

Public Comment on the Monterey County Community Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CCAAP), Public Draft

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Introduction

I'll open this comment by stating my full support for the County's commitment to develop and adopt a Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CCAAP). My office has advocated for and closely tracked this process throughout, and the publication of the draft CCAAP is a significant milestone. I appreciate the County's thoughtful and thorough work in developing this draft.

Climate change is already underway in this County. We're experiencing higher wildfire risk, a fire season that has stretched to almost year-round, and more intense wildfires that last longer. We're experiencing extreme heat events that cause fatalities, marine warming that's upsetting habitats and weather patterns, droughts that threaten both public health and our local agricultural economy, ongoing coastal erosion that's encroaching on properties, and more frequent flooding events that are endangering entire neighborhoods.

A climate action and adaptation plan that commits the County to reducing emissions and adapting to what's coming is the work of responsible government. The plan's framework is sound. The draft plan's greenhouse gas (GHG) targets are appropriate, the strategy areas address the appropriate sectors, and the adaptation work in Chapter 5 reflects a sound vulnerability analysis. The draft was developed with extensive community input.

My comments are about what's missing, what's understated, and what I'd like the County to commit to before it adopts and implements this plan. I've identified 10 gaps outlined below.

Gap 1: Water supply and groundwater sustainability

Water supply, groundwater sustainability, and climate change are not separate issues in Monterey County.

Climate change makes our County's water-supply problem worse. Greenhouse gas emissions increase heat in both our atmosphere and our ocean, changing atmospheric and oceanic currents in ways that raise the probability of long, severe droughts in our region. Droughts strain

the groundwater basins our residents and agricultural economy depend on. Meanwhile, seawater intrusion is advancing as our groundwater aquifers drop.

The CCAAP ranks drought and water supply as the lowest of the four hazards it assesses, scoring the county's adaptive capacity as high. The score rests on the existence of plans — the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Plan, the County Groundwater Management Plan, the North County Drought Contingency Plan — but not on their implementation or funding. The Salinas Valley Basin GSA is actively weighing project portfolios because the basin is not yet on a sustainable path. Why do plans that are still in development, unfunded, and/or partially implemented justify a high adaptive capacity score for water supply? The County should consider rescoring this hazard against real-time conditions: basins in overdraft, seawater intrusion advancing, and regional water supply decisions still unresolved.

The plan's water strategy, WA-1, is conservation only. Conservation is, of course, necessary, and I support the targets. The Monterey Peninsula has operated under a state cease-and-desist order on Carmel River diversions since 1995. New water meters have been banned since 2009. The State Water Board is holding hearings this summer on whether to modify that order. Whatever the outcome, the region will need to close its supply gap through some combination of water recycling, groundwater replenishment, and/or new supply development. Every option carries an energy and emissions footprint, and the CCAAP's emissions forecast doesn't model any of them. If the plan is to be credible through 2045, it must account for the emissions consequences of supply decisions the region will make within this plan's horizon.

The plan inventories the region's groundwater sustainability work as background but commits the County to no role in it. The MPWMD modification hearing closes in September 2026. The SVBGSA is selecting among project portfolios. These decisions will shape Monterey County's water and climate future for the next 50 years. The final CCAAP should add an implementation action committing the County to coordinate climate planning with SGMA implementation and the ongoing regional water supply proceedings.

The draft's conservation-only approach to water issues also misses the drinking water safety problems the County has documented. San Lucas has been under intermittent "do not drink" orders since 2011 for nitrate and total dissolved solids contamination linked to agricultural runoff, and the Environmental Justice Element flags elevated pesticide and groundwater-threat scores in Chualar, Pajaro, Bradley, Lockwood, and San Ardo. WA-1 doesn't address contamination, and none of these communities appear prominently in the CCAAP.

Questions:

1. The plan scores drought as lowest-priority based on existing plans. Can the County identify which of those plans are fully funded and on track to deliver water within the plan's horizon? If several are not, will the County rescore this hazard?

