

Climate action at the County level

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September 6, 2021



Susan Gorin represents the First District as a member of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, an area that includes the entire Sonoma Valley.



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Posted on September 6, 2021 by Susan Gorin

As the Caldor Fire threatens South Lake Tahoe and Hurricane Ida batters the South and East, I am increasingly, constantly, and inescapably reminded that climate change is here.

Under the weight of such devastation, it can at times feel futile to do climate action work. However, it is imperative that we do so, and I am so proud of several climate initiatives currently underway at the county. In this column, I would like to highlight the incredible work of Zero Waste Sonoma, for which I represent the county as a member of the Board of Directors.

In August, the Board of Supervisors took one step closer to adopting a Zero Waste Resolution and Disposable Food Service Ware and Polystyrene ban ordinance developed by Zero Waste Sonoma. Alongside my Board colleagues, I showed my support for both items as they align with the County's climate action initiatives.

The Zero Waste Resolution establishes a goal of reaching zero waste by 2030 and outlines 36 initiatives to get there. Zero Waste, as defined by the Zero Waste International Alliance, is "the conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse,

and recovery of products, packaging, and materials without burning and with no discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health.”

The City of Sonoma already adopted the ordinances; thank you Mayor Agrimonti for your work on this agency board.

If approved later this month, the Disposable Food Service Ware and Polystyrene ban would go into effect in January 2022, which provides time to educate local businesses on approved recyclable and compostable food service ware products. This also gives local businesses time between September through the end of December to replace polystyrene products with appropriate alternatives.

The ordinance addresses six areas:

1. Prohibits polystyrene foam food ware distributed by food and beverage providers.
2. Prohibits polystyrene foam food ware and specified polystyrene foam products sold by retail stores.
3. Requires food/beverage providers and special events to use of unlined, fiber only compostable products or recyclable food service ware.
4. Requires food/beverage providers to provide single-use straws, beverage lids, cutlery and to-go condiment packages only upon request. Customer may ask for the particular items, food providers may offer specific items, or the establishment may utilize a self-service area.
5. Requires food/beverage providers to provide service ware products without added fluorinated chemicals (PFAS).
6. Encourages use of reusables through optional fee for single-use or credit to customers providing their own containers.

There are many alternate food service ware products that are compostable, recyclable or those that can be cleaned and reused. Zero Waste Sonoma created a list of alternative products that can be found at https://zerowastesonoma.gov/uploads/documents/FINAL_PS_Alternatives-3-21.pdf.

Additionally, I would like to recognize Zero Waste Sonoma’s Household Hazardous Waste Manager, Courtney Scott, for receiving the California Product Stewardship Council’s Associate of the Year Award. This is a huge honor for Courtney to be recognized for her tremendous contribution Sonoma County’s Household Hazardous Waste programs and Extended Producer Reasonability (EPR) efforts.

EPR is a strategy to place a shared responsibility for end-of-life product management on producers, and other entities involved in the product chain, instead of the general public. EPR also encourages product design changes that minimize negative impacts on human

health and the environment at every stage of the product’s lifecycle. We appreciate and applaud Courtney’s dedication to Zero Waste Sonoma and the Sonoma County community.

Zero Waste Sonoma is just one piece of the greater network of entities working on our county’s climate goals, and I plan to highlight additional agencies and efforts in future columns. I represent the Board, alongside Chair Lynda Hopkins, on the Climate Action and Resiliency (CAR) Pillar of the county’s Strategic Plan, currently in its first year of implementation.

As a preview of more to come: county agencies, departments and special districts are working on identifying implementation plans to achieve the CAR pillar’s goals around reducing wildfire risk and building resilience, upgrading homes and buildings to be carbon neutral and zero waste, electrifying our fleet and building out infrastructure to support electric vehicles (EVs), and updating planning documents and processes to integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation.

There is momentum, a sense of urgency, and I am encouraged by the hard work in progress as well as the hard work to come.

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