

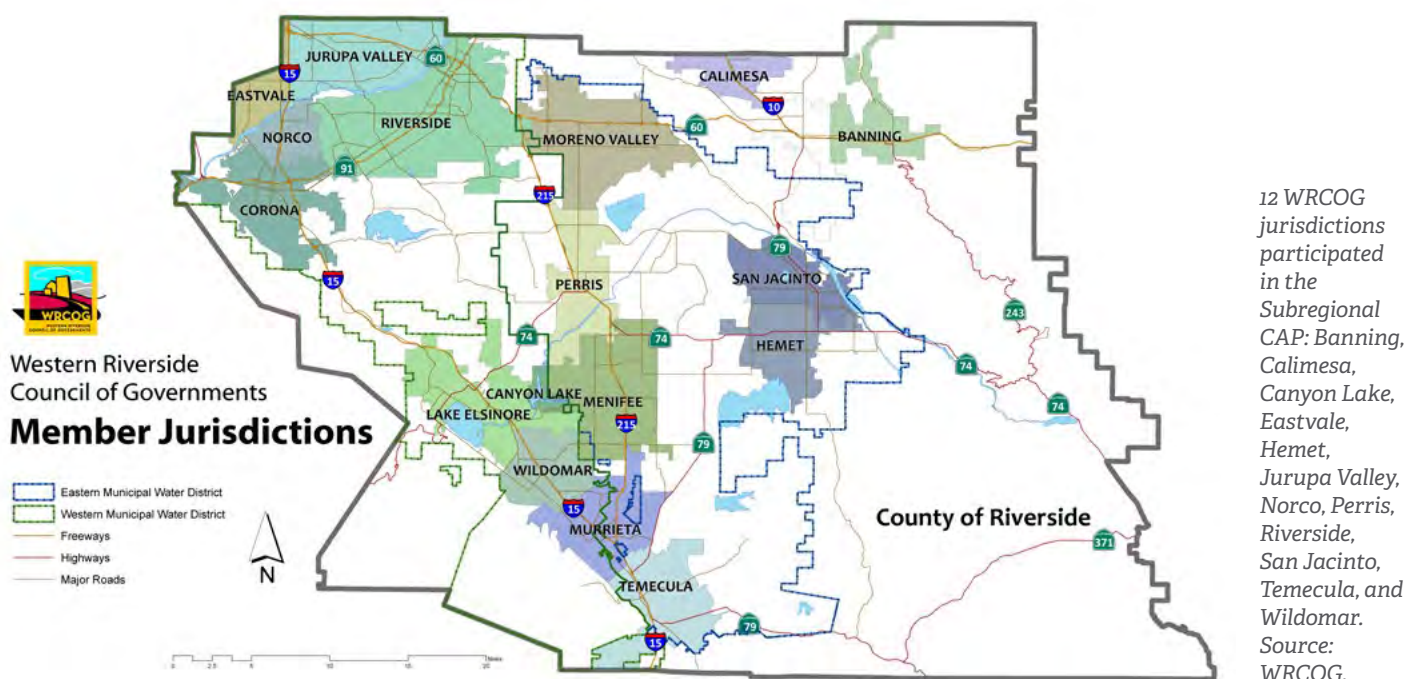
Project Highlight



CAPTivate: A Healthy Western Riverside County

The Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG) represents 17 cities in the western half of Riverside County, as well as the Riverside County Board of Supervisors, the Eastern and Western Municipal Water Districts, and the Morongo Band of Mission Indians. In 2012, members adopted the WRCOG *Sustainability Framework*, which outlined goals for quality of life in Western Riverside County. The Framework provided a starting point for dialogue about sustainability and its importance to the region. In addition to this framework, WRCOG spearheaded multiple very successful funding mechanisms (e.g. the HERO Program and the Western Riverside Energy Leadership Partnership) for energy efficiency projects. In June 2014, they substantively expanded their sustainability leadership by completing a subregional climate action plan that establishes a single subregional emissions goal to be met collectively by all participating cities.

