



San Joaquin Valley Climate Justice & the Scoping Plan

From the start of the 2022 Scoping Plan process at the California Air Resources Board (CARB), Environmental Justice Advisory Committee members emphasized the importance of consulting community members early and often. Despite failed requests to align decision making timelines with authentic consultation, it remains essential to ground truth assumptions about how to meet California’s climate goals along with the original charge of CARB, to ensure clean air for places like the San Joaquin Valley and environmental justice communities across the state.

On February 22, 2022, the San Joaquin Valley community based Environmental Justice Advisory Committee members and the organizations listed above hosted a community engagement workshop to make space for community priorities, concerns, and ideas for climate justice in the Valley and related to the California Air Resources Board’s (CARB) 2022 Scoping Plan update. Our host organizations each utilized their networks to complete 35 hours of outreach to community members about the workshop in priority environmental justice neighborhoods, plus 15 hours supporting planning and coordination, including by co-facilitating sessions and co-designing handouts and other materials. A \$50 stipend was provided to compensate community members for engaging in this workshop. Over 100 people participated virtually. The meeting agenda, overview slides, handouts from each breakout session, and other materials can be found at: <http://www.calcleanair.org/feb22/>.

[Overview](#)

[Natural and Working Lands](#)

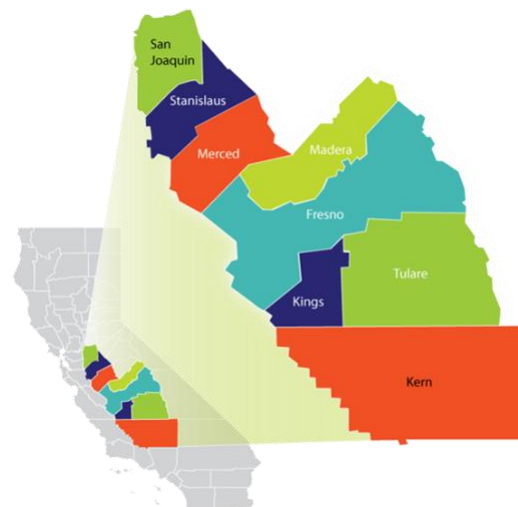
[Just Transition Off Fossil Fuels](#)

[Land Use and Transportation](#)

[Carbon Capture and Storage](#)

[Energy](#)

