



# WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

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## STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: March 11, 2025

**DATE:** February 12, 2025

**TO:** Board of County Commissioners

**FROM:** Brian Beffort, Sustainability Manager, Office of County Manager  
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**THROUGH:** Eric Brown, County Manager

**SUBJECT:** Recommendation to approve Washoe County's Climate Action Plan (CAP) to guide greenhouse gas reductions to meet the County's commitment to Net Zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. This plan addresses GHG emissions in both County Operations and community wide. The CAP recommends 126 actions to reduce emissions across four sectors: land use, transportation, buildings, and waste. This item does not constitute funding or budget approval for any of the components of the plan itself; any such funding, expenditures, or budget authority necessary to implement individual components of the plan will be brought back before the Board for approval as necessary. Manager's Office. (All Commission Districts.) **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

### SUMMARY

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) outlines a comprehensive strategy to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and address climate change priorities within County Operations and Community-Wide. The plan proposes 126 specific actions across land use, transportation, building energy-use and waste management to achieve the County's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050. All proposed actions are outlined in the attached documents.

### **Key highlights of the draft Climate Action Plan:**

- **GHG Emissions Reduction Goals:** The CAP sets targets and provides actions to reduce GHG emissions, aiming for a 45% reduction by 2030 toward net-zero emissions by 2050.
- **Community Engagement:** The CAP emphasizes the importance of community involvement and includes recommendations gathered from more than 1,000 stakeholders and residents from surveys, listening sessions and community events.
- **Equity and Environmental Justice:** The CAP prioritizes actions that improve outcomes for vulnerable populations who experience undue burdens from climate- and weather-related impacts.
- **Implementation and Monitoring:** The CAP includes a framework for County departments and regional stakeholders to implement the proposed actions and monitor progress through regular GHG inventories, performance dashboards and key performance indicators (KPIs).

**AGENDA ITEM # \_\_\_\_\_**

**Expected Benefits from this Climate Action Plan:**

- **Cost Savings & Economic Growth.** Many of the recommended actions involve technologies (e.g. LED lights, heat pumps and electric vehicles) that can save the County and taxpayers money on energy bills. The expansion of this energy efficient economy is already creating business and job growth, as with the Nevada Tech Hub, the local Lithium Loop effort to build a circular lithium economy in the region.
- **Cleaner Air & Healthier Communities.** Reducing dangerous emissions of dangerous gases improves air quality immediately, which in turn means fewer lung problems, heart problems, birth defects and cancer. In five of the last six years, Washoe County has violated one or more of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). In 2024, Washoe received failing grades for both Ozone and Particle Pollution the American Lung Association’s State of the Air Report.
- **Reducing Extreme Heat.** Reno is now the fastest-warming metropolitan in the United States. Reducing emissions and planting trees can help lower our urban heat.
- **Safeguarding Local Lands & Natural Resources.** This CAP proposes actions that help protect native habitats for species like mule deer, pronghorn antelope, sage grouse, Cui-ui, Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, native birds, reptiles and other animals that depend on healthy plant communities and the Truckee River.
- **Advancing Climate Equity.** Vulnerable populations such as the elderly or chronically ill, low-income families and people of color endure more extreme climate-related impacts. This CAP identifies actions that improve outcomes for these vulnerable populations.
- **Strengthening Community Resilience.** Many of the actions presented in this CAP will increase the ability of people, businesses, infrastructure, and our local environment to prevent, withstand and recover from stressful events. As examples, weatherization retrofits for homes can extend building comfort from hours to days in times of extreme heat and cold.

**Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item (move to section right under ‘Summary’)**

**Economic Impacts:** Support a thriving community.

- FY24: NET ZERO: Plan interim steps to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
- FY25: NET ZERO: Implement the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Plan to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

**PREVIOUS ACTION**

- **On February 3, 2025,** Washoe County published a county-wide Greenhouse Gas Inventory for the year 2021.
- **On May 23, 2023,** the Board approved the Green Recovery Plan, which recommends the County reduce greenhouse gas emissions and establish an Urban Forestry program, with funding provided to support initiatives.

- **On January 25, 2023**, the Board approved funding for a Sustainability Manager position to lead greenhouse gas emission reductions and sustainability initiatives.
- **On April 19, 2021**, the Board approved a three-year agreement with Ledger 8760 (now nZero) to provide a software platform for calculating and displaying real-time energy use and emissions data from county operations.
- **In Fiscal Year 2021**, the County added “Innovative Services: Promote Experimentation & Innovation: Environmental Sustainability” to the Strategic Plan.
- **In June 2016**, Washoe County published a county-wide Greenhouse Gas Inventory for the year 2014.
- **On July 27, 2010**, the Board directed the Green Team to proceed with Milestone 2 of the ICLEI approach, which involved setting a greenhouse gas emissions reduction target. This was part of a broader strategy to develop a comprehensive energy policy.
- **On October 28, 2008**, the Board approved a motion to join the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and set greenhouse gas emission milestones. ICLEI continues to provide the County resources and guidance on our sustainability efforts.
- **In 2008**, the County established the Green Team to guide the County’s work toward emissions reductions, renewable energy and other sustainability projects.
- **In May 1997**, the County joined a regional Sustainable Community Task Force to establish goals and standards around waste-reduction, preventing pollution, resource conservation, water quality and energy efficiency.

## **BACKGROUND**

Washoe County enjoys a vibrant, diverse economy that attracts families and companies with its diverse, resilient economy and abundant cultural and outdoor recreation opportunities. Unfortunately, the impacts from our changing climate threaten our region’s environment, public health, economy and quality of life. Reno is the fastest-warming city in the United States. Snow, rain, fires, smoke and droughts are becoming more intense and unpredictable, straining the County's resources to respond, and costing our region billions of dollars in emergency response, health care, and higher energy costs. Many of these impacts fall on those who can least afford to adapt (low-income and communities of color who have been overburdened and/or underserved in regarding extreme heat, energy burden, health, housing, pollution, transportation and workforce development).

For decades, the Board has directed staff to reduce greenhouse gas reductions and other sustainability best practices. This Climate Action Plan provides the County, regional stakeholders and consumers strategies and actions to minimize and prepare for projected widespread and intensifying challenges.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact to adopting the Climate Action Plan (CAP). For every CAP action that requires significant investment (e.g., electric vehicles, energy efficiency upgrades, solar panels, etc.), many operational and fiscal decisions will be brought to the Board of County Commissioners for approval. Like other decisions made by departments, Budget, Finance, and executive leadership will evaluate the costs, benefits and Return On Investment of each proposal. In most cases, proposed actions within this plan will deliver long-term economic, environmental and social benefits.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Recommendation to approve Washoe County’s Climate Action Plan (CAP) to guide greenhouse gas reductions to meet the County’s commitment to Net Zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. This plan addresses GHG emissions in both County Operations and community wide. The CAP recommends 126 actions to reduce emissions across four sectors: land use, transportation, buildings, and waste. Manager’s Office. (All Commission Districts.)

**POSSIBLE MOTION**

If approved, a possible motion might be:  
“Motion to approve Washoe County’s Climate Action Plan (CAP) to guide greenhouse gas reductions to meet the County’s commitment to Net Zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. This plan addresses GHG emissions in both County Operations and community wide. The CAP recommends 126 actions to reduce emissions across four sectors: land use, transportation, buildings, and waste. This item does not constitute funding or budget approval for any of the components of the plan itself; any such funding, expenditures, or budget authority necessary to implement individual components of the plan will be brought back before the Board for approval as necessary. Manager’s Office. (All Commission Districts.)”