2. The vulnerability assessment treats the SVBGSA's Groundwater Sustainability Plan as evidence of high adaptive capacity. The GSA is still selecting among project portfolios. Why does the County consider an adopted but unimplemented — and currently unfunded — plan as adaptive capacity?
3. Does the County's emissions model account for any new water supply infrastructure coming online between now and 2045, including recycled water expansion, groundwater replenishment, or desalination? If not, why not?
4. The State Water Board is holding hearings this summer on modifying the Cal-Am cease-and-desist order. Did the County coordinate with MPWMD or the State Water Board when developing the CCAAP's water strategy? If not, how does the County plan to update the CCAAP as those proceedings conclude?
5. The CCAAP's Housing Element strategy (TR-1.5) depends on new water connections, and the Board recently voted to allocate additional water supply while flagging reservations about that source's long-term viability. Climate and housing planning should track the Board's water supply decisions, including the emissions and infrastructure implications of new connections. Will the County add an implementation action committing to coordinate CCAAP implementation with SGMA and the ongoing regional water proceedings?
6. Given the Environmental Justice Element's documented drinking water contamination in San Lucas and other communities, will the final CCAAP include an action addressing water quality, not just water supply, in disadvantaged communities?
7. Beyond the Pajaro River Widening Project sidebar, does the CCAAP commit County resources or a coordination role to Pajaro's water infrastructure, covering both flood protection and drinking water safety?
8. Will the CCAAP connect its Salinas River restoration work under NWL-1.3 to the County's existing water quality monitoring data (303(d), TMDL, ASBS programs), so pollution sources reaching the river are identified as part of implementation rather than tracked separately by Public Works?

Gap 2: Implementation funding

The CCAAP prices near-term implementation at 12.5 FTE and \$16.7 million a year through 2030. The Sustainability Program (Budget Unit 105005), the office responsible for developing and implementing this plan, is funded at 5.0 FTE and \$4.46 million in FY 2026-27. That's 40% of the staff and 27% of the dollars the plan states is needed.

The funding mix is another challenge. Of the \$4.46 million budgeted, \$3.85 million comes from intergovernmental grant revenue. The County's General Fund contribution to this program fell 60% this year, from \$492,727 to \$196,941. If the grants don't renew, the Sustainability Program reverts toward last year's \$1.1 million level and the plan's near-term actions will be underfunded.

The CCAAP lists grants, utility incentives, green banks, bonds, and C-PACE financing as its funding sources. None are committed.

Action IM-3.3 commits to "an online platform, such as a digital portal or dashboard" for tracking CCAAP metrics. That's a good but vague idea, especially given the funding gap identified above. The plan should commit to a way to see, in real time, where implementation is falling behind and why — ideally through a live public dashboard rather than an annual report.

Questions:

1. Which near-term actions have committed funding today, and which are contingent on grants or financing not yet secured?
2. How does the County reconcile adopting a CCAAP implementation plan requiring 12.5 FTE and \$16.7 million a year while cutting its General Fund commitment to the office that runs it by 60%?
3. Federal grant funding is increasingly uncertain. What is the County's contingency if intergovernmental revenues don't materialize? Are there actions the County considers non-negotiable regardless of grant outcomes?
4. Will the County commit to an annual implementation report to the Alternative Energy & Environment Committee and the Board, tracking our progress and setbacks toward the County's climate goals, as well as funding secured versus funding needed?
5. Will Action IM-3.3's "digital portal or dashboard" be a public-facing, regularly updated tool rather than a static annual report, so gaps are visible in real time rather than hindsight?

Gap 3: Parks, green space, and Fort Ord

The CCAAP's natural and working lands strategies require a County-level planning document to anchor them. NWL-4 targets green space expansion and urban tree canopy in climate-vulnerable and underserved communities. ADPT-1.3 builds a resilience hub network in accessible public facilities. NWL-4.4 commits County support for the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District's strategic plan. All three strategies need a County Parks Master Plan to be implementable. While a Parks Master Plan has been partially funded, the County needs to prioritize its development and adoption.

Many of the County's parks lie in under-resourced areas of the County, but the draft CCAAP only commits to supporting the Monterey Peninsula Regional Parks District — whose parks, green spaces and other public assets are concentrated in more affluent areas of the County. This is an equity concern.

