

# **Environmental Action at College of Marin**

**A Proposed Approach by the College of Marin Sustainability Club & College of Marin Environmental Action Club, in coordination with the College of Marin President's Office.**

## **Global Context**

Recognition of the global context in which we exist is key to all effective efforts to improve sustainability and take meaningful action to mitigate environmental impact. Our global interdependence is at the heart of a number of important resources, including the United Nations Environment Programme and its *Making Peace with Nature* Report<sup>1</sup>, which is referenced in College of Marin's Board Policy on Environmental Responsibility.<sup>2</sup> *Making Peace with Nature* clearly articulates the core, interrelated elements of sustainability—biodiversity, climate change, and pollution. This tripartite framework is an easily understandable organizing principle for work at both the global and local levels.

## **Statewide Context**

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office has established system-wide Climate Action & Sustainability Goals<sup>3</sup> to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, natural gas usage, energy and water consumption, waste, and other environmental impacts at the system's colleges. These goals are an attempt to ensure community colleges comply with the State of California's deadline to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the state of California has also given direction in the other two major areas of sustainability. In 2018 Governor Jerry Brown, launched the California Biodiversity Initiative with Executive Order B-54-18<sup>5</sup>, which directs all state agencies to safeguard biodiversity and form appropriate partnerships to advance their efforts. In the area of pollution, California pioneered waste reduction with 1989's AB 939, whose goal was to reduce all waste by 50%. In 2016, Governor Brown signed SB 1383, which mandates further recycling of organic wastes.<sup>6</sup> In 2022, Governor Newsom signed SB 54<sup>7</sup>, which aims to further reduce plastic waste.

These State mandates and the CCCCCO goals will require colleges to conduct emissions inventories, benchmark energy use, and establish baseline information across a series of climate-impact categories and then set institution-specific reduction/improvement targets. Associated action steps will then be based on the specific circumstances of each college.

## **Local Context**

Marin Community Foundation has recently adopted a strategic plan that places climate justice at the center of its efforts, understanding the accelerating effects of climate change detrimentally impact communities and their residents, with disproportionate negative impact on communities such as Marin City, San Rafael's Canal neighborhood, Novato, and West Marin.<sup>8</sup> College of Marin's efforts to meet its mission of providing equitable opportunities and fostering success for all members of our diverse community are tied to the College's ability to reduce its environmental impact, both on its campuses and as it brings students, employees, and community members together to tackle issues of social justice—including climate justice.

College of Marin has already taken some steps to reduce the College's environmental impact.<sup>9</sup> These steps are important and position the College well—but are not nearly enough. Additionally, their impacts have not been fully measured to establish how far the College needs to go to meet the climate action goals. While the College's Maintenance & Operations department has taken these efforts with buildings and grounds, a major missing piece is the education of the campus and larger community about needed behavioral change related to energy use, waste/recycling, and the impact of transportation methods on the College's overall environmental footprint.

Currently, PRAC's established guiding principles do state resource allocation recommendations will "...include a consideration of their impact on the environment and how intentional choices might reduce that impact while being maintained over time." However, College of Marin's participatory governance committees do not have environmental action or sustainability called out as a priority otherwise. The Facilities and Safety Planning Committee's charge and responsibilities do not mention sustainability, climate, or environmental impact.<sup>10</sup>

### **Proposed Actions**

To ensure College of Marin does its part not only to comply with State requirements and goals, but to be a leader in Marin for education on climate action and the importance of personal and institutional responsibility, the following actions are proposed:

1. **Spring 2024:** Confirm constituent consensus to pursue the following actions via College Council.
2. **Fall 2024:** Update the College's participatory governance structure to focus on environmental action.
  - a. Create a new PRAC subcommittee
  - b. Fold the current Facilities Planning Committee into the new committee, removing the safety-related items and placing them in a different committee's charge
  - c. Include landscape planning in the new committee
  - d. Include education as a major focus area of the committee
  - e. Develop a charge for the committee focused on achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions in alignment with State expectations and BP 6560, which centers biodiversity, climate change, and pollution as interrelated areas needing coherent approaches to address
3. **Summer 2024 into Fall 2024:** Begin an inventory/benchmark of institutional data connected to the CCCC goals. This will require expertise beyond the College's capacity, but will include opportunities for student engagement and research.
4. **Fall 2024 into Spring 2025:** Once the committee is formed and the data are collected, the committee will ensure the development of a College Environmental Impact Mitigation Plan, designed to achieve net zero GHG emissions and address environmental justice by connecting the social, racial, and environmental issues in which our climate crisis is deeply entangled to our institutional equity efforts.
  - a. Within the mitigation plan, have strategic objectives and action steps for each area within the CCCC goals and the framework established by the UN's Environmental Programme and referenced in BP6560.
  - b. Ensure the action steps are tied to the larger College planning efforts and connected to future policy and resource decisions.

### **Additional Items for Consideration**

1. Various academic departments and the Academic Senate may wish to consider how environmental action and sustainability are reflected in the curriculum and across multiple 10+1 elements.<sup>11, 12</sup>
2. Reassigned time/units for a faculty sustainability/environmental action coordinator to work with the Environmental Action Committee (similar to the professional learning coordinator and the Professional Learning Committee) may be discussed with UPM.
3. On-going student research/project funds to support progress with various items and initiatives in the Environmental Impact Mitigation Plan, ideally tied to Faculty research, through grants or IR&D to be pursued with the College Foundation

## **Citations**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unep.org/resources/making-peace-nature>

<sup>2</sup> <https://policies.marin.edu/sites/default/files/BP6560-EnvironmentalResponsibility.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/College-Finance-and-Facilities-Planning/Climate-Action-and-Sustainability/goals>

<sup>4</sup> <https://calmatters.org/education/higher-education/college-beat/2024/03/california-colleges-decarbonization-2045/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://californiabiodiversityinitiative.org/pdf/executive-order-b-54-18.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/slcp/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2022/06/30/governor-newsom-signs-legislation-cutting-harmful-plastic-pollution-to-protect-communities-oceans-and-animals/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://dfq3h9wd5iwx4.cloudfront.net/pdfs/Climate-Justice-Initiative\\_2024-02-20-200357\\_vhnq.pdf](https://dfq3h9wd5iwx4.cloudfront.net/pdfs/Climate-Justice-Initiative_2024-02-20-200357_vhnq.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Installation of 26 bottle filling stations on drinking fountains in partnership with ASCOM;  
40 Waterless urinals installed at KTD which can each save up 40,000 gallons of water per year;  
25 Waterless Urinals installed at IVC which can each save up 40,000 gallons of water per year;  
Facilities construction to meet or exceed Cal Green standards;  
Participation in Marin Clean Energy Deep Green program;  
1.2 MW solar installed at KTD;  
1 MW solar installed at IVC;  
EV charging stations installed at both campuses;  
Reduction of irrigable lawn by 65%.

<sup>10</sup> <https://gov.marin.edu/fpc>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-climate-conscious-college>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.chronicle.com/article/5-steps-to-integrate-climate-action-into-your-courses-this-fall>