WRCOG represents a diverse group of cities that range in population from 8,000 (Calimesa) to 300,000 (Riverside) and are home to a highly variable mix and intensity of commercial, residential, and industrial uses. Among communities, there is also a wide disparity in average incomes, the range of urban and rural lifestyles, and accessibility of transit. As a result, it was logistically challenging to propose a one-size-fits-all sustainability strategy. In addition, WRCOG recognized that getting a climate action plan adopted and implemented would be challenging given the region's political dynamics.



The Project

WRCOG's Climate Action Plan, dubbed *CAPtivate: A Healthy Western Riverside County*, establishes a subregional emissions target of 15% below 2010 levels by 2020 and 49% below 2010 levels by 2035. Twelve of WRCOG's member cities are participating in the subregional climate action plan; the other six member cities already have adopted local climate action plans. *CAPtivate* identifies feasible actions WRCOG communities can take before 2020 and also highlights more innovative approaches that will be needed to meet the 2035 target.

From the beginning, the WRCOG team positioned the climate action plan as vital for the economic and public health of the community. They described climate mitigation, energy efficiency, and water conservation as ideal ways to keep dollars in the local economy, create new green jobs, and improve public health and community quality of life. Cities were reminded that a subregional approach reduces total administrative costs and enables cities with more capacity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to off-set jurisdictions with more limited opportunities— allowing the subregion as a whole to more cost-effectively meet their targets.

The plan organizes greenhouse gas reduction measures into four categories and provides strategies within each. In addition, it identifies co-benefits (e.g. economic, health, energy security benefits) for every action in the plan and highlights them with a system of icons. The categories and examples include:

- **Energy:** planting trees to reduce urban heat island effect (Co-benefits: reducing home energy costs; enhancing visual aesthetic of the community)
- **Transportation and Land Use:** providing end of trip facilities (Co-benefits: improving public health; increasing access to transit)
- **Solid Waste:** providing green waste and compost collection (Co-benefits: preserving natural resources by reusing as mulch; extending life of regional landfills)
- **Water:** meeting state requirement to reduce urban per capita water use (Co-benefits: saving money on energy and wastewater; saving natural resources)

Some measures apply to participating cities uniformly, because they reflect compliance with a state law (e.g., the Low Carbon Fuel Standard) or result from programs administered by a utility serving multiple jurisdictions (e.g., utility rebates). For other, more local measures,



Locally-Driven Solutions

- Devising a subregional approach wherein diverse cities can (1) capitalize on local opportunities in order to contribute to a single subregional emissions reduction target AND (2) benefit from the economies of scale, lower administrative costs, and greater publicity of incentives only possible via collaboration.
- Creating different levels (silver, gold, platinum) of plan engagement in recognition of the range of resources and political conditions within member cities.
- Providing a sister document with “plug and play” general plan and zoning ordinance text for each *CAPtivate* measure to make implementation as simple and non-resource intensive as possible.



Graphic ads used to promote the health benefits of climate action measures. Source: WRCOG

participating cities have voluntarily committed to a participation level that can be implemented given their specific community constraints and opportunities. These levels range from “Silver” level programs, smaller initiatives that could be promoted through a city’s website, to “Platinum” level programs that require codification through a local ordinance. Communities that committed to Gold and Platinum level programs achieved more greenhouse gas reductions with fewer programs, but Silver level programs offered cities more flexibility to implement the plan even in the face of opposition within their City. In addition to committing to a level of action, each city defined 2020 progress indicators, measureable outcomes that will confirm the city is on track to meet its pledge.

WRCOG recognized that even with political support for the plan, cities were also hampered by lack of funding and limited or no staff dedicated to sustainability. While *CAPTivate*’s emissions reduction strategies are relatively simple in concept, implementation can be tricky. Therefore, WRCOG went a step further with their plan and created a “plug and play” implementation toolkit. For each applicable action listed in *CAPTivate*,

the toolkit provides specific general plan policy language and zoning ordinance text, as well as examples of other jurisdictions already implementing the strategy. Also, WRCOG provided participating cities with a tracking and monitoring tool to help them measure their progress implementing these measures.