The plan's prioritization matrix (Appendix E) scores NWL-4.4 at zero for County control, explicitly noting that "the County does not oversee the plan's implementation." That means the County's most direct parks commitment in the CCAAP is one it can't deliver on. The County's Public Works, Facilities and Parks (PWFP) Department is named as an implementing partner across multiple NWL actions, but it has neither the staff capacity nor a Parks Master Plan to drive their execution.

Tree Equity Score data in the plan (Figure 4.11) shows that Census block groups near the former Fort Ord have among the lowest scores in unincorporated Monterey County, indicating the highest priority for tree planting and green space investment. The plan identifies this disparity and commits no site-specific action to address it.

The CCAAP's natural and working lands framework has full jurisdiction over County-owned Fort Ord parcels, and Fort Ord is a direct opportunity for climate action on County land. The County owns Fort Ord parcels that should be considered within the NWL strategy. These parcels are adjacent to some of the unincorporated County's more heat-vulnerable and underserved communities. See: [Vulnerable Communities Platform](#) > [Climate Vulnerability Map](#) and [Fort Ord Zoning Maps](#).

Fort Ord access raises a question the draft plan doesn't address: What transportation infrastructure would support increased visitor and resident use of County land there? That includes road access, transit connections, and bike and pedestrian infrastructure linking Fort Ord to East Garrison, Seaside, and Marina. The SURF! Busway and BRT project already extends service among Salinas, Marina, Seaside, Sand City, and Monterey; and the FORTAG project is building bicycling and pedestrian trail interconnectivity. But the draft CCAAP doesn't connect these projects — or any other transportation strategy — to Fort Ord access specifically.

Questions:

1. Will the County add a near-term implementation action committing PWFP to develop a County Parks Master Plan, with a defined timeline and budget, as the foundational document for NWL-4's green space and tree canopy strategies?
2. The CCAAP scores NWL-4.4 at zero for County control, because the CCAAP's green space outcomes as drafted depend entirely on a partner agency's plan. Will the County add a parallel action it does control: a commitment to its own parks planning and land conservation plans (Habitat Management Plan and Resource Management Plan)?

3. Will the County Parks Master Plan process explicitly address Fort Ord, including public access infrastructure for the County recreation area and all County-owned property on the former Fort Ord, in coordination with BLM, City of Seaside, CSUMB, and Monterey Peninsula College on access to the Fort Ord National Monument?
4. The resilience hub strategy (ADPT-1.3) targets libraries, community centers, and schools. A resourced access point to the County's Fort Ord recreation area could serve the same function, particularly for unincorporated communities near Fort Ord with low tree equity scores and limited green infrastructure, to make the outdoor recreation space more user-friendly for people avoiding the rising heat in other places. Will the County evaluate Fort Ord access points as eligible resilience hub locations — with infrastructure potentially including restrooms and water bottle filling stations — in the final plan?
5. NWL-4.1 commits to community-specific forest management plans that identify high-priority areas underserved by trees and green space. Will the County commit to prioritizing County-owned lands on the former Fort Ord., consistent with the Tree Equity Score data?
6. What transportation infrastructure, whether road access, transit connections such as the SURF! Busway and BRT project, or bike and pedestrian routes, would be needed to support public access to County-owned Fort Ord land? Will the final CCAAP address this alongside the Parks Master Plan and resilience hub questions above?

Gap 4: Energy independence and microgrids

I support Action BE-2.5's commitment to renewable microgrids at schools, hospitals, and community centers, and ADPT-1.3's pairing of resilience hubs with solar microgrids. The list appears incomplete.

Energy resilience during a climate emergency depends on keeping critical infrastructure running when the grid goes down. Water treatment and pumping, fire stations, and emergency operations centers are as essential as libraries and community centers. The CCAAP's microgrid strategy doesn't mention them.

Agricultural operations face a similar gap. Cold storage for harvested produce depends on continuous power, and a multi-day outage can mean spoiled crops, real economic loss for growers, and a food security concern given Monterey County's role in the state's produce supply. Growers also rely on generator power to keep drainage and flood-control pumps running during storm events, which is its own adaptation need given the flooding risks addressed in Chapter 5. BE-2.5 and ADPT-1.3 name schools, hospitals, and community centers as priority sites; the plan doesn't address agricultural cold storage or on-farm backup power, despite naming agriculture as a priority sector elsewhere, including BE-2.9's agrivoltaics provision and OR-1.6's Ag Electrification Program.

