles traveled, and developing or upgrading local infrastructure. Implementing projects over a geographically dispersed population can be costly and very complex.
- 2. Limited Infrastructure:** The region lacks local waste management facilities such as recycling, composting, or processing centers, which diminishes local control, hinders compliance with state mandates, and necessitates long-distance transportation of waste outside of the county. Additionally, the existing natural gas and electricity infrastructure presents challenges for developing renewable energy projects and electrification efforts due to transmission and distribution limitations.
- 3. Economic Dependence and Limited Resources:** The region is economically constrained due to low population, and recently diminished industries such as logging and fishing. As well, the local jurisdictions are limited in relation to available staff and resources dedicated to obtaining funding and implementing climate mitigation efforts. Converting infrastructure and transitioning to more sustainable practices can be challenging without adequate staffing, funding support, and incentives.
- 4. Social Vulnerability:** Approximately forty percent (40%) of the population is either at or below the 80th percentile of the statewide median income, categorized as low-income and increasing social vulnerability to climate change.

What are the Regional Opportunities?

The region is rich with natural resources with an environmentally conscious and engaged community, offering several opportunities to overcome the constraints of the region.



- 1. Partnerships and Collaboration:** Regional collaboration is necessary in achieving the goals of the RCAP. No single agency is responsible for mitigating GHG emissions, and the participating jurisdictions recognize the need for strong coordination and partnerships. This will enhance the ability to obtain funding for implementing the RCAP.
- 2. Green Economic Growth:** Opportunities will arise for new green industries and job creation with transitioning to a low-carbon economy.
- 3. Funding opportunities:** There are several funding opportunities for low-income areas, including federal and state funding, incentives, and partnerships to implement climate-related projects.
- 4. Abundant Renewable Energy Resources:** The region has potential for renewable energy generation, particularly from wind, solar and biomass sources. Specifically, there is the near-future plans for offshore wind energy generation.
- 5. Carbon Sequestration in Natural Ecosystems:** The diverse ecosystems of the region provide valuable opportunities for carbon sequestration. There are significant opportunities to implement sustainable land practices that sequester carbon, protect biodiversity, enhance resilience to climate change, and support local economies.

Cost to meet the RCAP strategies?

The strength of the Regional Climate Action Committee approach is to position the region to be more attractive to entities who grant money for Climate Resilience actions. It is envisioned that the Climate Program Manager and supporting staff will be grant funded. There are ordinances and other programs to be developed which may be developed by local staff for the benefit of the region. For local governments there is cost associated with moving fleet vehicles away from carbon fuel sources and retrofitting buildings to be energy efficient and away from gas heating.



It is anticipated this too can be grant funded. Where retrofitting private development is called for, the RCAP provides reduction goals, but leaves room for the Regional Climate Committee to accomplish those goals using grants and other means so as to not impose all the cost on the owners of existing buildings.

What is the time frame for adoption of the RCAP?

August 14, 2024	Draft RCAP published for Public Review Period
August 30, 2024	File Notice of Preparation for EIR
September 10, 2024	RCAP Public Meeting, Wharfinger Building, Eureka, 6:00 p.m.,
September 17, 2024	EIR Public Scoping meeting, Agricultural Building Humboldt Hill, 3:30 p.m.
September 20, 2024	Public Review Period ends for the draft RCAP
September 30, 2024	30-day EIR Scoping period ends September 30, 2024
December 2024	Administrative Draft EIR completed
February/March 2025	EIR public review/comment period
May 2025	Final EIR preparation completed
June 2025	Humboldt County Planning Commission hearing
June 2025	Humboldt County Board of Supervisors hearing -- EIR certified and RCAP adopted -

Summer 2025	Cities adopt RCAP
Summer 2025	County, Cities, and JPAs work together to form a Regional Climate Committee
Ongoing	Regional Climate Committee works to secure funding, implement the RCAP, and monitor progress

What about the GHG Reduction efforts already being pursued?



The County, cities, Humboldt County Association of Governments, Redwood Coast Energy Authority, Humboldt Transit Authority and Humboldt Waste Management Authority have all been involved in implementing projects and programs to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Many of these are incorporated into the RCAP. The RCAP is not envisioning starting over but rather to build upon the good work that has been started in the region.

The concept is to strengthen and enhance the ongoing work, and where necessary to develop new initiatives to achieve the climate reduction goals.

