



## The San Diego Foundation Climate Change Initiative

### The Challenge

The San Diego region has an enviable lifestyle and economy, and a magnificent natural environment – and much of it is due to our climate. Our climate, however, is changing due to a build up of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. Left unchecked, climate change will have devastating consequences for San Diego County.

According to climate scientists at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, without a drastic reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, 40 years from now, downtown San Diego will have average temperatures on par with La Mesa today, and La Mesa will feel like Campo. Other adverse effects include a rise in sea level by one to three feet in the next 75 years, putting our beaches and coastal communities at risk, and decreased snow pack in the Sierras, diminishing a major water source for the area. Storms and wildfires may occur more frequently, and our native plants and wildlife will be pushed to the brink of extinction.

With the recent passage of California's Global Warming Solutions Act and likely federal legislation in the next few years - metropolitan regions such as San Diego County are expected to play a critical role in stabilizing carbon emissions and reducing local vulnerability to the adverse impacts of climate change. Through sensible adjustments we can maintain San Diego's lifestyle and protect our treasured climate for future generations. The quality of life our children and grandchildren will experience depends on how rapidly San Diegans and the rest of the world reduce their emissions and plan for global warming. *We must act now.*

### The Opportunity

These challenges also present an unprecedented opportunity for leadership and investment. Leadership is needed to create a more sustainable region and protect the quality of life that makes this place so special. Public and private investment in clean technologies and industries will provide a green pathway for job creation and economic prosperity in the future. Those regions that pursue these opportunities will be best positioned to compete in the global marketplace in the 21st century.

Community foundations such as The San Diego Foundation are beginning to step up across the country, to help provide the leadership and

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<http://www.sdfoundation.org/communityimpact/environment/Initiative-ClimateChange.html>

philanthropic investment that will help set regions on a more sustainable path of economic prosperity and a higher quality of life.

### **The San Diego Foundation's Climate Initiative Strategy**

Over the next few years, The Foundation's Climate Change Initiative will work with government, business, and consumers to advance regional efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for climate change in order to avoid some of its most harmful effects.

We will provide leadership, partnership and support, including up to \$1 million in grants for a wide range of local actions in the following six areas:

#### **1. Increase public awareness and support for local climate action.**

The San Diego Foundation created the Climate Smart partnership with other leading local institutions, The California Center for Sustainable Energy, Reuben H. Fleet Science Center, San Diego Natural History Museum, and Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, to raise the profile of local lecture series, exhibits, and other programs to increase public awareness and galvanize local action around climate change.

#### **2. Support and disseminate research, especially information about local mitigation and adaptation measures.**

Climate change is best addressed on the basis of solid scientific information about causes and effects. There is a convergence of international scientific opinion about the causes and possible impacts of climate change. In order to determine appropriate local action, however, data gathering and analysis must be "localized". We will support research that will assist local organizations and individuals to understand what measures are appropriate to: (a) help stabilize greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation) and (b) reduce the worst impacts of climate change that are the result of past emissions and to enable communities to recover from those impacts (adaptation).

#### **3. Partner with local governments to address climate change through local action.**

The Foundation will work with local governments to develop climate plans for their communities and to assess their effectiveness over time. These efforts will include dissemination of best practice guides, training and technical assistance for public agencies and employees, and support for public employees to participate in peer-to-peer exchanges to learn from staff in governments that are further along in their efforts.

#### **4. Support nonprofit organizations that will lead in addressing climate change; assist other nonprofits to see how they can help.**

The natural "constituency" for community foundations is found in the nonprofit sector. We will support them to discover and deploy their own actions to address climate change.

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**5. Develop and support positive local economic strategies.** Local actions hold significant promise for new job creation in fields such as green chemistry, materials recycling, retrofitting buildings, and many more. The Foundation will work with the local business community to advance greater use of renewables and other green practices (e.g., reduced energy use and staff commutes) in business.

**6. Advise donors, and recruit new donors, to contribute to climate action solutions.** Rarely in history has an issue caught the attention of people across all income, geographic, and philosophical outlooks as has global climate change. We will work with our donors, or potential donors, to understand how they can contribute to solving one of the most serious problems facing this and future generations.