

County joins cities in keeping 'cool'
Board of Supervisors pledges to reduce greenhouse gasses

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REDWOOD CITY — We'll try to be cooler, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors pledged Tuesday.

The supervisors weren't worried about their image as much as the ozone layer. They agreed to sign on to the Sierra Club's "Cool Counties" campaign, affirming a commitment to drastically reduce the county's greenhouse gas emissions in the coming decades.

"This is a major first step that the county can take on the road to becoming carbon-neutral," Supervisor Jerry Hill said.

The board unanimously adopted the Sierra Club's Climate Stabilization Declaration, which encourages the county to inventory its greenhouse gas emissions and develop a strategy to reduce pollutants to 80 percent below the current levels by 2050. The declaration also encourages the county to advocate for climate protection at the federal level.

Supervisor Rich Gordon was inspired in July to adopt the pledge while attending the National Association of Counties annual conference in Richmond, Va.

The Sierra Club launched the Cool Counties campaign at the conference, and counted Alameda County as one of its inaugural members. Since then, Contra Costa and Santa Clara counties have also signed on.

"It seems very appropriate and very timely, given greenhouse gas emissions, that we take this step," Gordon said.

The Sierra Club's declaration, which is being signed by counties nationwide, was modeled after Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's executive order in 2005 to reduce California's emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2050.

As an initial step, San Mateo County plans to contract with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, an international group with an Oakland office, to do a baseline inventory of the emissions the county's operations produce. That analysis will cost the county \$13,000.

After that, the county plans to participate in regional initiatives to ease its impact on the environment.

The Sierra Club's efforts to get promises from counties for emissions reductions follows a similar effort on a city level to reduce emissions by 7 percent by 2012.

Mayors from nine Peninsula cities have signed the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement: Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley, Redwood City, San Mateo, Burlingame, Millbrae, San Bruno and South San Francisco.

"Really, you need action at all levels of government because we all use energy," said Julio Magalhaes, global warming program coordinator for the Loma Prieta chapter of the Sierra Club. "This is just a continuation of the effort to get local action."

While the declaration focuses on reducing emissions strictly from county operations, Magalhaes said it is important for individuals to reduce their carbon footprints, too.

The agreement's signing left a brief window of opportunity for a joke and Supervisor Hill wasn't going to let it slip away.

"We always knew we were cool," he said to chuckles from his colleagues, "but now it's documented by resolution that we're a Cool County."

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