



The Sequoia

Want to Help Save the Planet? Eat Less Beef!

Sierra-Tuolumne Climate Action Committee

WHEN WE THINK OF CLIMATE ACTION, we usually focus on renewable energy, energy efficiency and the transition to low-carbon transportation. However, *food production accounts for over a quarter (26%) of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide.* We can't tackle climate change without considering what we choose to eat.

Climate-killing beef. The graph below, from *OurWorldinData.org* illustrates the environmental impact of various types of foods – and beef is a prodigious producer of heat-trapping greenhouse gases. By weight, beef uses 10 times more climate-warming emissions than poultry meat. When compared with staples like potatoes, wheat and rice, the impact of beef is even more extreme. Meat and dairy provide just 18% of calories and 37% of protein worldwide, but beef and dairy cattle produce 60% of agriculture's greenhouse gas emissions.

Rainforest beef. Beef farming is a top driver of deforestation worldwide, particularly in the Amazon. Cattle ranching in the Amazon is pushing the forest to the edge of what scientists warn could be a vast and irreversible dieback. As stated in the *Washington Post* (April 29, 2022), the US

bought more than 320 million pounds of Brazilian beef in 2021 – and we're on pace to purchase nearly twice as much this year. According to this article, "If the Amazon is to die, it will be beef that kills it. And America will be an accomplice."

A modeling study published in *Nature.com* (May 4, 2022), states that "Replacing just 20% of global beef consumption with a meat substitute within the next 30 years could halve deforestation and the carbon emissions associated with it."

Local beef isn't much better. Buying from local farmers is always a good idea, but transport accounts for less than 1% of beef's greenhouse gas emissions. For beef, it doesn't much matter if you buy from the farmer next door or from far way. What you eat is more important than where it comes from. If you are eating a burger or steak for dinner, your meal's carbon footprint will be large no matter where it was produced.

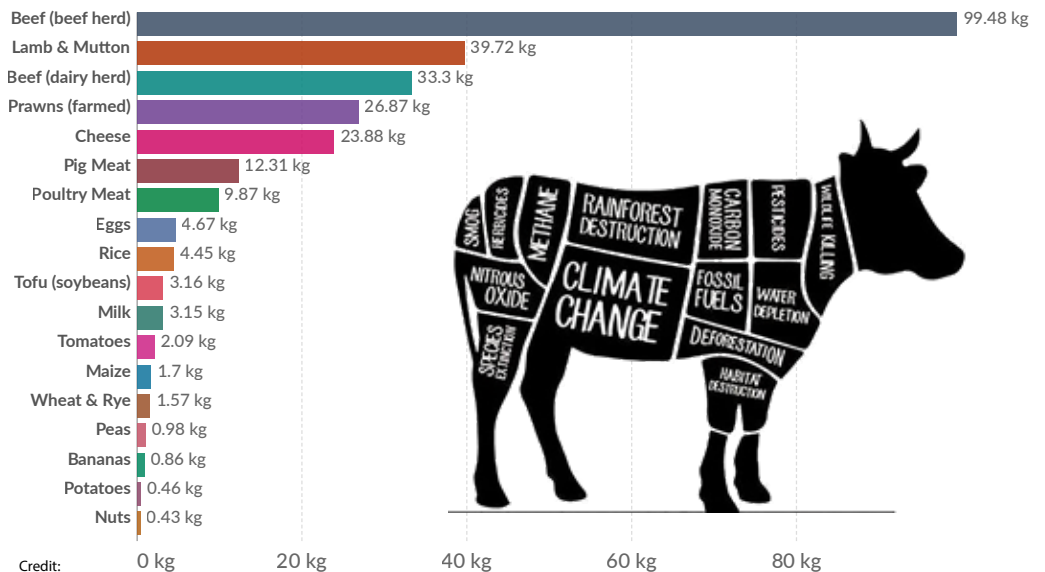
#EatLessBeef for a better world. One of the most powerful actions you can take to reduce your carbon footprint is to eat less red meat. You don't need to become vegan overnight – or ever – but eating less beef will have a major impact on our world and the trajectory of climate change.

INSIDE
TUOLUMNE COUNTY'S
CLIMATE NON-ACTION PLAN
TUD PLANS TAKEOVER
OF PINECREST LAKE &
LYONS RESERVOIR

“Replacing just 20% of global beef consumption with a meat substitute within the next 30 years could halve deforestation and the carbon emissions associated with it.”

Greenhouse Gas Emissions per Kilogram of Food Product

Greenhouse gas emissions are measured in kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalents (kgCO₂eq) per kilogram of food product. This means non-CO₂ greenhouse gases are included and weighted by their relative warming impact.



