

BEACON  
SPOTLIGHT  
AWARD  
WINNER  
BEST PRACTICE  
ACTIVITIES



# County of Santa Cruz

## Sustainability Best Practice Activities



**ILG** INSTITUTE FOR  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT<sup>SM</sup>  
*Promoting Good Government at the Local Level*








# County of Santa Cruz

California communities are leading the fight against climate change. From small projects to large-scale programs, cities and counties are making great strides to create healthy, sustainable and economically prosperous communities. Participants in ILG's Beacon Program serve as leaders in this effort, making measureable contributions to reducing energy and greenhouse gas emissions, and sharing their sustainability best practices.

This document represents a collection of activities your agency has completed in 10 areas of sustainability. While local governments have a wide range of choices available to address climate change, these activities represent the unique opportunities and values in your community. These voluntary actions are essential to achieving California's goals to save energy, reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and create more sustainable communities.

## SPOTLIGHT AWARD

Areas of Accomplishment		SILVER LEVEL	GOLD LEVEL	PLATINUM LEVEL
	Agency GHG Reductions		2018 (12%)	
	Community GHG Reductions		2017 (17%)	
	Agency Energy Savings			2018 (28%)
	Natural Gas Savings		2018 (13%)	
	Sustainability Best Practice Activities			2018
	Beacon Award		2018	

Cities and counties throughout the Golden State should be proud of the accomplishments made through the hard work, innovation and collective community action. The Institute for Local Government applauds your achievements and thanks you for your continued participation in the Beacon Program.

The Beacon Program is sponsored by the Institute for Local Government and the Statewide Energy Efficiency Collaborative (SEEC). SEEC is an alliance between three statewide non-profit organizations and California's four Investor-Owned Utilities. The Beacon Program is funded by California utility ratepayers and administered by Pacific Gas and Electric Company, San Diego Gas and Electric Company, Southern California Edison and Southern California Gas Company under the auspices of the California Public Utilities Commission.





# Energy Efficiency and Conservation Activities

## Silver

1. All county facilities within Santa Cruz have been audited to identify energy efficiency opportunities, as well as potential for renewable energy production.

## Gold

2. Major county facilities have been benchmarked using the Portfolio Manager tool. This allows county staff to track energy usage, and track the impacts that retrofits and behavior change campaigns are having.
3. The County of Santa Cruz has implemented significant energy efficiency projects at major county facilities including, but not limited to, the Emeline campus, detention facilities, and the government center.

## Platinum

4. The county has installed a battery storage system in the main government center building to reduce the use of grid power during peak hours, which relieves stress from the grid and reduces county cost.
5. The county has reduced emissions from major county facilities by 18% in 2016 compared to the baseline year of 2005. This overall emission reduction is a result of a 25% reduction in electricity use and a 7% reduction in natural gas use over the same period.
6. As the county upgrades computer and other energy-using office equipment, the county's green purchasing and green IT policies prioritize energy efficiency. In addition, county employees are recognized for implementing practices to conserve energy, water, and materials, and to prevent pollution and waste in county operations.





# Water & Wastewater Systems Activities

## Silver

1. The county is working to provide a comprehensive and integrated approach to countywide water resources management at the local level as detailed in the 2017 Water Resources Annual Report.

## Gold

2. County of Santa Cruz staff is working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, County of Monterey, and City of Watsonville to develop a feasible flood control alternative for the Pajaro River.
3. The county is implementing water conservation programs requiring installation of high efficiency plumbing fixtures at time of property transfer and prohibiting wasteful water use, and facilitating greywater and rain catchment systems.

## Platinum

4. The county is engaged in storm water management activities to promote infiltration of storm water back into the groundwater system. This includes a requirement that runoff from all new development not exceed pre-development levels.
5. The county has established two additional groundwater management agencies engaged in planning for sustainable use of groundwater resources in the county.
6. The county adopted the Steelhead and Coho Salmon Conservation Strategy, which commits county departments to implement actions to support restoration of steelhead and salmon in county streams.