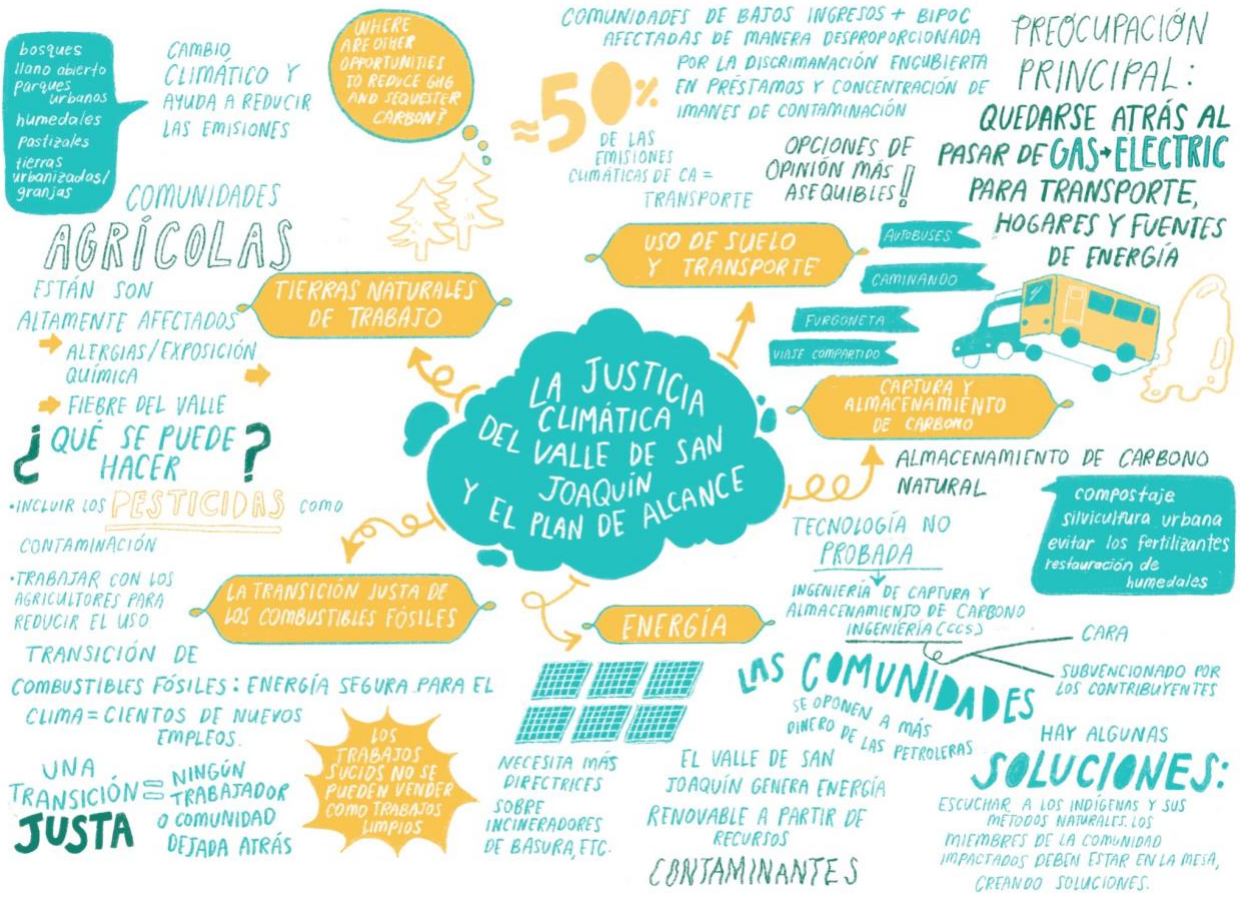
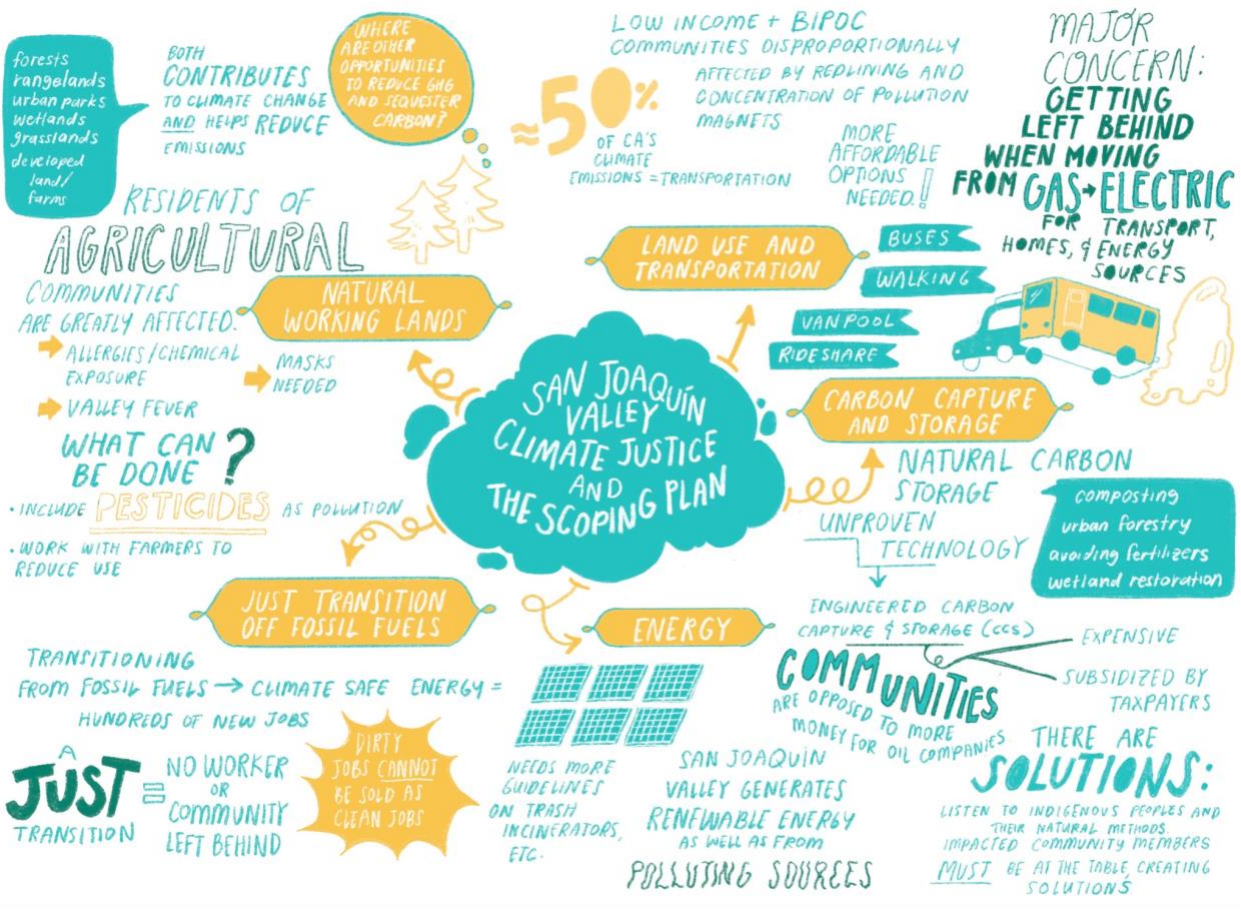
[Opportunities To Address Recommendations](#)



