

Air Quality Concerns

The San Joaquin Valley has some of the nation's worst air quality, failing to meet health standards for both ozone and particulate pollution. The County should be doing all it can to improve air quality — but it isn't. It is not fulfilling the planning requirements of the General Plan or state law.

Topographic and atmospheric conditions trap air pollution in the San Joaquin Valley. Lateral dispersion of air pollutants is impeded by the surrounding mountains, and vertical dispersion is limited by temperature inversions where higher temperatures aloft prevent air from rising and act as a lid on the Valley.

Fresno County is currently in extreme non-attainment for federal ozone standards and in non-attainment for both federal and state PM10 and PM2.5 standards.

PM2.5 refers to particulate matter that has a diameter less than 2.5 micrometers (more than one hundred times thinner than a human hair). These fine particles can adversely affect a person's lungs and heart and even cause premature death. According to Fresno County's July 2021 draft General Plan Background Report, a 2016 emissions inventory prepared by the California Air Resources Board reported that farming operations account for around 80% of the PM2.5 in Fresno County.

According to that same inventory, mobile sources such as cars and trucks account for 83% of the nitrogen oxides emissions in Fresno County. Nitrogen oxides in the presence of sunlight and reactive organic gases transform into ozone, the primary component of smog.

The current 2000-2020 General Plan has a section on air quality composed of one program and sixteen policies. Program OS-G.A required the County to engage in a two-step process to first review the [Guide for Assessing and Mitigating Air Quality Impacts](#) published by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and then to adopt air quality mitigation measures and procedures for performing air quality impact analyses. The sixteen

policies included directives to adopt air quality impact assessment and mitigation procedures, lessen vehicle miles traveled by County employees, reduce PM10 and PM2.5 emissions from new construction and participate with cities, neighboring counties and regional agencies to promote consistent air quality programs and address cross-jurisdictional and regional transportation issues. The County adopted these policies as measures to help mitigate the adverse effect of buildout under the plan.

The County's annual reports on the implementation of the General Plan show that the County did not adopt the air quality procedures required by Program OS-G.A. It's unknown whether the County successfully implemented the sixteen policies since the County does not have a General Plan mitigation monitoring program.

In 2003, Assembly Bill 170 decreed that the legislative bodies of every city and county within the jurisdictional boundaries of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District were required to update their respective general plans to include...

- ♦ A report describing local air quality conditions, including air quality monitoring data, emission inventories, air pollution categories, the status of air quality attainment, and a list of applicable state and federal air quality plans and transportation plans
- ♦ A summary of local, district, state, and federal policies, programs, and regulations that may improve air quality
- ♦ A comprehensive set of goals, policies, and objectives to improve air quality
- ♦ A set of feasible implementation measures designed to carry out those goals, policies, and objectives.

The County took no formal action with respect to AB 170. And while the draft July 2017 General Background Report does contain an air quality section that satisfies the first two requirements of AB 170, the proposed 2020-2040 General Plan lacks updated goals, policies, and objectives to improve air quality and a set of feasible air quality mitigation measures.