# Green Building Activities

## Silver

1. The County of Santa Cruz is part of the three Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) programs, which allows community members competitive access to loan funding to implement green building retrofits.

## Gold

2. The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors adopted a revised Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance in 2016 to promote efficient water use in landscapes and the use of native, drought tolerant plants.
3. The county's Planning Department has implemented an expedited permitting process for residential solar photovoltaic projects.

## Platinum

4. County requirements for project design include shade and solar access studies to minimize and mitigate reductions in solar access and shading of neighboring properties to preserve both active and passive solar energy potential.
5. County requirements for project design include minimizing grading and vegetation removal and promote designing with the environment in mind and integration of development with the natural setting.
6. County environmental protection ordinances require development to avoid sensitive and hazardous areas. Required riparian setbacks are intended to avoid encroachment of new development into sensitive areas near creeks, for example. Other ordinance requirements are intended to ensure new development does not result in erosion and water quality impacts.





# Waste Reduction and Recycling Activities

## Silver

1. The county has met its 75% waste reduction goal and continues to be a leader in recycling and the reduction in the amount of waste being disposed, as well as spearheading efforts to minimize upstream impacts on materials through sustainable manufacturing and consumerism.

## Gold

2. In 2016, the Board of Supervisors adopted the Zero Waste Plan to serve as a guide for future recycling and composting efforts. The recently updated solid waste franchise contract includes a whole new fleet of modern trucks that will run on biodiesel fuel.
3. With some financial support from the California Green Business Network, the county certifies green businesses, including the county itself, as part of the Green Business Program. Since 2015, a total of 19 business and agencies have been certified by the county, among them two schools, an auto repair shop, a dentist and several offices and retail stores.

## Platinum

4. As per County Code (5.46.031) "No retail vendor or special event in the unincorporated area of the County of Santa Cruz may sell, rent or otherwise provide any product which is composed entirely or primarily of polystyrene foam, except as exempted in SCCC 5.46.060. This specifically includes but is not limited to cups, plates, bowls, clamshells and other products intended primarily for food service use, as well as coolers, pool or beach toys, packing peanuts or other packaging material."
5. A number of county ordinances have been enacted to reduce waste and increase recycling, including bans on plastic bags and Styrofoam and new standards for the recycling of electronic waste. New retail take-back or other diversion programs have been created for such problematic products as used oil, batteries, carpet, mattresses, fluorescent light bulbs, propane canisters and paint. Efforts to increase recycling of Styrofoam are underway. The board approved the first extended producer responsibility ordinance in the county to encourage proper disposal of drugs and sharps.
6. The county has implemented a program to curb illegal dumping through increased staff resources, outreach, monitoring of areas identified as hotspots for illegal dumping, and creating additional enforcement tools.







# Climate-friendly Purchasing Activities

## Silver

1. The county has been adding electric and hybrid vehicles to the county fleet as part of normal turnover in the fleet and with the help of grant funding. Currently the fleet includes 71 hybrid vehicles and 2 electric vehicles out of a total fleet of approximately 400 cars. The Public Works Department manages its own fleet, with four EVs and four GEM-type EVs. The county is also exploring participation in a new PG&E program promoting installation of multiple EV charging stations at major employment centers and multi-unit housing sites.

## Gold

2. As per County Code (2.37.107), "The county shall not enter into or renew any contractual agreement with any person or entity for the provision of goods or services, the performance of which calls for, requires, or involves the use of any tropical hardwood or tropical wood product."
3. As per County Code (2.37.105), "the county gives preference, in its purchasing decisions, to products containing the maximum amount of recycled materials, where the quality and fitness of such products is equal to those of products containing no recycled materials, or a lesser amount of recycled materials, and where the total cost of such products is reasonable in comparison to the total cost of those products containing no recycled materials, or a lesser amount of recycled materials."

