



**Contra
Costa
County**

To: Board of Supervisors

From: John Kopchik, Director, Conservation & Development Department

Date: September 25, 2018

Subject: Amend the County's Legislative Platform to Include Support for Efforts to Price Carbon Emissions

RECOMMENDATION(S):

CONSIDER amending the County's 2018 Federal Legislative Platform to include support for the concept of establishing a national price on carbon emissions to address the cost to society of those emissions, as recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee on Sustainability.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None.

BACKGROUND:

In December 2015, the Board of Supervisors adopted the County's Climate Action Plan, which states the County's commitment to addressing the challenges of climate change by reducing local greenhouse gas emissions while improving community health. On July 23, 2018, the Contra Costa County Sustainability Commission brought to the Ad Hoc Committee on Sustainability (Committee) a recommendation for the County to include in its Federal legislative platform support for a Carbon Fee and Dividend. The Sustainability Commission received this request from the Citizens Climate Lobby, and voted 8-1 to recommend support for the Carbon Fee and Dividend.

☒ APPROVE

☐ OTHER

☐ RECOMMENDATION OF CNTY
ADMINISTRATOR

☒ RECOMMENDATION OF BOARD
COMMITTEE

Action of Board On: **09/25/2018** ☐ APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED ☐ OTHER

Clerks Notes:

VOTE OF SUPERVISORS

I hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of an action taken and entered on the minutes of the Board of Supervisors on the date shown.

ATTESTED: September 25, 2018

Contact: Jody London,
DCD, 925-674-7871

David Twa, County Administrator and Clerk of the Board of
Supervisors

By: , Deputy

cc:

BACKGROUND: (CONT'D)

As explained in the communication from the Sustainability Commission (attached), the Carbon Fee and Dividend would put a federal price on carbon-based fuels with the goal of having the price charged to consumers reflect the true costs of those fuels to society. The funds collected through this fee would be placed in a trust and returned to all American households in equal, monthly, per-person dividend payments. According to the analysis presented by the Sustainability Commission, two-thirds of all American households will break even or come out ahead. Lower income households would receive a proportionately greater benefit because they spend proportionately more on transportation, heating, and food.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Sustainability had a robust discussion with members of the Sustainability Commission and the public about the Carbon Fee and Dividend proposal. Advocates for the Carbon Fee and Dividend discussed the importance of policies to promote clean energy on public health. They stressed the simplicity of this approach and that lower-income households will see a greater benefit. Others disagreed with the dividend concept, arguing that some of the funds should be directed to government-sponsored programs that build stronger communities and/or research.

The Committee discussed challenges that the dividend proposal presents, including who would benefit, how dividend funds would be allocated and used, and how best to build public support for this concept. The Committee recommended that the County add to its federal legislative platform language that supports the concept of a national price on carbon. The Committee declined to recommend that the County take a position on the dividend, citing concerns that not all of the funds collected should necessarily be returned 100 percent to the public; there may be other public purposes to which those funds should be applied.

Staff notes that the national League of Women Voters at its 2018 national convention voted overwhelmingly to support a similar approach:

“The League of Women Voters stands united with, and in support of, efforts to price carbon emissions, whether cap-and-trade, carbon tax/fee, or another viable pricing mechanism. The League does not have a position on how the revenue generated is to be used. We do not espouse any single method of pricing carbon over another. We will evaluate all proposed methods based on their effectiveness to abate emissions and whether the method can be successfully implemented.”

Staff suggests that the same language may be useful for the County to include in its legislative platform.

CONSEQUENCE OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

If the Board does not amend the County's legislative platform, it will forego an opportunity to influence policies that help mitigate damage to the climate and protect public health.

CHILDREN'S IMPACT STATEMENT:

N/A

CLERK'S ADDENDUM

Speakers: the following members of the Citizens' Climate Lobby spoke in favor of the matter: Michael Kent; Emily Hopkins; Cynthia Mahoney; Pam Murray; Elizabeth Lobos; Doug Merrill. CONTINUED to October 9, 2018.

ATTACHMENTS

Sustainability Commission Recommendation on Carbon Fee and Dividend