Overview

With funding from CARB, the planning organizations were able to dedicate staff resources for outreach, planning, implementation, and evaluation as well as to offer residents stipends for engagement. Working through trusted community based organizations who work with them on a range of issues, from food access to water quality and air pollution, residents understood the connection between their local priorities and the topics under discussion. Participants engaged in rich discussions facilitated by community advocates and organizers familiar with those issue areas.

Some themes that emerged throughout discussions include ensuring meaningful engagement, with priority for environmental justice communities, as well as ground truthing information when shaping policy decisions and programs. Community members expressed concerns with the potential impacts of the economic and technological assumptions CARB is making on how to meet California's climate goals, and if they will enjoy the benefits or continue to bear much of the costs. Community leaders also emphasized the need to address cumulative pollution issues, the importance of utilizing Indigenous practices, divesting from harmful practices like oil extraction and pesticide use, as well as investing in natural lands, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable, equitable economic development.



Natural and Working Lands

Participants: over 50

Format: English and Spanish with simultaneous interpretation

Overview: Natural and working lands can both contribute to climate change and help to reduce emissions and the impacts of climate change. Much of the land in the San Joaquin Valley is used for agriculture, industrial uses, and sprawling residential areas. Management of these lands impacts public health and the economy.

Key Takeaways: Pesticides are a priority concern for community members; they should be included in the Scoping Plan. Residents shared concerns about stronger regulations in areas with the most exposure to limit pesticide use and support for organic farming options. We should learn from Indigenous communities and integrate traditional practices and ecological knowledge. Overall, the state should make more investments in land restoration and preservation in the Valley.

Comments:

- *“Chemical pesticides are impacting us, the water, land, air, nature, plants, they can drift for miles.”*
- *“I’ve been sprayed twice. My car has been sprayed.”*
- *“Those of us living near pesticide use want reduced pesticide use and more organic food to reduce pollution.”*
- *“It’s an ag state but there must be better regulations in rural areas to protect homes and families.”*
- *“Pesticides contaminate our food and hurt our health. We need other options. Talk to the ranchers to use less pesticides.”*

Just Transition Off Fossil Fuels

Participants: 34 total

Format: 2 separate breakout sessions - one in English and one in Spanish

Overview: A just transition moves our economy off of fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy with reliable and equitable storage while providing pathways to high-quality, life-affirming work in regenerative economies. The overconcentration of polluting industries in the San Joaquin Valley is an ongoing issue that is taking a severe toll on the health and vitality of people and the environment, particularly Black and Indigenous people, people of color, and low income communities.