Local/Regional Connection

WRCOG provides a venue for cooperative regional planning and reduces administrative costs for member cities. The regional prevalence of conservative politics, however, minimizes the support for any policies perceived to make a city less economically competitive, a perception that often extends to sustainability programs. Ensuring local implementation of the *CAPTivate* plan, therefore, required (1) city buy-in and (2) the identification of any specific local barriers to adoption and implementation.

By utilizing WRCOG’s existing committee structure and standing meeting schedule, the *CAPTivate* working group interfaced with decisionmakers who might not otherwise have engaged with climate issues. In targeted presentations to the City Managers Technical Advisory Committee and WRCOG’s Executive Committee (comprised of local elected officials), the team tied greenhouse gas reduction to economic and health indicators, quantifying the co-benefits from the proposed climate mitigation strategies. Their dedication to pursue consensus-building strategies among the cities paid off: the City of Calimesa used the subregional template to adopt their local CAP in 2014; Riverside, Eastvale, Hemet, Perris and Wildomar adopted their local CAPs in 2015; and WRCOG staff is in the process of working with the remaining six cities to ensure 100% adoption.

Measure T-17: Neighborhood Electric Vehicle Programs
Implement development requirements to accommodate Neighborhood Electric Vehicles and supporting infrastructure.

2020 GHG Reduction Potential: 4,707 MT CO₂e/yr

PARTICIPATION LEVEL	ACTIONS + PARTICIPATING CITIES	GHG REDUCTION POTENTIAL (MT CO ₂ e/yr)
PLATINUM LEVEL	Provide dedicated NEV facilities within the community. No jurisdictions participating at this level.	0
GOLD LEVEL	Adopt a comprehensive NEV program including signage for NEVs and an educational program related to the use of NEVs. Riverside	3,496
SILVER LEVEL	Adopt an educational program related to the use of NEVs. Hemet	1,211
PROGRESS INDICATORS		YEAR
1 Number of jurisdictions which have implemented NEV plans.		2020

Example of a greenhouse gas mitigation strategy from the plan with three participation levels described. Source: *CAPTivate: A Healthy Riverside County*

Participants learn about CAPtivate via hands-on activities at the Farmers' Market in Downtown Riverside. Source: WRCOG



Agency Collaboration for Action

The WRCOG Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee, which included representatives from all twelve cities, served as the *CAPtivate* working group, increasing their meeting frequency as they took ownership of the plan. In addition to presenting regularly to elected officials, the Committee developed a stakeholder engagement plan that included outreach to relevant city departments in each jurisdiction, including Planning, Public Works, Utilities, and Human Resources.

In addition, the team approached state and regional regulatory agencies early to secure their support. Representatives from the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, California Air Resources Board, and South Coast Air Quality Management District, and Southern California Association of Governments were actively engaged in *CAPtivate*.

Effective Community Engagement

WRCOG's stakeholder engagement plan solicited input from multiple levels — elected officials to individual citizens. Though some greenhouse gas mitigation strategies will require government action, others require behavioral change on the part of residents. The following strategies were used by WRCOG to reach a range of different populations:

- **City officials and employees:** one-on-one meetings with participating cities; presentations to city councils, planning commissions, and other WRCOG standing committees
- **Other government and regulatory stakeholders and technical partners:** presentations to the Riverside Transit Agency, Riverside Green Accountability Performance Committee, South California Association of Governments; booths

at existing WRCOG events, e.g. WRCOG Energy Summit and Advancing the Choice Expo, and other stakeholder conferences

- **Residents of Western Riverside:** pop-up events throughout the subregion; a *CAPtivate* Mind Mixer Website, where any member of the public could leave feedback or ideas throughout the planning process

Sustainable Benefits for California

Implementation of *CAPtivate: A Healthy Western Riverside County* will help to advance many of California's sustainability objectives, particularly in the areas of:

- Clean air and water
- Economic Prosperity
- Energy efficiency and conservation
- Equity
- Public health
- Reduced automobile usage and fuel consumption
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions

For More Information

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