



County of Santa Cruz

COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

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COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT 2021 and 2022 BIENNIAL REPORT

1. Role of the Commission on the Environment

The Commission on the Environment acts as an advisory body to, and resource for, the County Board of Supervisors. The Commission is charged with recommending policies and action programs designed to improve and protect the environment. In accordance with its purpose as presented in Chapter 2.54.050 of the County Code, the Commission shall:

- A. Advise the Board of Supervisors and make recommendations on ways to improve and protect the environment to ensure the long term environmental sustainability of the County;
- B. Advise the Board of Supervisors and work with other commissions in reviewing and updating County policies to provide a comprehensive course of action to support these goals in both the public and private spheres;
- C. Serve as an information clearing house to the Board of Supervisors and other county commission about proposed and pending legislation, both state and federal, which may impact the environment;
- D. Advise the Board of Supervisors on potential areas of cooperation with other public and private agencies and organizations to plan and implement effective environmental policies in Santa Cruz County; and
- E. Exercise any other responsibilities that may be set forth in the commission's bylaws, or may be directed by the Board of Supervisors.

2. Meeting Dates, Time and Location

According to the Commission on the Environment Bylaws, meetings are held six times a year generally on the fourth Wednesday of each month, convening at 5:00 p.m. The Commission met in 2021 on January 27, March 24, May 26, July 28, September 22, November 17, and conducted a special meeting on December 8. The Commission met in 2022 on January 26, May 25, July 27, and November 16. In 2022, the meetings scheduled for March 23 and September 28 were canceled, and the special meeting scheduled for October 19 did not have a quorum but the Commissioners present met as a subcommittee on that date. All of the meetings in 2021 and 2022 were held virtually.

3. Commission Structure

The Commission is composed of ten members who are residents of the County. Each member of the Board of Supervisors appoints two commissioners. There are currently two vacancies on the Commission, one in District 1 and one in District 4.

Membership of the Commission is presented in the following tables:

2021	Commissioner	Term Expires
District 1	Greg Pepping (term expired 4/1/21)	April 1, 2025
	Jane Orbuch (term expired 4/1/21)	April 1, 2025
	Jackie Nuñez	April 1, 2025
	Deirdre Scholar	April 1, 2025
District 2	Tiffany Wise-West	April 1, 2025
	John Hunt	April 1, 2025
District 3	Rachel Kippen	April 1, 2023
	Ross Clark	April 1, 2023
District 4	Tony Gregorio	April 1, 2023
	Robert Culbertson	April 1, 2023
District 5	Beth Trenchard (resigned March 2021)	April 1, 2025
	Margaret Bruce	April 1, 2025
	Kris Damhorst (appointed March 2021)	April 1, 2025

2022	Commissioner	Term Expires
District 1	Jackie Nuñez (resigned November 2022)	April 1, 2025
	Deirdre Scholar	April 1, 2025
District 2	Tiffany Wise-West (resigned June 2022)	April 1, 2025
	John Hunt	April 1, 2025
	Lisa Wooninck (appointed August 2022)	April 1, 2025
District 3	Rachel Kippen	April 1, 2023
	Ross Clark	April 1, 2023
District 4	Tony Gregorio (resigned November 2022)	April 1, 2023
	Robert Culbertson	April 1, 2023
District 5	Margaret Bruce	April 1, 2025
	Kris Damhorst	April 1, 2025

4. Commission Staff

The Commission is staffed by the Community Development and Infrastructure Department (David Carlson, Resource Planner).

5. Attendance

Commissioner attendance for 2021 and 2022 is summarized in the following tables:

Commission on the Environment 2021-22 Biennial Report

2021	Commissioner	Jan.	Mar.	May	July	Sept.	Nov.	Dec. (Special Mtg)
District 1	Greg Pepping (term expired 4/1/21)	X	X					
	Jane Orbuch (term expired 4/1/21)	X	X					
	Jackie Nuñez			X	X	X	X	a
	Deirdre Scholar			X	X	X	X	A
District 2	Tiffany Wise-West	X	X	X	X	A	X	X
	John Hunt	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
District 3	Rachel Kippen	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Ross Clark	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
District 4	Tony Gregorio	a	A	a	X	a	a	a
	Robert Culbertson	X	X	X	X	X	a	X
District 5	Beth Trenchard (resigned 3/21)	X						
	Kris Damhorst		X	X	X	X	X	X
	Margaret Bruce	X	A	X	X	X	X	X
X Present at meeting								
A Excused absence from the meeting								
a Unexcused absence from the meeting								

2022	Commissioner	Jan.	Mar.	May	July	Sept.	Nov.
District 1	Jackie Nuñez (resigned Nov 2022)	X	c	X	A	c	N/A
	Deirdre Scholar	X	c	X	X	c	N/A
District 2	Tiffany Wise-West (resigned June 2022)	X	c	X	v	c	N/A
	John Hunt	X	c	X	X	c	N/A
	Lisa Wooninck					c	N/A
District 3	Rachel Kippen	X	c	X	X	c	N/A
	Ross Clark	X	c	X	A	c	N/A
District 4	Tony Gregorio (resigned November 2022)	A	c	a	a	c	N/A
	Robert Culbertson	X	c	X	X	c	N/A
District 5	Kris Damhorst	X	c	X	X	c	N/A
	Margaret Bruce	X	c	X	X	c	N/A
X Present at the meeting				c Meeting canceled			
A Excused absence from the meeting				v vacant			
a Unexcused absence from the meeting				N/A No quorum, Commissioners present met as a subcommittee			

