COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2025

MINUTE ORDER NO. 13

SUBJECT: CLIMATE CHANGE IS REAL AND SAN DIEGO IS FIGHTING BACK (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

We all saw what happened in Los Angeles. The climate crisis intensified high winds and prolonged drought into an apocalyptic firestorm that leveled neighborhoods and overwhelmed emergency response. Just a year earlier, San Diego was slammed by the most extreme January rainfall since 1850, triggering a "once in a thousand years" flood that displaced 1,200 people and damaged thousands of homes.

The climate crisis isn't a far-off threat. It's here, it's happening, and San Diegans are paying the price. We're seeing catastrophic floods, deadly heat waves, collapsing infrastructure, and skyrocketing insurance premiums. And the costs don't stop when the headlines fade. Rising seas erode our bluffs, destabilize our coastal ecosystems, strain our power grid, degrade our air and water quality, and accelerate risks for dangerous pathogenic diseases.

At the exact moment we need stronger science and smarter planning, federal leaders are dismantling the very protections we rely on to stay safe, gutting climate science, slashing clean energy funding, and giving polluters a free pass. We must fight back, to protect our homes, our health, and the future of our communities.

The science is clear: 99.9% of peer-reviewed climate research confirms that human-caused climate change is accelerating. The past ten years have been the hottest on record. In 2024, the United States experienced 27 climate disasters that cost at least $1 billion, up from just three such disasters in 1980. Meanwhile, insurance companies are increasingly raising premiums to unaffordable levels to cover these risks and are pulling out of fire-prone and flood-prone areas completely.

San Diego's greatest asset is our natural environment, from beaches and coastlines, mountains, deserts, chaparral, and open spaces that define our quality of life. Our economy depends on it too, with tourism, fishing, agriculture, outdoor recreation all relying on a healthy environment. But the current administration's slash-and-burn policies are selling out San Diego's health, safety, and future, all to protect the profits of big polluters.

Led by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), the federal government is dismantling San Diego's climate safety infrastructure. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the agency we rely on for flood forecasts, coastal alerts, and disaster response, is being gutted. Nearly 25% of NOAA's workforce has been fired or forced out. Critical weather labs and cloud data systems have gone dark. Ocean buoys that help us manage fisheries, monitor oil spills, and navigate the coast safely are being neglected or shut down. And research that protects our region - like mapping deep ocean dumpsites off the Southern California coast, which contain thousands of pounds of hazardous pesticides, munitions, and industrial waste - is in jeopardy

The EPA is being decimated too. The administration's budget would slash 65% of the agency's funding and eliminate programs that keep our air, water, and soil safe. Staff working on cleaning up "Superfund" hazardous waste sites are being laid off, jeopardizing remediation at places like Camp Pendleton, and leaving the Tijuana River Valley more vulnerable to environmental collapse. The EPA also announced plans to eliminate all offices focused on tackling elevated pollution in low income and minority neighborhoods, threatening progress in Barrio Logan and other frontline communities with a long history of toxic exposure. Last month, the EPA revoked a $1 million grant with the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District for air quality monitors, gutting efforts to track pollution and protect public health where it's needed most.

These attacks on environmental science will mean more asthma, more cancer, more chemical dumping, and fewer tools to stop it. At the very moment we need stronger protections, polluters will get a free pass, and San Diegans are being left to pay the price. And the costs are staggering: experts estimate these rollbacks will result in an additional 8,000 premature deaths a year and 10,000 asthma attacks every single day, costing the public $25 billion annually in hospital bills and missed work and school days.

Meanwhile, our clean energy economy, one of San Diego's fastest-growing sectors, is being threatened. San Diego's cleantech community has already lost $50 million in federal grants funding to scale clean energy technologies. If we let polluters win, San Diego will lose thousands of local jobs, billions in economic output, and the momentum we've built towards energy independence.

We cannot let that happen. Today's item calls on the County to speak out with moral clarity, to reaffirm that climate change is real, and that protecting our environment is not optional, it is essential. It calls on the County to join the "America is All in" coalition, a nationwide alliance of local government and private institutions driving to meet the goals identified in the Paris Climate Agreement, halving US emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero emissions by 2050, while guarding against the impacts of climate disruption. And we're sending a clear message to federal leaders: San Diego will not stay silent while climate science is being dismantled, and our region is put at risk. I urge my colleagues to join me in standing up for science, for clean air and water, and for the future of our region.

RECOMMENDATION(S)
VICE-CHAIR TERRA LAWSON-REMER

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to amend the County's 2025 Legislative Program to include advocacy for sustained or increased federal funding for NOAA and EPA programs critical to San Diego's public safety and climate resilience, and opposition to efforts to dismantle federal environmental science and regulatory infrastructure.

2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to take bold local action to affirm our commitment to addressing the climate crisis by joining the "America is All In" coalition and return to the Board with a strategic assessment of the best ways to utilize America is All In to advance the County's environmental and climate priorities within 90 days.

3. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to send a climate and environmental action advocacy letter to federal leadership, including the Special Government Employee for DOGE Elon Musk, the NOAA Administrator, the EPA Administrator, and ranking members of relevant

Congressional committees. The letter should document the full range of negative impacts of the current administration's environmental and climate policies on San Diego and advocate for robust corrective action.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT
The burdens of climate change, pollution, and toxins fall on all of us but disproportionately impact those least able to bear them. Not only are environmental health hazards concentrated in low income and minority communities, but, as we saw in Hurricane Katrina, those communities struggle to evacuate during natural disasters. Many low income and minority people lack the means to rebuild after a disaster and end up permanently displaced. Today's action will speak out against the disproportionate harms enabled by the destruction of environmental science and regulation.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT
Robust support for climate action and environmental protection is essential to achieving the County's sustainability goals. Today's action supports those goals by documenting the climate and environmental challenges facing the County due to changes in federal policy and taking proactive steps to address them.

FISCAL IMPACT
There is no fiscal impact associated with today's recommendations. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and limited additional staff time.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT
San Diego businesses already struggle with environmental disasters and disruptions and the increased costs they entail. They realize these costs in terms of lost business, property damage, higher insurance premiums for property and health, worker sick days and more. Businesses that rely on our oceans and beaches such as tourism and fishing face long term threats from sea level rise, coastal ecosystem destabilization and heat, not to mention the increased risk of chemical dumping and oil spills. San Diego agriculture faces threats from heat and drought. San Diego's outdoor sports and entertainment industries rely on good air quality and moderate temperatures. San Diego cleantech faces the shrinking of market opportunities. Today's action warns about the impacts of these harms to San Diego's business community and reaffirms out commitment to continue addressing them going forward.

ACTION:
Noting for the record that this item was heard on April 23, 2025; A motion was made by Supervisor Lawson-Remer, seconded by Supervisor Montgomery Steppe, for the Board of Supervisors to take action as recommended.

AYES: Lawson-Remer, Montgomery Steppe
NOES: Desmond
NOT PRESENT: Anderson
ABSENT: (District 1 Seat Vacant)

(Motion failed due to lack of required affirmative votes.)

State of California)
County of San Diego) §

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

Signed by Andrew Potter