Current Regional GHG Reduction Efforts

- North Coast Resource Partnership (NCRP)
Has focused on ensuring clean and reliable drinking water supplies, watershed health, energy independence, climate adaptation and economic vitality – especially in economically disadvantaged communities.
- Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA)
The purpose of RCEA is to develop and implement sustainable energy initiatives that reduce energy demand, increase energy efficiency, and advance the use of clean, efficient and renewable resources available in the region for the benefit of the Member agencies and their constituents.
- Redwood Community Action Agency (RCAA)
Provides the following services: affordable housing, assistance with energy bills or purchase of heating fuel, energy efficiency services, home repairs, natural

resources enhancement and mitigation, services for the houseless members, youth services, and community gardens.

- Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG)

A Joint Powers Agency comprised of the seven incorporated cities and the County of Humboldt. It is the designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), as well as the Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE). HCAOG is largely responsible for programming State highway, local street and road improvements, public transportation resources, and the roadside call box program. HCAOG also bears responsibility for preparing and implementing the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

- Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA)

A joint powers authority between Humboldt County and the cities of Arcata, Eureka, Fortuna, Rio Dell and Trinidad. HTA provides riders with affordable fixed route and dial-a-ride transportation options that allow access throughout Humboldt County.

- Humboldt Waste Management Authority (HWMA)

HWMA was established by a Joint Powers Agreement comprised of the County of Humboldt and the Cities of Arcata, Blue Lake, Eureka, Ferndale and Rio Dell in 1999. The Authority receives municipal solid waste (garbage) and curbside recycled materials delivered by franchise haulers, and is a One-Stop Drop off for the general public for self-hauled municipal solid waste, recycling services and other material diversion programs and services.

- California Community Power (CC Power)

CC Power allows its member CCAs to combine their buying power to procure new, cost-effective clean energy and reliability resources to continue advancing local and state climate goals. CC Power members represent over 2.7 million customers across 112 municipalities spanning from Humboldt County to Santa Barbara County.

- Redwood Region Economic Development Commission (RREDC)

Dedicated to expanding economic opportunity in Humboldt County. Creates opportunity and support the growth of local businesses. Leads projects of regional significance, make loans, and offer business consulting through partner, the North Coast Small Business Development Center.



HUMBOLDT REGIONAL CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

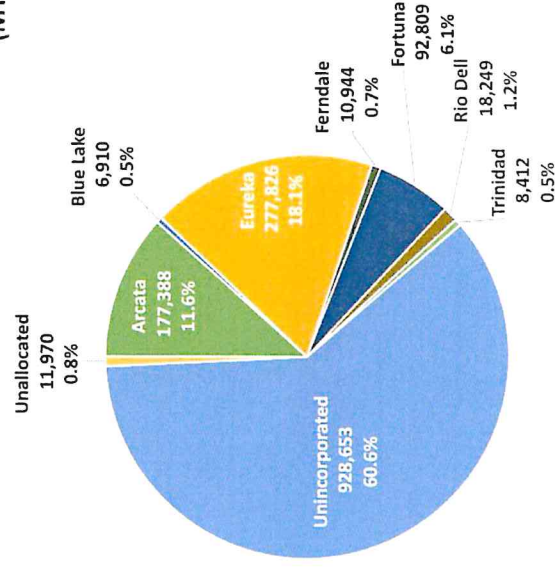
Associate Planner, Megan Acevedo



HISTORY OF CAP

- Working group created 2019.
- Public draft released 2022.
- GHG reductions by jurisdiction.
- Not a Qualified CAP.

2015 County-Wide Emissions
by Jurisdiction
(MT CO2e)



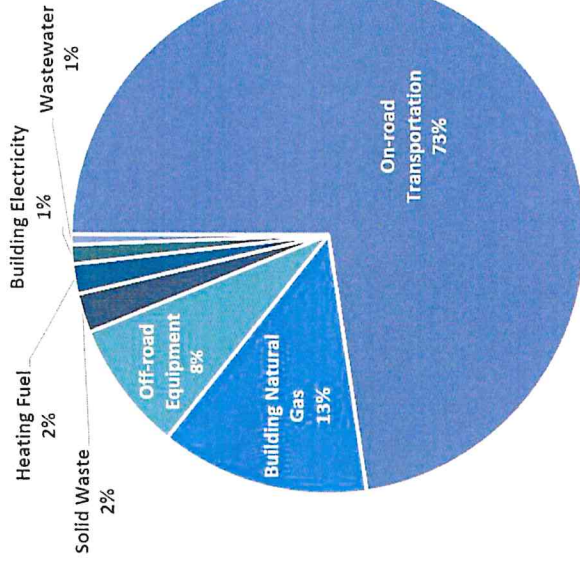
REFOCUS

- Qualified CAP with Achievable measures
- Modified EIR Contract to include Redrafting of the CAP.
- October 2023.
- Completion Date June of 2024.

