

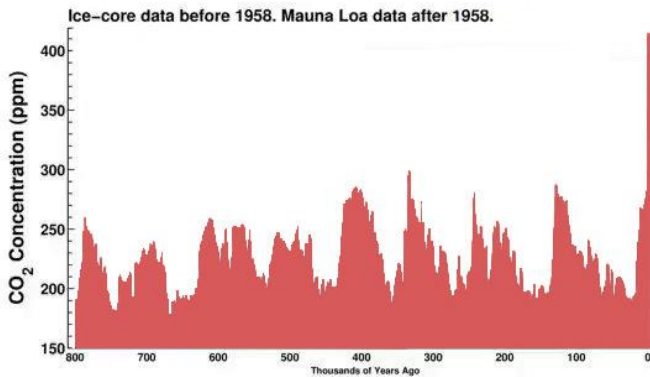
Lack of a Climate Action Plan

“Climate Change is the defining issue of our time, and we are at a defining moment. There is alarming evidence that important tipping points, leading to irreversible changes in major ecosystems and the planetary climate system, may already have been reached or passed.” This statement, taken from the United Nations’ “Peace, Dignity and Equality on a Healthy Planet” website, speaks to the seriousness of global climate change.

Greenhouse gases blanket the Earth. In excess, they cause the Earth to warm and bring about changes in climate. Greenhouse gas emissions from human activities include methane, nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide (CO₂).

CO₂ accounts for 75% of all greenhouse gases emitted through human activities. The graph below depicts the level of CO₂ in the atmosphere over the past 800,000 years. The average CO₂ concentration prior to the beginning of the industrial revolution (1760) was less than 250 parts per million (ppm). In recent years, it has risen to over 400 ppm.

Average Concentration of CO₂ in the Atmosphere over the Past 800,000 Year



(Source: 2021, Mike Hudema, Affiliated with Greenpeace Canada)

In the United States, greenhouse gas emissions by economic sector are as follows:

Transportation	29%
Electricity	25%
Industry	23%
Commercial and Residential	13%
Agriculture	10%

California’s Fourth Climate Change Assessment (2018) reported that costs associated with climate impacts will be dominated by human mortality, damage to coastal properties and precipitation and temperature extremes. In reviewing the *Climate Assessment*, the Community Alliance, a Fresno newspaper, reported that *“statewide, average daily high temperatures could rise by as much as 8.8 degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the century. For Fresno, that could mean 43 more days with highs exceeding 106 degrees. By 2050, average water supply from snowpack is projected to decline by two-thirds.”*

Severe heat and an undependable water supply would be catastrophic for Fresno County agriculture and agribusiness.

In 2000 when the current 2000-2020 General Plan was developed, there was less understanding of the significance of climate change. While the 2000 General Plan Background Report did mention that global warming could destabilize natural systems and pose risks to human health, the 2000-2020 Policy Document did not contain any goals, policies or implementation programs to address climate change.

In 2008, the consultant revising the General Plan suggested the County add a countywide climate action plan to the draft revision of the General Plan, and in 2011, the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition submitted comments to the County explaining the need for such a plan. In 2012, the County added Policy OS-G.6 and Program OS-G.B to the draft revision of the General Plan, which directed the County to prepare a climate action plan. In 2013 and 2014, the County substituted the word “*should*” for the word “*shall*” in the text of the new policy and program, and in 2017 the policy and program were removed from the draft update altogether.

The County’s draft July 2021 General Plan Background Report contains a chapter titled “Climate Change.” However, the draft 2020-2040 Policy Document is still absent a directive to prepare a climate action plan even though the California Air Resources Board has a toolkit to prepare climate action plans and a protocol for estimating greenhouse gas emissions.