Key Takeaways: In the San Joaquin Valley, many communities have been left out of energy transitions. Some are still relying on burning wood or propane, and face high costs associated with the use of natural gas. Investing in energy efficiency, resilience, and renewable energy can address community needs, protect workers, and help reach climate goals. Immediate protections must be provided in the short term for those living near facilities. We need a new renewable energy definition that prevents greenwashing and ensures real benefits.

Comments:

- *“The Governor should give protections to communities and create buffer zones between communities and polluting industries.”*
- *“Every SJV resident deserves the right to clean water and air. I used to be an oil worker, have first hand seen the process leading to the contamination...need real renewable energy, a new and real definition.”*
- *“Dairies and refineries should not be in the communities.”*
- *“Utilities, rent, etc are all rising, and we need equitable well paying jobs.”*
- *“We would like to also stop greenwashing dirty jobs/ companies/ practices.- reclassification of some of these dirty jobs to actually reflect how dirty they really are.”*

Land Use and Transportation

Participants: 16 total

Format: one breakout session with Spanish interpretation

Overview: The layout of our communities directly relates to health and economic justice. Discriminatory practices like redlining and a concentration of pollution magnets have disproportionately exposed Black and Indigenous peoples, People of Color, and low income communities to harmful pollutants. Many San Joaquin Valley communities are sprawling, lack transportation options, and don't have adequate infrastructure or greenspace.

Key Takeaways: Communities should be (re)designed to achieve equity, health, and connectivity. Rural areas and older parts of towns and cities should be included in decision making about infrastructure needs. Investing in green spaces provides co-benefits to mental and physical health. Programs like the ridesharing electric vehicle program in the city of Huron called “Green Raiteros” can be replicated and provide clean mobility options that meet local community needs.

Comments:

- *Light Rail - “Who has the power in the county when making these moves- How do we make sure we are included?”*

- *“How can the state help assess new development so that older parts of the community are not left behind?”*
- *“We need to drive at least 30 minutes to get to our basic needs (stores/ groceries)- There is no green space for our children to play in although we are surrounded by agriculture and pesticides.”*
- *“Raitero Program/ RideShare- in Huron- should be duplicated in other areas.”*

Engineered Carbon Capture and Storage

Participants: over 50

Format: English and Spanish with simultaneous interpretation

Overview: Carbon can be stored naturally through beneficial practices like composting, urban forestry, and wetland restoration. Engineered carbon capture and storage (CCS) is an unproven, expensive technology that proposes to remove carbon dioxide (CO₂) at the source of power plants and industrial smokestacks and inject it underground. Engineered CCS will increase risks such as air pollution, groundwater contamination, earthquakes, and leaks. CCS has primarily been used for Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR), perpetuating the use of fossil fuels that must be phased out.

Key Takeaways: There are many negative impacts to engineered CCS projects and many unanswered questions regarding risks. Community members are worried about the cumulative impacts of proposed engineered CCS projects, and their concentration in already polluted communities. There was also concern about enhanced oil extraction and the harms of increased production, as well as risks of leaks and water contamination. The same concerns were named for CCS applications for biomass, cement, and other industries. Communities where engineered CCS projects are proposed should be notified and meaningfully included in the decision making process. We should sequester carbon naturally, restore ecosystems, and utilize traditional ecological knowledge and Indigenous practices.

Comments:

- *“Most of the money for CO₂ sequestration will go to the oil industry that was instrumental in accelerating climate change.”*
- *“We already have oil, pesticides, we don’t need more. It will impact our water, we already have problems with our water. No more carbon footprint in our communities.”*
- *“There will be more to learn about the risks, we must make our voice heard, we demand 90 days for public comment.”*
- *“We must think like our ancestors. Give time to nature to do its own work.”*

Energy

Participants: 18 total

Format: one breakout session with Spanish interpretation

Overview: Energy creation, transmission and use affects our climate, economy, and health. Numerous forms of energy are generated in the San Joaquin Valley from renewable sources like wind and solar power to polluting sources, including methane (natural gas) and even animal and other biowaste burned to create electricity.