Credit:
Our World
in Data

Source: Poore, J., & Nemecek, T. (2018). Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers. *OurWorldInData.org/environmental-impacts-of-food* • CC BY

If You Care about Climate Action... It's time to speak up about Tuolumne County's Climate "Non-Action" Plan

Sierra-Tuolumne Climate Action Committee



Sierra Club Climate Action Group

Climate change is here, bringing heat, drought, wildfires and smoke to our Mother Lode towns, and extreme weather across the planet. We believe that the best way to address climate anxiety is to talk solutions, inspire one another, and get connected with a climate action community.

Interested in joining other members for collective action? We'd like to hear from you. Email us at tsclimateaction@gmail.com. Stay connected to local climate efforts by clicking the climate action blog at www.sierratuolumne.org Together, we can make a difference.

FOR YEARS, TUOLUMNE COUNTY HAS DELAYED creating a required "climate action plan" that is supposed to lay out steps the County will take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our region to help reduce climate change. The County has finally released the latest draft of its Climate Action Plan (CAP), but due to politics and pressure from climate change skeptics, the CAP turns out to be almost nothing but rhetoric, with no real requirements or mandates that will actually result in reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. It is a "nothing actually required" non-action plan that should be an embarrassment to County residents.

Tuolumne County's "Climate Action Plan" is now available for review and comments through June 15, 2022: www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/1332/Climate-Action-Plan. We are asking all Sierra Club members in Tuolumne County to take just a few minutes to submit comments in response to this plan.

The CAP is a smooth-talking document with nice graphics and important sounding words, but it mandates absolutely nothing to actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions, or to meet climate change reduction targets, or to do anything meaningful.

For example, one measure is: "Reduce vehicle idling." Another measure is: "Encourage students to walk or ride a bike to school." Another is: "Promote responsible consumption of products..."

Tuolumne County has no control over vehicles idling, and students already walk and bike to schools. The County has no way to control whether people consume products responsibly. All of these so-called "measures" are just empty phrases that can neither be enforced nor measured.

Chapter 4 is supposedly the core of the Climate Action Plan, and it is full of such aspirational measures – all without any solid requirements. Every single measure is followed by the wording, "Actions that could be taken under this measure include..." or similar weak language.

Chapter 5 identifies a subset of "actions" with a high priority. Here too, the so-called "Action"

descriptions are brimming with squishy words like "promote" or "encourage" or "explore" or "support" or "where feasible." The only requirement is Action 1.2.1: "Establish a policy to require new County buildings to be constructed to meet a high energy efficiency standard." Really? That's the only mandate in the whole plan? And even for that, there is no definition of "high energy efficiency."

As it is currently drafted, this climate action plan is purely cosmetic, written by slick consultants to promote the concept that ill-defined, voluntary measures will somehow result in a magical reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. What the county needs is a clear plan with meaningful, measurable required actions.

Background on why the plan was developed

The State of California has passed legislation that establishes emissions targets and a suite of measures to achieve these targets. State and federal actions, however, are not sufficient. Local communities must participate as well, so California SB 379 was adopted in 2015 to require cities and counties in California to define greenhouse reduction measures they will take locally.

Rather than adopting a weak and meaningless plan, Tuolumne County supervisors should adopt a strong, effective plan that requires (rather than "encourages") actions that will lead to measurable changes. This plan does not suffice.

YOU can help make it better and more meaningful. Rather than Sierra Club members just

READ THE PLAN AND MAKE COMMENTS AT: TUOLUMNECOUNTY.CA.GOV/1332/CLIMATE-ACTION-PLAN

WHEN YOU SUBMIT COMMENTS, CONSIDER
RECOMMENDING WAYS THE CAP CAN BE
STRENGTHENED, IMPROVED, AND MADE MEANINGFUL.

THE CAP SHOULD HAVE CLEAR REQUIREMENTS THAT
ARE MEASURABLE AND QUANTIFIABLE.

submitting comments that complain about the totally inadequate draft Climate Action Plan, your comments can point out how the plan can be corrected and strengthened. This is a true opportunity for Club members to “act locally” to help deal with a global problem.

Here are ways you can help:

Speak up now, calling out this document for the scam that it is.

- Contact your county supervisor.
- Contact **Quincy Yaley** (Community Development Director) with your comments at qyaley@co.tuolumne.ca.us, or mail your comment letters to the **Community Development Department, 2 South Green St, Sonora, CA 95370**.
- Send a letter to the editor of the Union Democrat.

When you submit comments, consider recommending ways the CAP can be strengthened, improved, and made meaningful.

