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February 14, 2020

Director John Ford
Humboldt County Planning Department
3015 H St
Eureka, CA 95501

Dear Director Ford,

On behalf of the Environmental Protection Information Center and the Friends of the Eel River, please accept this letter on the forthcoming multijurisdictional Climate Action Plan.

In setting a greenhouse gas emissions reduction target, the county needs to be in line with the best available science, in line with state-mandated goals, and provide sufficient benchmarks that the public and county can gauge progress. We recommend that the Climate Action Plan set a goal of zero net carbon emissions by 2045, with a benchmark of 50% emission reductions from 2015 emissions levels by 2030 (hereafter “zero net target”).

A zero net target is in line with the United Nations International Panel on Climate Change, which found that to limit warming to 1.5°C implies reaching zero net emissions by 2050 and approximately 50% net reductions by 2030. (Rogelj 2018 (“In model pathways with no or limited overshoot of 1.5°C, global net anthropogenic CO₂ emissions decline by about 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 (40–60% interquartile range), reaching net zero around 2050 (2045–2055 interquartile range).”))

A zero net target is likewise in line with existing California state law. California has set various targets for global greenhouse gas emissions and the county is obligated to set a target that conforms with state requirements. Given multiple potential emission targets, we recommend that the county set the target in line with the most ambitious target yet issued and the most recently issued target. In 2018, Governor Brown issued Executive Order B-55-18 which ordered the state to achieve carbon neutrality no later than 2045 and maintain negative emissions thereafter. Our proposed zero net target builds off Governor Brown’s order by providing clearer intermediate direction of 50% emission reductions compared to 2015 emission levels.

Our climate crisis demands bold and immediate action. We are committed to working with you and the county to address this existential threat. Thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

Tom Wheeler
Executive Director, EPIC

Rogelj, J., D. Shindell, K. Jiang, S. Fifita, P. Forster, V. Ginzburg, C. Handa, H. Kheshgi, S. Kobayashi, E. Kriegler, L. Mundaca, R. Séférian, and M.V. Vilariño, 2018: Mitigation Pathways Compatible with 1.5°C in the Context of Sustainable Development. In: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, H.-O. Pörtner, D. Roberts, J. Skea, P.R. Shukla, A. Pirani, W. Moufouma-Okia, C. Péan, R. Pidcock, S. Connors, J.B.R. Matthews, Y. Chen, X. Zhou, M.I. Gomis, E. Lonnoy, T. Maycock, M. Tignor, and T. Waterfield (eds.)]. In Press.

Available at:

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/02/SR15_Chapter2_Low_Res.pdf