## Platinum

4. As per County Code (5.46.040) "county contractors and lessees using any disposable food service ware shall use biodegradable/compostable or recyclable disposable food service ware in city/county facilities while performing under a county contract or lease unless there is no affordable biodegradable or compostable product available."
5. The county Policy and Procedures Manual in Section 304 requires all purchases of new fleet vehicles to maximize energy efficiency and the use of alternative fuels, or electric or hybrid technology.
6. The county has established an integrated pest management policy to reduce the purchase and use of pesticides.





# Renewable Energy and Low-Carbon Fuels Activities

## Silver

1. The county led a grant-funded, regional collaboration to establish Monterey Bay Community Power (MBCP) to provide locally-controlled, carbon-free electricity to residents and businesses in Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz Counties. MBCP began serving approximately 20,000 commercial, industrial, and agricultural customers on March 1, 2018 and began serving approximately 235,000 residential customers on July 1, 2018.

## Gold

2. Since June 2015, the County of Santa Cruz has served as the lead agency in the Monterey Bay Region Solar Collaborative Procurement Initiative and the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development Fund Program (Seed Fund) to establish solar power at county facilities and throughout the region. Installations are currently underway at eight county sites. The combined size of these systems is 2.25 megawatts of solar power generating capacity.
3. The county generates electricity with captured landfill gas and makes continuous improvements to the gas capture systems in order to optimize it and minimize release of methane gas to the atmosphere.

## Platinum

4. Under the contract for solid waste and recycling services, the waste hauling fleet will be upgraded with all new vehicles that will use biodiesel fuel.
5. Two county facilities that are high energy users are equipped with on site cogeneration power plants that provide an energy efficient power source for the main jail and the swim center.
6. The county is engaged in regional planning with the Integrated Regional Waste Management Local Task Force for a potential regional organics processing facility that may include bio gas production.





# Efficient Transportation Activities

## Silver

1. The county has been engaging in the promotion of alternative commuting by bicycle, bus, and vanpool. Bike lockers are continually maintained and upgraded for security and weather protection. Zero interest bike loans and emergency ride home services are offered to encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation.

## Gold

2. The County of Santa Cruz owns two EV charging stations at the Government Center at 701 Ocean Street, one charging station at the Sheriff Center in Live Oak, one dual port charging station at the Emeline campus and another dual port charging station at the Freedom campus. These charging stations are available to the general public. There are two additional charging stations at the Government Center reserved for charging county fleet vehicles.
3. According to the 2017-18 Santa Cruz County Capital Improvement Program (CIP), development fees and other funding sources are being used to fund the planning, design, right-of-way acquisition or construction of a total of 11 pedestrian safety improvement projects and four road improvement projects that will also improve bike safety. Recently completed projects and projects that are under construction include the Boulder Creek Elementary School Safe Routes to School Project and the construction of a bus turnout on Soquel Drive near 41st Avenue.

## Platinum

4. The county is pursuing funding for design and construction of sections of the Rail Trail, including a partnership with the City of Santa Cruz to complete a section of the trail that crosses both jurisdictions. bicycle and pedestrian trail next to the railroad.
5. The county was awarded a grant in the amount of \$366,504 to conduct audits of parent/student impediments to walking or biking to school, garner community support and feedback, create mapping of school transportation routes, and identify priority projects that encourage increased active transportation.
6. The county received a grant of \$500,000 for Sustainable Communities Planning from the Strategic Growth Council, which funded the Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan.





# Land Use and Community Design Activities

## Silver

1. On February 26, 2013, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution approving the Climate Action Strategy (CAS). The board also directed the county's Planning Department to oversee implementation of the CAS and to report on implementation of the CAS in April of each year.

## Gold

2. County of Santa Cruz staff is preparing General Plan/Local Coastal Program amendments related to safety and protection from hazards related to climate change and sea level rise, including updated policies in the Safety Element addressing coastal bluffs and beaches, erosion control, flood hazards, fire hazards, and environmental justice.
3. During 2018 and 2019, county staff intends to finalize the project description of the Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update, and to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the package, which will also include proposed code modernization amendments to the Zoning Ordinance along with the General Plan/Local Coastal Program Sustainability Update. The package will amend and update the Land Use, Circulation and Community Design Elements to incorporate sustainability policies and several new land use designations, many as articulated in the Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan.