Key Takeaways: Many community members expressed concerns about indoor air pollution created by gas stoves and furnaces common in older homes. Participants want investments in programs that support renewable energy like wind and solar. Oil, natural gas, and biogas from dairy digesters should all be phased out.

Comments:

- *“I want to understand, The stove I have in the house, the gas that it releases is harmful to me?...The PG&E program gives us carbon monoxide detectors, but they are small and cheap and we still have the stoves that we use in our homes.”*
- *“I want electricity from places that do not create harm to my health, the environment, that does not create pollution.”*
- *“Operations take place in poorer communities because there is less resistance and money to stop these operations.”*
- *“Put more money toward programs that would allow us to get electric appliances.”*

Opportunities To Address Recommendations

Assembly Bill 32: The Global Warming Solutions Act (2006) gave CARB broad authority to establish an attainable, equitable vision for how to achieve the emissions targets established by law. While some of these recommendations may fall outside of CARB’s direct regulatory authority, the responsibility to create a Scoping Plan means CARB is able to include recommendations and ideas beyond its direct authority to establish a framework that other agencies or the Legislature should seek to follow.

Recommendation #1: Include all community feedback in the EJAC recommendations, and give those recommendations full consideration in the Scoping Plan.

We request that community feedback be fed into the scenario development and refinement process. Recommendations should be substantively integrated in the analysis justifying the final scenario selected for the 2022 Scoping Plan. We also recommend direct integration of

information and recommendations from all relevant community engagement efforts into each chapter of the Scoping Plan, including those organized by the Building Energy, Equity & Power (BEEP) coalition as well as this and other activities organized by Environmental Justice Advisory Committee members.

For the San Joaquin Valley listening sessions, these summary recommendations should be included:

- Focus on reducing air pollution and climate gasses from the largest sources including industrialized agriculture, energy generation, and freight and goods movement.
- Prioritize reducing exposures in communities of color and low income communities that bear a disproportionate burden of pollution exposure and higher levels of social vulnerability.
- Invest in clean, renewable energy and reliable, equitable storage.
- Increase accessibility of programs for electric vehicles and electrifying residences to low income communities and communities of color; they are currently being left behind.
- Engage communities in “redesign” and “refill” community development processes that address sustainability and just transition needs.
- Include strategies to limit pesticide use on the path to a full phase out, with pesticide reduction targets by 2030 and 2045, and help growers transition to organic practices. Promote agroecological practices and do not include pesticide use as a climate-smart strategy in any way.
- Integrate traditional ecological knowledge.
- Promote direct emission reductions and phase out credit-based systems and taxpayer-funded incentives for corporate polluters.
- Do not use engineered Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) to meet climate targets unless and until community concerns can be addressed.
- Phase out industrial biomass plants and dairy digesters. Do not subsidize or offer credits for existing projects; stop investing in new projects.

Recommendation #2: Create opportunities for ongoing community engagement and more equitable implementation through a permanent EJAC.

Health and Safety Code 38591(a) states that “The state board, by July 1, 2007, shall convene an environmental justice advisory committee, of at least three members, to advise it in developing the scoping plan pursuant to Section 38561 and *any other pertinent matter in implementing this division.*”

Based on this language, the members of the Environmental Justice Advisory Committee have consistently called for it to be convened year-round, and not just during Scoping Plan development. This would enable members to lend expertise on implementation of the plan, while also creating a venue for ongoing community input and engagement.

As we heard loud and clear during our listening session, the communities most impacted by this plan are eager to engage in policy development and implementation. Building on promising practices identified in the listening sessions and other community engagement activities, CARB should invest in the EJAC to build and maintain lines of communication.

Central Valley Air Quality Coalition
Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment
Central California Environmental Justice Network
Central California Asthma Collaborative
Valley Improvement Projects
Valley LEAP
Little Manila Rising
Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
Californians for Pesticide Reform

Submitted Wednesday, May 12, 2022