Questions:

1. Will the County expand BE-2.5 to include water and wastewater facilities, fire stations, and emergency operations centers as priority microgrid sites?
2. The plan names Monterey One Water and the water districts as partners in other strategies. Has the County assessed the energy vulnerability of those facilities during extended outage events? If so, what did that assessment find?
3. Will the County assess agricultural cold storage and other critical on-farm infrastructure, including flood-control pumps, for inclusion as priority sites for microgrids or backup power, consistent with the County's other agricultural energy initiatives such as BE-2.9 and OR-1.6?
4. Electric bus depots with battery storage can function as both grid assets and emergency energy resources. Will the County work with MST and TAMC to evaluate whether transit facilities qualify as resilience hub locations under ADPT-1.3?
5. The CCAAP and the Municipal Climate Action Plan both address County facilities and energy. Where does the microgrid strategy for County-owned buildings live, and how are the two plans being coordinated to avoid gaps?

Gap 5: Energy demands from water projects

The leading solutions to Monterey County's water-supply problem — with the notable exception of conservation — bring intensive energy demands that can drive up emissions. This is not adequately addressed in the draft CCAAP.

The region is currently grappling with hard choices about water supply projects whose energy demands will shape our emissions trajectory for decades. Monterey One Water's Pure Water Monterey Groundwater Replenishment Project, which recycles wastewater into drinking water through a four-step process of ozone treatment, membrane filtration, reverse osmosis, and advanced oxidation, is one example. It solves a supply problem, and it's also considerably more energy-intensive than the groundwater pumping and surface water treatment it displaces. The Pure Water Expansion Project would scale that facility to 7.6 million gallons per day. The Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project and any future desalination proposal carry the same tradeoff, and desalination in particular is one of the most energy-intensive ways to produce drinking water.

None of this shows up in the CCAAP's emissions accounting. The plan's water supply emissions category is modeled to fall from 68 MTCO₂e in 2019 to zero by 2045, based on the

assumption that PG&E's grid keeps decarbonizing under SB 100 and SB 1020. That's a reasonable way to model today's existing water systems. It is not a reasonable way to model a region actively expanding advanced water treatment and, potentially, adding desalination within this plan's horizon.

A case can be made that this is out of the County's direct control, since the County doesn't directly operate Monterey One Water, MPWMD, or PG&E, and energy demand ultimately depends on decisions made by those agencies and the PUC. I'd push back on treating that as a reason to leave it out. The County's Sustainability Program, already stretched thin relative to what this plan calls for, doesn't need to control these projects to account for them. It needs visibility into what the region's water agencies are planning, and a way to fold that into the County's own emissions forecast so the CCAAP's numbers reflect the water future Monterey County is building toward. This is the kind of cross-agency coordination the plan will need throughout implementation.

Questions:

1. Has the County modeled the emissions impact of the Pure Water Monterey Project, the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project, or any desalination proposal under consideration in the region? If not, will the County commit to doing so before the plan is finalized?
2. Water supply emissions are forecast to reach zero by 2045 based solely on grid decarbonization. Does that forecast include any assumption about new or expanded water treatment infrastructure coming online in that timeframe?
3. Will the County establish a standing coordination process with MCWRA, Monterey One Water, and MPWMD to track the energy and emissions implications of water supply decisions as they're made, rather than revisiting this only at the next major plan update?
4. If the region ultimately pursues desalination as part of closing its water supply gap, what would that mean for the County's 2045 emissions target, and has the County modeled that scenario?

Gap 6: Public health and disaster readiness

ADPT-1.2's strategy description names three state and federal partners: the California Department of Public Health, the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, and the CDC. It refers only generically to "other local partners." The Monterey County Health Department isn't named in that description. It does appear as the lead implementing department in Chapter 7's action tracking table, alongside IGLA, with Natividad Community Hospital Management Partners listed as a partner organization.

