

MEMORANDUM

To: District Community Advisory Council

From: Molly Pearson, Planning & Grants Supervisor (961-8838)

Subject: Revisions to District Environmental Review Guidelines

Meeting: March 25, 2015

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that all California agencies with potential to act as lead agency prepare a set of guidelines for how they will implement CEQA. To meet this requirement, the District's *Environmental Review Guidelines* were prepared in 1995, and were last revised in 2000. Since the revision in 2000, California has adopted revisions to the CEQA Guidelines (in 2010) to include procedures for the assessment of climate change impacts and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The District proposes to update its *Environmental Review Guidelines* to incorporate general updates and clarifications, revise the list of projects that are considered to be exempt (for air quality impacts) under CEQA, and to include a threshold of significance for GHG emissions.

The thresholds of significance that are included in the *Environmental Review Guidelines* are used by the District when it assumes the role of a CEQA lead agency; they are also recommended for use by other CEQA lead agencies in Santa Barbara County when the agency does not have its own adopted significance thresholds for air quality impacts.

The District embarked on this process to update the *Environmental Review Guidelines* in the spring of 2014. The public review process has involved extensive outreach and noticing, public workshops, publicly accessible stakeholder meetings, and regular email updates on project activities. At public workshops May 6, 2014, May 8, 2014, and December 3, 2014, the District provided background information and outlined options, and received comments before, during and after the workshops. Workshop information, and public comments received during and after the workshops, are available for review online at <http://www.ourair.org/greenhouse-gases-and-ceqa>.

A staff report was prepared that presents two GHG significance threshold options for consideration: A Bright Line Threshold of 10,000 metric tons, and an AB 32 Consistency Threshold. The staff report was posted to the District's website on March 9, 2015, and notice of the availability of the staff report was given to Community Advisory Council (CAC) members on that day.

Notice of the March 25, 2015 CAC meeting and concurrent public workshop was published in Santa Barbara County newspapers and was sent to the District's email list of interested parties for this work effort. The meeting will be a combined public workshop and CAC meeting, so that members of the public can provide comment on the item prior to the CAC making a recommendation on a threshold option.

Recommended Action:

To recommend adoption of the proposed revisions to the Environmental Review Guidelines and a preferred GHG significance threshold to the District Board.

ATTACHMENT:

Revisions to District Environmental Review Guidelines, Staff Report, District Community Advisory Council, March 25, 2015 Meeting