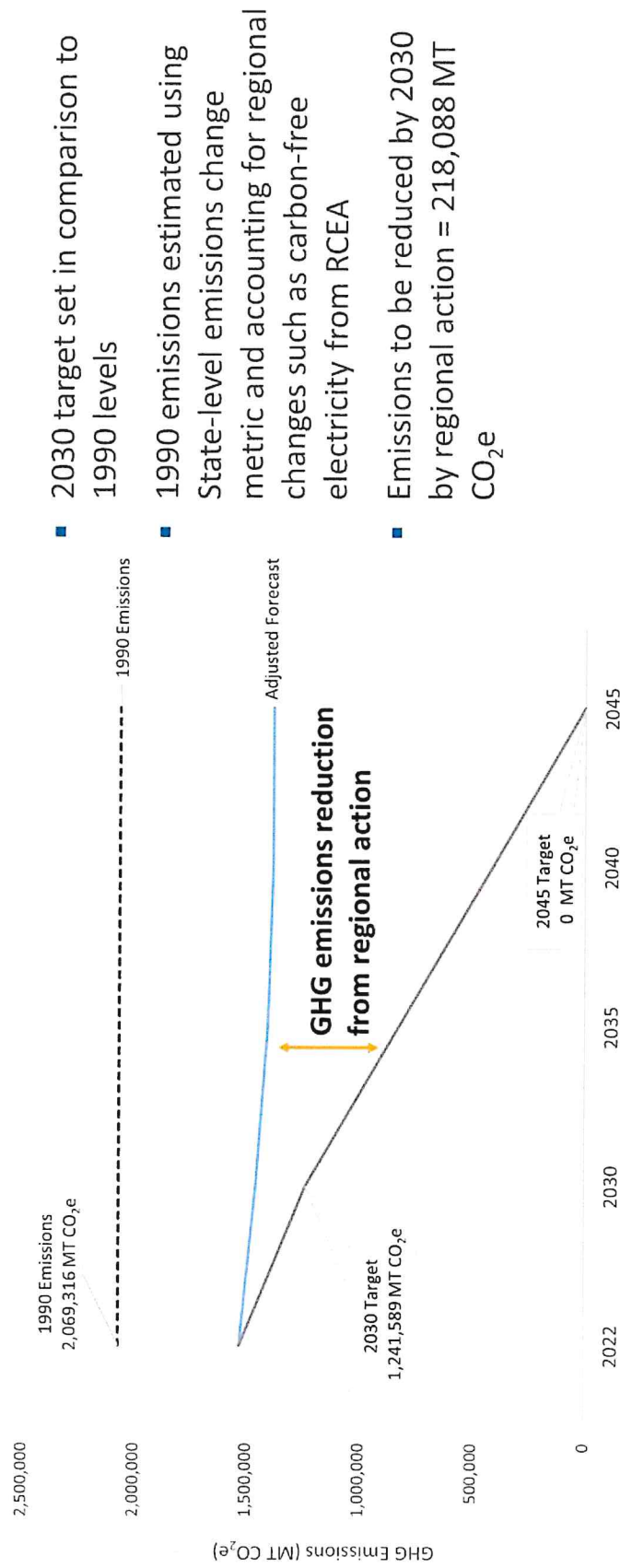
REDRAFTING OF CAP

- 2022 GHG emissions inventory.
- Measures and Actions refined through interviews.
- Achievable Goals
- Identifies urban vs rural needs.
- Regional Climate Committee.