The Health Department should be positioned more centrally in the plan, with the accountability measures and resourcing needed to do so successfully. It's the County department that will operationalize much of this work, receive the data, and connect it to existing county programs.

Questions:

1. Will ADPT-1.2's strategy description name the Monterey County Health Department directly, consistent with its role as lead implementing department in Table 7.3, rather than referring to it only as one of "other local partners"?
2. Has the County Health Department's current capacity to take on this data collection and reporting role been assessed as part of the plan's implementation analysis?
3. Will Action ADPT-1.1 commit to multilingual emergency alerts and accessible formats, such as audio or image-based materials, for residents with limited English proficiency or limited literacy?

Gap 7: Environmental and climate justice

It's evident that the County's draft CCAAP and draft Environmental Justice Element were developed on separate tracks. They should instead cross-reference one another, and their implementation plans should be deeply integrated.

The EJ Element carries the same legal weight as any other General Plan element, and its baseline conditions document specific, documented harm in this district: nitrate and total dissolved solids contamination in San Lucas's drinking water dating to 2011; elevated pesticide exposure in Boronda, Castroville, Chualar, Las Lomas, Moss Landing, and Pajaro; and groundwater threat scores above the 75th percentile in Bradley, Lockwood, and San Ardo.

None of this appears in the CCAAP. The plan integrates equity considerations (the Equity Panel, AEEC's environmental justice mandate, equity scoring criterion in the prioritization matrix), but I don't see it tied to the EJ Element's goals, policies, or disadvantaged-community designations.

The two plans will need to coordinate operationally. The EJ Element proposes a Five-Year Environmental Justice Implementation Plan (EJ-1.4) and a standing Citizen Advisory Committee (EJ-1.5) that will track adjacent ground to the CCAAP's own Chapter 7 implementation and monitoring framework. Without an explicit connection between them, the County risks building two accountability structures that don't talk to each other. The AEEC's expanded environmental justice advisory role adds a third structure to that same coordination problem. It's positioned to advise on climate action, CCAAP implementation, and environmental justice, but isn't described as a convener bringing other County departments into that work.

Civic engagement in the EJ Element and the CCAAP both depend on the same practical constraints: whether residents can physically access a meeting, understand the material in their language, and trust that the County will be responsive to their input. EJ-1.2 calls for funding to directly hire and pay community-based organizations to do outreach, rather than asking CBOs to absorb that work unpaid. The CCAAP's IM-1 and IM-2 strategies commit to bilingual materials and CBO partnerships, but stop short of committing funding for CBO capacity, and they don't commit to non-text formats for residents with limited literacy.

Questions:

1. Will the final CCAAP cite the Environmental Justice Element's goals and policies directly, particularly EJ-2 (pollution exposure) and EJ-6 (housing), where the two plans overlap most?
2. Does the CCAAP's Chapter 7 implementation and monitoring framework coordinate with the EJE's Five-Year Environmental Justice Implementation Plan (EJ-1.4), or will the County track these separately?
3. Will the EJE's Citizen Advisory Committee (EJ-1.5) have a defined role in CCAAP implementation, given the overlap in subject matter and community outreach?
4. The CCAAP's equity criterion in the prioritization matrix (Appendix E) is applied after strategies are drafted. Did the County use the EJE's CalEnviroScreen-based disadvantaged-community mapping as an input to strategy development, or only as a scoring check afterward?
5. Will the CCAAP commit funding, not just partnership language, for community-based organizations doing direct outreach, consistent with EJ-1.2? Will the County commit to producing key CCAAP outreach materials in accessible, non-text formats for residents with limited literacy – such as images, video, and audio?
6. Will the AEEC or the EJ Citizen Advisory Committee be given an explicit role convening CCAAP implementation across County departments, versus just advising on climate-specific actions?

Gap 8: Emissions from agriculture

The draft CCAAP is upfront about its omission of a solution to a significant problem. Agriculture, primarily grazing livestock, is projected to be the largest remaining emissions source in 2045. The County's response is to maintain carbon stock in natural and working lands, citing the economic value of the ag sector and the fact that Monterey County's grassfed operations already emit at lower rates than feedlot operations.

