

# County of Santa Clara

Department of Planning and Development  
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California Office of Planning & Research  
P.O. Box 3022,  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

RE: Comments from the County of Santa Clara Department of Planning & Development regarding proposed changes to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines to address Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the draft changes to the CEQA guidelines regarding greenhouse gas emissions, consistent with requirements under SB 97. Please find below our brief comments regarding the proposed changes.

Section 15093 (d)- This section describes “region-wide or statewide benefits” to be referenced in making a Statement of Overriding Considerations. It is unclear what is the exact intent of this revision and more specificity should be included. Would an example be the provision of construction aggregate for state highway construction, etc?

Section 15126.4 (c)(5) - In referencing mitigation measures in the form of off-site measures or carbon offsets, the proposed revisions to this section state that the measures must be a “ part of a reasonable plan of mitigation that the relevant agency commits itself to implement”. This wording is vague and it would be difficult for someone to define or discern “reasonable plan”. Wording regarding the use of offsets should contain more definite and stronger language similar to wording used under Section 15126.4(a) (2).

Section 15130 (d) and (e) – To provide consistency in addressing cumulative impacts, the language added to section (d), should also be added to section (e): “regional transportation plans, regional blueprint plans, climate action plans, sustainable community strategies”.

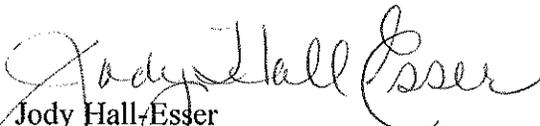
Section 15152 (h)(7)(i) - This section refers to an applicable “regional or local plan”. It is unclear exactly what type of plan is being referred to. Is this a General Plan or Regional Blueprint plan? This section should refer to plans listed under Section 15130(d) as referenced above for consistency.

Appendix G-

II. Agricultural and Forest Resources. The proposed modifications reference the use of California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection standards and the Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board in determining if a project would result in significant impacts to forest land. The current Forest Sector Protocols are lengthy and difficult to apply, and include a calculation of carbon absorption with lying dead wood and herbaceous understory. This methodology would be very difficult to apply to routine CEQA analysis of projects which interface forest lands. We recommend that the CEQA guidelines use a more simple methodology for evaluating forest land conversion impacts. Also, this section has overlap with provisions to evaluate Oak Woodlands impacts under the Oak Woodlands Conservation Law (Public Resources Code 21083.4). We recommend that any proposed forest land impacts and mitigation methodologies be consistent with this statute.

We look forward to reviewing the revised CEQA Guidelines when they are available. If you have any questions regarding these comments, please do not hesitate to contact Rob Eastwood at (408) 299-5792.

Sincerely,



Jody Hall-Esser  
Director of Planning and Development



Michael M. Lopez  
Planning Manager



Rob Eastwood AICP  
Senior Planner