SCAQMD Climate Change Policy
September 5, 2008

It is the policy of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) to actively seek opportunities to reduce emissions of criteria, toxic, and climate change pollutants and maximize synergistic effects of strategies that reduce emissions in more than one of these categories. It is the policy of the SCAQMD to assist businesses and local governments implementing climate change measures, decrease the agency's carbon footprint and provide information regarding climate change to the public. If greenhouse gas reduction strategies have potential negative impacts or slow progress in reducing criteria or toxic pollutants, the impacts must be carefully evaluated and disclosed. In these instances, public health protection should prevail in the majority of circumstances. This policy provides additional direction to staff relative to future actions related to greenhouse gas emission reductions and climate change.

Pursuant to this policy, the District staff will take the following actions:

1. Climate Change Programs

Work cooperatively with other agencies/entities to develop quantification protocols, rules, and programs related to greenhouse gases. Assist CARB in achieving AB 32 goals. Staff will actively pursue funding opportunities for research projects and for emission reduction projects in the South Coast Air Basin, particularly those that would benefit environmental justice areas. Participate in the development of programs at the state, multi-state, and federal level that impact Basin residents, to protect air quality and that impact SCAQMD sources to proactively resolve any potential conflicts related to rules, permitting, and inspections and seek to integrate requirements in an efficient manner into climate change programs.

2. SCAQMD Command-and-Control and Market-Based Rules

Share experiences and lessons learned relative to the Regional Clean Air Incentives Market (RECLAIM) to help inform state, multi-state, and federal development of effective, enforceable cap-and-trade programs. To the extent practicable, staff will actively engage in current and future regulatory development to ensure that early actions taken by local businesses and local governments to reduce greenhouse gases will be treated fairly and equitably. Staff will seek to streamline administrative procedures to the extent feasible to facilitate the implementation of AB 32 measures. Evaluate and incorporate concurrent greenhouse gas benefits in Proposed Rule 2301 – Control of Emissions from New or Redevelopment Projects, an indirect source rule that will reduce emissions through mechanisms such as energy usage and vehicle miles traveled. As SCAQMD amends its rules in the future, staff will consider further greenhouse gas reduction opportunities consistent with the goals of AB 32.

3. Legislation

Review and comment on proposed legislation related to climate change and greenhouse gases, pursuant to the 'Guiding Principles for SCAQMD Staff Comments on Legislation Relating to Climate Change' approved at the Board Special Meeting in April 2008.

4. Prioritization

When criteria and toxic benefits of a project are equal, consider giving higher priority to Technology Advancement Office (TAO) projects or contracts that also reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

5. CEQA

Develop recommendations through a public process for an interim greenhouse gas CEQA significance threshold, until such time that an applicable and appropriate statewide greenhouse gas significance level is established. Provide guidance on analyzing greenhouse gas emissions and identify mitigation measures. Continue to consider and mitigate GHG impacts in SCAQMD lead agency documents and submit comments on GHG impacts and mitigation measures when SCAQMD is a responsible agency.

6. Guidance Document

Revise the SCAQMD's Guidance Document for Addressing Air Quality Issues in General Plans and Local Planning to include information on greenhouse gas strategies as a resource for local governments. The Guidance Document will be consistent with state guidance, including CARB's Scoping Plan.

7. Inventory

Update the Basin's greenhouse gas inventory in conjunction with each Air Quality Management Plan. Information and data used will be determined in consultation with CARB, to ensure consistency with state programs. Staff will also assist local governments in developing greenhouse gas inventories.* Assumptions and methodologies used will be documented to assist other jurisdictions in establishing inventories.

8. Reducing SCAQMD Climate Change Impacts

Bring recommendations to the Board on how the agency can reduce its own carbon footprint from operation of its buildings, purchases and employee work-related activities, including drafting a Green Building Policy with recommendations regarding SCAQMD purchases, building maintenance, and other areas of products and services. Assess employee travel, as well as other activities that are not part of a GHG inventory, per se, and determine what greenhouse gas emissions these activities represent, how they could be reduced, and what it would cost to offset the emissions.

*For example, staff is working with the County of San Bernardino to develop 1990, current and 2020 inventories.

9. Education

Provide multi-lingual educational materials concerning climate change and available actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on the SCAQMD website, in brochures, and other venues to help cities and counties, businesses, households, schools, and others learn about ways to reduce their electricity and water use through conservation or other efforts, improve energy efficiency, reduce vehicle miles traveled, access alternative mobility resources, utilize low emission vehicles and implement other climate friendly strategies.

10. Conferences

Conduct conferences, or include topics in other conferences, as appropriate, related to various aspects of climate change, including understanding impacts, technology advancement, public education, and other emerging aspects of climate change science.