I understand the reasoning. I represent a district where agriculture is both an economic foundation and a land use reality, and I'm not asking the County to override that. I'm asking the County to be more specific about what closing the gap requires.

The plan's 2045 target is 86% below 2019 levels. The plan's strategies get the County to about 72% below 2019. The remainder depends on carbon stock in natural and working lands that is maintained. That leaves a gap of 157,000 metric tons of carbon equivalents, with no committed pathway to close it.

This emissions gap has a pollution-exposure dimension too. The EJ Element calls for stronger pollution controls at agricultural facilities near disadvantaged communities, prioritizing the county's northern areas, citing elevated pesticide exposure in communities including Boronda, Castroville, Chualar, and San Lucas. NWL-3's climate-smart agriculture strategies address carbon and soil health, not pesticide exposure or facility-level pollution controls. Closing the ag emissions gap and addressing agriculture's health impacts on nearby communities are two different problems, and the plan currently addresses neither fully.

Residents along agricultural haul routes raised a distinct exposure pathway: dust and particulate matter agitated by truck traffic, concentrated in communities along those routes. This is separate from the field-level pesticide exposure described above; NWL-3 doesn't address it either. Reducing residents' exposure to ag truck emissions was some of the most consistent feedback the County heard directly during outreach, and the CCAAP should respond.

This gap reflects a deeper accounting problem. The CCAAP's methodology states that the County's inventory "does not account for embedded or lifecycle GHG emissions" and that it "evaluates emissions using the production-based approach." That means the manufacturing emissions behind the fertilizer and pesticide products used in this county aren't counted anywhere. The County's updated estimate of agricultural nitrogen inputs, based on actual Regional Water Quality Control Board records, is more than three times the County's earlier figure: 71,610 tons of nitrogen applied versus a previous estimate of 21,516 tons.

That data shows up as a health impact for vulnerable people in our community. San Lucas's drinking water problems, described in Gap 1, are driven by nitrate contamination. As a result, the County and local water districts have had to fund water treatment and remediation infrastructure. A full accounting of agricultural inputs would weigh their production emissions and their cleanup costs against their economic value.

Questions:

1. The plan assumes carbon stock will be maintained through 2045 through climate-smart agriculture and natural lands management. What acreage commitments and land management practices underlie that assumption? How will the County track progress?
2. NWL-3 commits to 3,832 acres of regenerative agricultural practices and cropland conservation annually by 2030. What is the baseline acreage today, and what is the

County's mechanism for securing voluntary participation from landowners at the scale needed?

3. The plan defers the 2045 gap to carbon stock rather than emissions reduction. Has the County modeled what it would take to close that gap through additional sequestration, and what land area would be required? If that analysis exists, I'd ask that it be included in the final plan so the Board and the public understand the scale of the commitment.
4. If carbon stock in natural and working lands declines rather than holds steady — due to drought, fire, or conversion — the 2045 target becomes even further out of reach. What is the contingency plan if the carbon stock assumptions in Chapter 4 don't hold up?
5. Does NWL-3's climate-smart agriculture work intersect with the EJ Element's call for stronger pollution controls at agricultural facilities near disadvantaged communities? If not, should it?
6. Has the County identified agricultural haul routes with the highest truck traffic near residential areas, and does any CCAAP strategy address dust and particulate matter exposure from that traffic? Beyond identifying high-traffic haul routes, will the County pursue targeted incentives for zero-emission trucks on routes closest to residential areas, ahead of the countywide TR-2 heavy-duty EV targets, which apply uniformly without route-specific prioritization?
7. Given that the community inventory doesn't count the upstream production emissions embodied in fertilizer and pesticide products, has the County estimated those emissions through any parallel analysis? Has it separately estimated the public cost of water infrastructure and remediation tied to agricultural input use? I'd ask that the County weigh both alongside the sector's economic value.

Gap 9: Oil and gas emissions and local authority

The draft CCAAP excludes the oil and gas sector from the community greenhouse gas inventory on the basis that the County has no operational control, regulatory authority, or significant influence over these emissions sources.

