

Supervisors Should Take Action on Climate Change

Climate Change has our area in its crosshairs. Ventura County has been reported as the fastest-warming county in the country. Despite last winter's good rainfall, the county is projected to again be in significant long-term drought with elevated temperatures and water shortages. The Thomas and Woolsey fires devastated the county and a Cal Fire representative has stated that "firefighters are on the front lines of climate change." Ventura County has more than forty miles of coastline subject to the consequences of ongoing sea level rise. These local climate change impacts cannot be responsibly denied.

The Board of Supervisors has the opportunity to take important action to reduce Ventura County's contributions to the greenhouse gas emissions that feed climate change / global warming as called for in the County's Climate Action Plan. On September 12th, there will be two public hearings at the Board that deal with reducing greenhouse gas emissions which will help with the ultimate goal of achieving State emission reduction targets.

At 10 am, the Board will consider whether to settle an oil company lawsuit trying to overturn regulations on oil and gas operations adopted by the previous Board in 2020. Those 2020 regulations include a ban on flaring natural gas produced by new wells (except for emergencies). Flaring produces air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions and wastes an important energy resource without providing any benefit whatsoever. The Board should reject oil company efforts to undo this important regulation.

At 11 am, the Board will hear two proposals from the Ventura County Climate Emergency Council (VCCEC) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from burning natural gas in buildings. The first is a proposed policy to electrify County-owned buildings by converting systems burning natural gas to electric heat pumps (where feasible), particularly at the time of equipment replacement. A number of California jurisdictions have adopted this policy including the City of Ojai. The second proposal is the creation of a program to encourage the voluntary retrofit electrification of existing residential and non-residential buildings, again to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This program would include education about financial incentives available for building owners including the Inflation Reduction Act.

The Board of Supervisors has the opportunity to act on Climate Change, and County residents should encourage them to do so now.

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