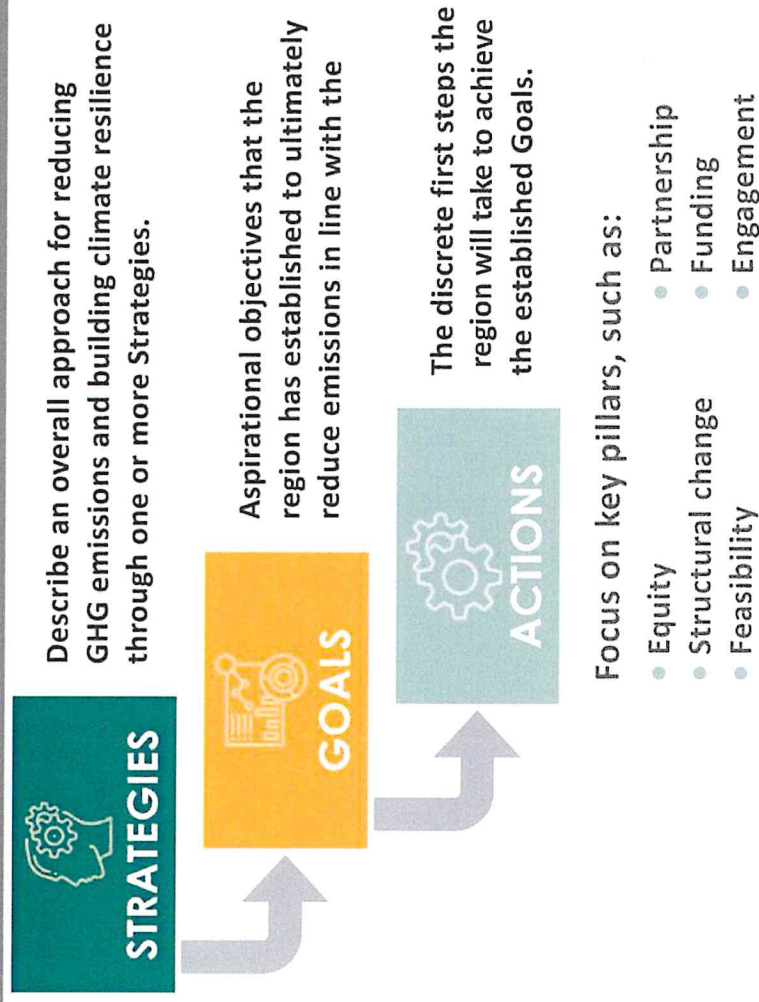
ES-1 Humboldt GHG Emissions for 2022



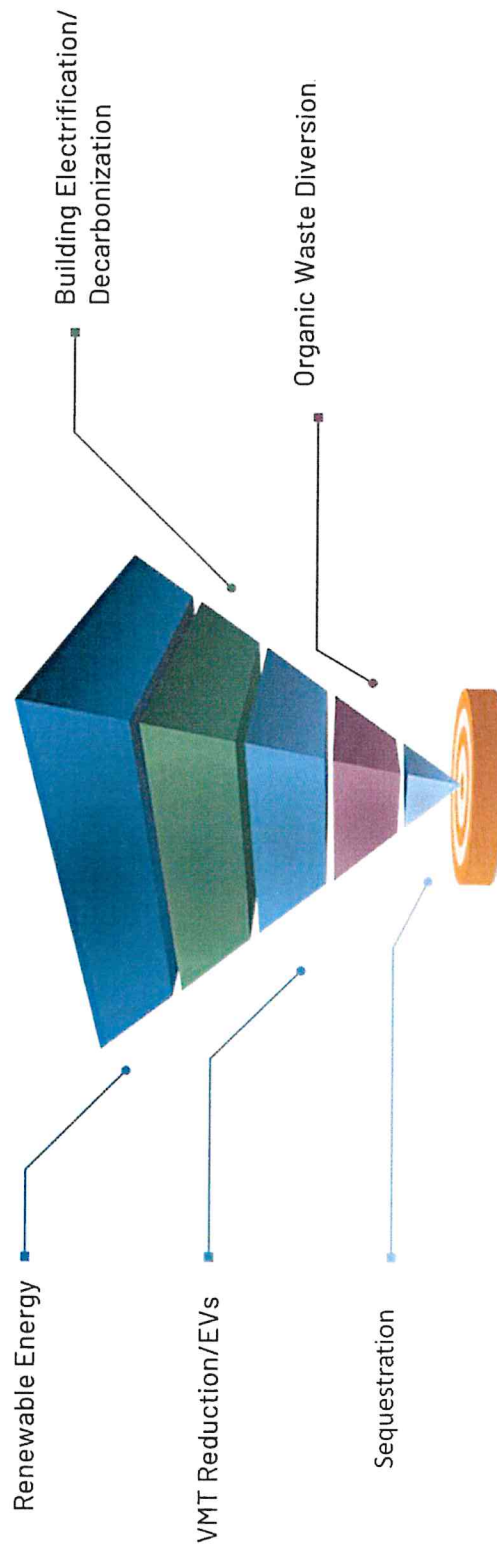
Humboldt RCAP GHG Targets



Structure of RCAP Strategies



Key Strategy Areas



**Target approaches to account for different characteristics of rural vs municipal areas of County*

REGIONAL CLIMATE COMMITTEE

- Highest priority measure.
- Creation of a Program Manager.
- Could be a new or existing JPA.
- Leverages funding eligibility and existing local projects.



STATUS

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| • RCAP in Public Review | September 20, 2024 |
| • NOP Comment Period | September 30, 2024 |
| • Public Meeting Tonight | |
| • EIR Preparation Underway | Spring 2025 |
| • Adoption | June 2025 |

TODAYS ACTIONS

- Provide comments on the draft RCAP.
- Accept the draft RCAP for the EIR project description.
- Direct staff to develop options for the establishment of a Climate Committee.