That's no longer accurate. AB 3233, signed into law in September 2024, gives local governments explicit authority to regulate, limit, or prohibit oil and gas operations by ordinance, including the methods and locations of that development. The bill responded directly to this county's experience: It followed *Chevron U.S.A. v. County of Monterey*, in which the County's own Measure Z was struck down after industry litigation, and it was written to restore the authority the County lost in that case.

I'm not asking the County to commit to specific oil and gas actions in this plan cycle. I am asking that the plan's factual and legal basis for excluding this sector be corrected. The excluded emissions are significant: 83,245 MTCO₂e in 2019, with roughly 80 percent of that as fugitive methane, much of it from uncapped and idle wells.

Questions:

1. Will the final CCAAP be updated to reflect AB 3233 and its effect on the County's regulatory authority over oil and gas operations?
2. Given that authority now exists, will the County reconsider the oil and gas sector's exclusion from the community inventory, even if specific reduction actions are deferred to a future plan update?
3. AB 1866, signed the same day as AB 3233, adds oversight requirements for idle wells that can leak and contaminate. Has the County reviewed AB 1866 for any obligations relevant to Monterey County's oil fields?
4. The County could, in the future, develop a local ordinance requiring that idle or uncapped wells be capped. Should the CCAAP reference this as a potential County action, even if it sits outside the plan's strategies?

Gap 10: Housing density, infill, and climate-friendly development incentives

TR-1.5 commits the County to "implement the policies and programs of the 2023-2031 Housing Element to rezone for higher density development," but that's the extent of the CCAAP's commitment. The plan doesn't name the specific tools that make infill development happen: streamlined permitting for ADUs, remodels, and new construction; density bonuses tied to high-performance or all-electric building standards; or reduced parking requirements near transit.

The County's community workshop feedback, included in the plan's appendix, shows this was some of the most requested action in the entire planning process: streamlining the building permit process for remodels, additions, ADUs, and new construction drew 43 responses and the workshop's highest priority ranking. Streamlining ADU permitting specifically drew 41. Residents connected these asks directly to climate outcomes, and several specifically asked that any streamlining be paired with electrification requirements. More infill housing means fewer vehicle miles traveled and lower building energy emissions per household.

The Strategic Growth Council's Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program funds infill housing and transportation projects to advance climate and equity goals together. It appears in the CCAAP's funding appendix and should be leveraged.

Questions:

1. Will the CCAAP name specific infill and density incentives, such as streamlined ADU and remodel permitting, density bonuses for high-performance or all-electric buildings, or reduced parking minimums near transit, rather than deferring entirely to the Housing Element's implementation?
2. Will TR-1.5 commit to pairing any density or permitting incentives with electrification requirements, as community feedback specifically requested?
3. Will the County pursue Strategic Growth Council AHSC funding, or a similar program, to connect infill housing incentives to an actual funding source, rather than listing it only as a general option in the appendix?
4. Best practices for climate-friendly infill development, such as by-right approval for qualifying projects or reduced parking requirements, exist in other California jurisdictions. Will the County reference specific models it's considering adopting?

Final thoughts

Climate change doesn't respect department lines, and neither should our response to it. Every gap I've raised here – water, parks, energy, public health, agriculture, environmental justice and others — touches more than one County department. Closing them will take intentional, ongoing interagency collaboration. I'd like the County to approach implementation in the spirit of a convener: bringing together Public Works, Health, Housing, Emergency Management, Water Resources, and community partners around a shared set of commitments, so progress isn't happening in separate and uncoordinated work streams.

Equity, health, and community justice should be woven throughout this plan rather than siloed in their own sections. They're values that should guide every implementation decision the County makes, from which flood project gets funded first to which neighborhood gets the next tree-planting grant. I'd like this plan to follow that standard.

We don't want this plan to exist only on paper. The 2015 Paris Accords set a global climate ambition the world didn't meet. This plan should be more than an ambition. The County has a responsibility to set its CCAAP up for success by resourcing it and keeping it on track.

I'm committed to working with County staff and my colleagues on the Board to strengthen this plan before adoption. Our residents are relying on us to protect our clean air and water, not only for future generations, but also for our residents today. The CCAAP is the County's most significant climate policy document. It should reflect the full scope of what the climate challenge Monterey County faces and what the County is prepared to do about it.