

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Targets

In 2007, the growing concern about climate change and interest in ensuring a sustainable future led the City Council to request staff to prepare a recommendation for aggressive greenhouse gas reduction goals. In May 2007, Council committed to the following targets for reducing municipal greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions:

- 2012:** GHG emissions 25% below 1990 levels
- 2015:** GHG emissions 30% below 1990 levels
- 2020:** GHG emissions 35% below 1990 levels
- 2030:** GHG emissions 50% below 1990 levels
- 2045:** GHG emissions 80% below 1990 levels

The municipal baseline was set as 1990 to match the baseline years in the Kyoto protocol standard and adopted by the California Air Resources Board through the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB32), the state's 2006 landmark Climate Action legislation. However, as the state began developing the local government implementation protocol, it was acknowledged that municipalities were having difficulty gathering verifiable data back to 1990. The AB32 Climate Change Scoping Plan, released in December 2008, recommended local governments reduce GHG emissions 15% below current levels by 2020 to achieve AB 32 reductions goals.¹

Thus, staff will recommend the targets be revised from municipal only goals to a community-wide plan using 2005 as the baseline year. The revised targets to be presented for adoption by the City Council are proposed to be as follows:

- 2015:** GHG emissions 15% below baseline year achieving AB32 Scoping Plan recommended municipal goals 5 years before state target year.
- 2020:** GHG emissions 20% below baseline year
- 2030:** GHG emissions 35% below baseline year
- 2040:** GHG emissions 65% below baseline year
- 2050:** GHG emissions 80% below baseline year

These recommendations achieve the 2007 direction from Council to be both aggressive and achievable given operational and budget constraints, and will meet or exceed AB 32 recommendations.

California Air Resources Board, "Climate Change Scoping Plan Document [on-line]," December 2008; Internet; available from: http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/scopingplan/document/adopted_scoping_plan.pdf, pg. 27.

Local factors considered in selecting the target reduction percentage included estimation of the effects of implemented and planned programs and policies, an approximate assessment of future opportunities to reduce emissions, targets adopted by peer communities, and emissions reductions expected to be achieved by state-level climate policy. The California goal for 2050 is 80% below 1990 levels. The state estimates that local governments have achieved approximately 15% emission reduction between 1990 and current (San José 2005)² which would mean that a San José target of 65% below current levels would be equivalent to the AB32 goals. However, to demonstrate leadership, San José proposes to keep the 2050 goal at 80% below current levels (2005) and challenges others to do the same.

² California Air Resources Board, “Climate Change Scoping Plan Document [on-line],” December 2008; Internet; available from: http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/scopingplan/document/adopted_scoping_plan.pdf, pg. ES5.