6. Biennial Goals and Accomplishments

In 2021 and 2022, the Commission continued to focus on issues pertaining to climate change within the County and the Monterey Bay Region by supporting municipal planning and regional program development. This participation served to educate, promote a collaborative dialogue and encourage the development of cooperative projects among local government staff, businesses, academic institutions and non-profit organizations involved with climate change policies and programs within the Monterey Bay Region.

Regular Commission meetings throughout 2021 and 2022 provided informational opportunities on topics relevant to building awareness and context for the adoption of appropriate local policies and programs to address climate change, environmental justice and equity. Presentations to the Commission also identified existing resources as well as opportunities for State and Federal funding and local cooperation.

Milestones are listed below. Commission minutes available to the public on the Commission webpage reflect actions taken by the Commission.

- The Commission developed work priorities for the 2021-22 biennial reporting period and adopted a Work Plan that includes a process for updating the Work Plan.
- Hosted a presentation from Central Coast Community Energy (3CE) where staff highlighted their success in providing energy to central coast residences and businesses at a lower cost, while providing unique programs and services to increase energy efficiency and invest in electric vehicles.
- Submitted an advisory letter requesting the Santa Cruz County Supervisor Bruce McPherson consider recommending to the 3CE Policy Board that 3CE staff develop a Local Renewable Energy Financial Strategy and Implementation Plan that outlines how 3CE can optimize revenue to invest in local large-scale and rooftop renewable energy projects and, in turn, our local economy.
- Received a presentation from the County Administrative Office staff on equity and County Operational Plan update. The Commission discussed equity issues related to transportation infrastructure (rail trail), housing location and density, access to government services, racial profiling, and equity related to climate change adaptation.
- Planning Department staff presented information to the Commission and received feedback regarding the Climate Action Strategy annual report and update process related to staff resources, potential grant resources, updated emissions reduction goals, and new/updated strategies including GHG inventory update factors. An ad hoc committee was established to follow this project.
- Received training on the Brown Act from Office of County Counsel
- Received presentations by Commissioner Kippen and Wise-West on the Work Plan item on environmental justice and equity. The Commission discussed funding sources for EJ initiatives and outreach, related work by County departments, and the RTC, and identification of disadvantaged communities. An ad hoc subcommittee was established to follow this initiative.
- Received a presentation from OR3 staff that will be preparing the updated Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) and discussed the on the initial framework for a new CAAP.
- Received a presentation by AMBAG staff and discussed the greenhouse gas emissions intensity of retail power suppliers.

- Submitted an advisory letter to the Board of Supervisors to support the Office of Response, Recovery, and Resilience and the CAAP process with funding and staff resources for regional collaboration, professional services, and equitable engagement.
- The Commission received a presentation from Rene Mendez, City Manager, City of Gonzales on community scale microgrid project in the City of Gonzales.
- The Commission received regular updates from OR3 staff on the status of the CAAP and discussed the project activities including the activities of the Commission ad hoc subcommittee on climate change issues.
- The CAAP project interns also provided brief presentations on their capstone projects
- The Commission had discussions of environmental justice issues as they relate to the Commission and the Commission appointment process in general, including the newly forming A Santa Cruz Like Me (ASCLM) Committee
- Prepared a letter of support to the Board of Supervisors on the CAAP.
- Received regular updates from Commissioners on topics in their focus areas.
- Elected a Commission Chair (John Hunt) and Vice-Chair (Margaret Bruce).
- Received updates on the state legislative processes in Sacramento that could benefit or conflict with County environmental programs and objectives.
- Received regular updates from staff regarding actions by the Board of Supervisors related to topics of interest to the Commission.

Commissioner participation in local community meetings

One or more Commissioners attended community meetings to discuss issues related to environmental protection and cooperative opportunities that held potential for establishing local climate change policies and programs as well as identifying funding sources.

7. Future Goals

The Commission's work plan reflects the Commission's intent to continue its efforts to inform the Board on climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives; the County's Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update project; plastic pollution mitigation; state and federal legislation; sustainable transportation policies, programs and projects; environmental justice and equity; and the ongoing work of various local community groups with specific recommendations for local policies and programs that are feasible and effective.

8. Recommendations

The Commission will develop a work plan for the next two year period and continue to focus on plans and initiatives to implement mitigation and adaptation priorities in the County Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, including a focus on environmental justice and equity. Other Commission work in the next two years will include continuing to advise the Board of Supervisors and make recommendations on ways to improve and protect the environment to ensure the long term environmental sustainability of the County. It is therefore recommended that the Board of Supervisors accept and file the 2021-2022 biennial report of the Commission on the Environment.