1) The CAP should have clear requirements that are measurable and quantifiable. Examples include:

- “Require all new development constructed in the County to be at least 10% more energy efficient than the current basic requirements.”
- “Utilize County funds or grants to ensure that there are electric vehicle charging units provided at every existing public school and county facility within the County within 10 years of CAP adoption.”
- “The County shall show leadership in the field or solar by installing solar systems on all feasible, cost-efficient sites on county buildings within 10 years of CAP adoption.”
- “The County will provide financial incentives for County businesses and residential parcels to install solar in order to reduce other energy consumption.”
- “The County will apply for grants and other sources of funding to assist county businesses to transition to the highest energy efficiency lighting.”

- “All existing County buildings will be retrofitted to boost energy efficiency by at least 25%. No less than 50% of County buildings will meet this goal within 10 years.
 - “All new County buildings will exceed minimum energy efficiency standards by at least 25%.”
 - “The County will transition its vehicle fleet to entirely hybrid or electric vehicles as vehicles are replaced or added to the fleet.”
- 2) The CAP measures should be monitored, and an initial report on progress should be mandated to be made public within 3 years of CAP approval, with a second required public report at 6 years after CAP approval.

Bottom line

If Sierra Club members don't engage to provide strong criticism of this incredibly weak, meaningless draft Climate Action Plan, then county supervisors may adopt it, and no effective greenhouse gas emission actions for our region will be required. It is important for you to take 5 minutes to engage and help on this key issue.

At the very least, please submit a short comment letter criticizing the CAP plan for not having clear, measurable, and meaningful measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Do it for your children and grandchildren, and for the future of our region. **Remember, deadline for comments is June 15, make your voice heard!**



CREATIVE COMMONS

LOCAL CONSERVATION NOTES



TUD Takeover of Pinecrest Lake & Lyons Reservoir

PG&E currently owns and operates Pinecrest Reservoir and Lyons Reservoir on the South Fork Stanislaus River. It manages them for hydropower as well as for a guaranteed water supply for the local Tuolumne Water District (TUD). But despite TUD having a contract that assures a free water supply from PG&E, TUD directors have proposed a plan to take over all of PG&E's facilities and to gain PG&E's water rights.

In reality, the water rights are meaningless to TUD since it already has a binding legal agreement for water deliveries from PG&E. What is really at stake is whether PG&E or TUD will control the reservoirs and manage the river. TUD recently admitted that in order to purchase the PG&E facilities, over the next 5 years each family of TUD water customers will have to pay \$200 extra each year for a total amount of \$1,000 on top of their regular bills.

Of even greater concern for the Sierra Club, TUD has consistently opposed any required water conservation mandates during droughts, pushing instead for leaving less water in the river to reduce the need for TUD customers to use less water. Unlike PG&E, TUD also has no wildlife biologists, botanists, or other resource specialists on its staff to help minimize impacts to nature. TUD will be announcing a series of public meetings to promote its highly expensive acquisition proposal.



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TUOLUMNE GROUP

Due to COVID-19, the Tuolumne Group Executive Committee is currently only meeting by phone or with online sessions. For information on how to participate in the next ExCom meeting, contact Elaine Hagen at the email listed below.

Chair Jim Bearden, jbearden@ieee.org

Secretary-Treasurer

Karen Swanson, tuolumnegroupsecretary@gmail.com

Outings Keith & Beth Martin, keithwmartin@sbcglobal.net

Chapter Delegate Keith Martin, keithwmartin@sbcglobal.net

Climate Action Chair Gisselle Bourns,
tsclimateaction@gmail.com

Webmaster Jim Bearden, jbearden@ieee.org

Membership Elaine Hagen, elainehagen@att.net

News Editor Joe David, jd@daviddesign.com

We welcome your input and feedback.

NOTES & UPDATES

CONNECT WITH YOUR SIERRA CLUB TUOLUMNE GROUP

Want to put your support for the environment into action? Consider joining our Executive Committee. Have a great idea for a local Sierra Club presentation? There are many ways to volunteer with our local group. Interested members are invited to attend one of our ExCom meetings. Contact Membership Chair, Elaine Hagen at elainehagen@att.net.

SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS

Official local Sierra Club Tuolumne group outings have been curtailed due to COVID. For the most current information regarding scheduled hikes and current guidelines for Sierra Club outings, go to the outings page at www.sierratuolumne.org.

GET INVOLVED • TAKE ACTION

Today, years of hard-fought environmental protections are under threat—and to influence governments and businesses, we need everyone to speak up and shout out. Explore how you can get involved: go to www.sierraclub.org/take-action

RATHER RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER VIA EMAIL?

If you would like to receive this newsletter via email either instead of, or in addition to our printed edition, email your request to mail@sierratuolumne.org.

The Sequoia Newsletter is designed to provide local Sierra Club members with a trusted source of information on people, events, and issues impacting our environment. Members can also find additional information on our updated web page: www.sierratuolumne.org.