## Platinum

4. The county has updated the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan to create a safer community. The LHMP represents the county's commitment to reduce risks from natural and other hazards and serves as a guide for commitment of resources to reduce the effects of potential hazards, including climate change.
5. The county has obtained funding and is leading an effort to develop a reuse plan for the former Davenport Cement Plant that would promote several sustainability goals, including local jobs, on-site housing, and low cost visitor serving uses related to the surrounding state parks, and national monument.
6. The county participates in a regional, multi-jurisdictional effort, the Monterey Bay Regional Climate Action Compact, an action network of government agencies, educational institutions, private businesses, non-profit, and non-governmental organizations who are committed to working collaboratively to address the causes and effects of global climate change through local initiatives that focus on economic vitality and reduce environmental impacts for the region.





# Open Space and Offsetting Carbon Emission Activities

## Silver

1. The county encourages the creation and use of community gardens. For example, the Farm Park provides thirteen community garden plots, including three accessible plots, on-site green waste recycling, interpretive features and signage, a rain water harvesting system, a kiosk and a small garden shed.

## Gold

2. In collaboration with the City of Scotts Valley, the county administers a Habitat Conservation Plan for the rare and endangered Sand Hills habitat areas. The Sand Hills contain a wealth of biodiversity, including four species of plants and two species of insects that occur nowhere else in the world.
3. Santa Cruz County's Sensitive Habitat Protection Ordinance (Chapter 16.32) establishes a salamander protection zone (S-P zone), which provides additional protection of the population and habitat of the Santa Cruz long-toed salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum croceum*). The salamander is listed with both the federal and state governments as an endangered species.

## Platinum

4. The county Parks Department completed a 10-year strategic plan with a vision to create a healthy and vibrant county where everyone is able to be active, explore, learn, play and connect, and where our diverse natural and cultural resources are celebrated and protected for generations to come. Two goals of the plan are to steward and protect open spaces and natural, cultural and historical resources, and add parks, facilities, and programs in underserved areas.
5. The county works with local mine operators to reclaim closed quarries to revegetated open space providing wildlife habitat, water quality protection, and carbon sequestration values on former mined lands.
6. The county maintains a Significant Tree Protection Ordinance (Chapter 16.34) to protect healthy mature trees for their scenic qualities and values, including carbon sequestration value.





# Promoting Community and Individual Action Activities

## Silver

1. The county supports environmental education programs in local schools through a multi-year contract with a local non-profit organization. These programs promote environmental stewardship, including energy conservation and waste reduction.

## Gold

2. The county designed and launched a job training program to prepare veterans and at-risk youth to be employed in positions related to energy efficiency utilizing a \$50,000 Proposition 39 pre-apprenticeship grant. The first phase of the program resulted in a small group of individuals trained. In Phase II, with Monterey County serving as the lead, a three-county collaborative including Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey County received a \$400,000 training implementation grant from the State of California. Through the grant, the three-county region used the Building Trades Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) green job skills program to train 57 individuals, targeting at-risk youth, women, veterans, and disadvantaged or disconnected job seekers.
3. The County of Santa Cruz works with partners to provide the community with webinars, seminars, and trainings on a wide variety of sustainability topics ranging from solar water heating to energy auditing classes.

## Platinum

4. The County of Santa Cruz works with partners to provide the community with information and project assistance to pursue energy efficiency opportunities.
5. Under the contract for solid waste and recycling services funding is provided for two new county positions to provide education, outreach and enforcement of recycling programs. Waste hauling trucks include sign boards for recycling education. The contract provides for an increased number of county-sponsored community events to promote waste reduction and recycling. The contract also requires the waste hauler to provide two new positions to coordinate with businesses, multi-family dwellings, and large events to reduce waste and improve recycling.
6. The county's agricultural extension office conducts multiple research, education and outreach programs related to water, irrigation, fertilizer and other resource use efficiency in area agriculture and for home gardens.







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