

Carbon Neutral Counties Declaration

WHEREAS the world's leading climate scientists agree that the earth is warming at an unprecedented rate and that human emissions of greenhouse gases are the leading cause of climate change;

WHEREAS impacts associated with climate change include, but are not limited to, sea level rise, ocean acidification, more frequent extreme weather events (e.g. floods, heat waves), ecosystem disturbances, shifts in abundance and distribution of plant and animal species, and changes to the quantity and quality of regional water supplies;

WHEREAS scientists have projected that, in order to avoid severe, widespread and irreversible impacts of climate change, such as global and regional food insecurity, global warming must be limited to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels;

WHEREAS, under the Paris Climate Agreement, a majority of the world's countries have agreed to plan and regularly report on climate change mitigation efforts, with a goal to limit the increase in global average temperatures below 2 degrees Celsius with efforts to further limit the increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius;

WHEREAS 29 countries, as part of the Carbon Neutrality Coalition, have pledged to meet the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement by achieving carbon neutrality by the second half of the century;

WHEREAS the United States is responsible for producing approximately 11 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions;

WHEREAS many leading U.S. companies are pledging to meet climate mitigation targets by the second half of the century, with several companies committing to carbon neutrality;

WHEREAS state and local governments in the U.S. have been setting new or strengthening existing climate mitigation commitments in recent years, with several U.S. cities pledging to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 or sooner through the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance or the Race to Zero campaign;

WHEREAS counties have a unique role to play in climate mitigation efforts through their influence over the development and implementation of local and regional policies geared toward county government operations and energy use, air quality, land use planning, transportation, zoning, forest preservation, water conservation, and wastewater and solid waste management;

WHEREAS counties have made significant progress toward existing climate commitments, such as the 2007 Cool Counties Climate Stabilization Declaration, in which counties pledged to develop local greenhouse gas inventories, work with local, state and federal governments to reduce county geographical greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent below 2005 levels by 2050,

and urge federal actors to enact measures to meet this emission reduction goal, including more stringent fuel economy standards;

WHEREAS the implementation of more aggressive climate mitigation commitments at the county level would align counties with other local governments and those in the private sector leading on climate mitigation;

WHEREAS climate mitigation efforts provide numerous social, economic and environmental benefits for both local and regional communities;

NOW THEREFORE WE DECLARE,

We as Carbon Neutral Counties will take immediate steps to mitigate our county government's contribution to climate change by making the following commitments:

- i. Commit to being energy carbon neutral by 2040 while significantly reducing operational greenhouse gas emissions in the building and energy, transportation and solid waste sectors.
- ii. Urge federal and state lawmakers to provide incentives, requirements or other such measures to meet carbon neutrality goals, with specific measures targeting the building and energy, transportation and solid waste sectors.
- iii. Ensure the carbon neutrality goal is implemented equitably, and in a manner that protects and improves the quality of life for community members, regardless of age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, socio-economic status, neighborhood of residence or other characteristics. Ensure all community members can fully participate in and contribute to the environmental, social and economic benefits and/or opportunities that may result from the implementation of this goal, and that no communities are disproportionately impacted by the transition to a carbon neutral economy.