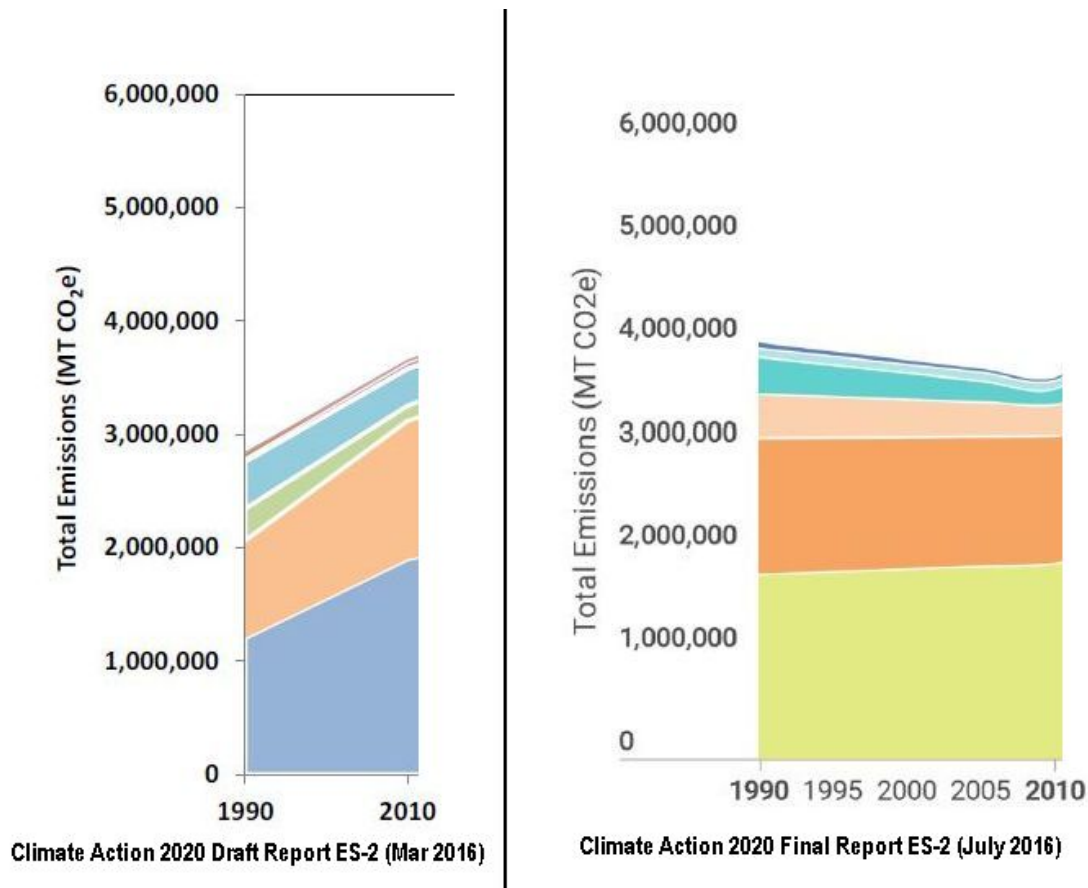


**For Immediate Release**  
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## **How Did Our Greenhouse Gas Baseline Change?**

*A bogus GHG emissions baseline would be a giant step backward for Sonoma County*

Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Authority's (RCPA) long awaited Climate Action 2020 (CA 2020) Plan is finally here. But how did Sonoma County's AB32-mandated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions baseline — and even the direction of its 20-year trend line — change so dramatically in just the three months between the Draft and Final Reports?



Did the consultants hired to write the CA 2020 Plan make a serious error in their baseline analysis, or are they trying to rewrite history with a 'backcast' that is poorly documented and simply too good to be true?

In 1990, Sonoma County had 72,000 (16%) fewer people than in 2010, each driving fewer miles on average a day. Yet somehow they tell us that cumulative traffic and building emissions in 1990 were much worse than they were 20 years later, even after a period of unprecedented growth. Although driving many fewer miles and powering 17% fewer homes, and with businesses employing 12% fewer workers, mysteriously they say we produced 9% more GHGs.

How can that be? Were baseline emissions really so much higher in 1990? How did the direction of this previously well-accepted trend get reversed?

Has anyone else ever documented such a spontaneous Business-As-Usual emission reduction trend of this magnitude — a steady decline over 20 years, despite significant economic growth?

Not in the County's first GHG inventory, performed by the Center for Climate Protection (CCP) in 2008, and updated in 2010. Not in the County's next inventory, updated by the same CCP consultant in 2015. Nor was it there in the first inventories RCPA's same new consultants shared with stakeholders and other members of the public at the early stages of CA 2020 planning. In fact, this unprecedented claim of a new trend direction was not even made obvious in the Executive Summary of the CA 2020 Draft Report circulated to elected officials, stakeholders, and the public in March 2016.

To find out what may really be going on here we took a deep dive into the details, as [reported on our website](#). We found a RED FLAG that may indicate an error in the annexation, VMT allocation, or Santa Rosa integration methodology, somehow double-counting or otherwise inflating 1990 baseline levels.

Unfortunately RCPA and their consultants have failed to document their work in sufficient quantitative detail to allow anyone to replicate it. In fact, RCPA staff had quietly let it be known (at least as of April of 2016) that they too have had difficulties getting some of the key variables and other numerical drivers out of ICFi (the consultant whose work is here in question).

Why haven't RCPA staff and trusted climate policy watchdogs like CCP, SCCA, Sierra Club, NRDC, Environmental Defense, 350.org and others raised any of these concerns publicly already? Why didn't RCPA staff answer these and numerous other questions when we first posed them in May?

Cynics will argue that some of these groups may have already been co-opted by powerful interests with a stake in maintaining the status quo. An artificially higher baseline in 1990 means, at least in theory, that we get to emit more GHG pollution in 2020, 2040, 2050 and beyond.

At this point, we at Transition Sonoma Valley still think County staff and our environmental advocates deserve some benefit of the doubt. We realize that they are staffed by busy people who generally still have faith that Sonoma County can be trusted to lead on climate policies without much oversight. By no means do we intend to denigrate the entire report. We acknowledge it still contains a great deal of valuable information. We just want to see it fixed and finished.

But our trust in RCPA has been shaken.

Regardless, we will know soon when these groups choose to either join with us to question this 1990 "backcast" inventory, or to defend it in its present form, despite these serious questions we have raised.

If the people of Sonoma County hope to maintain our international reputation as a leader in climate action governance, we think we deserve better. Until our questions are resolved, and we have more confidence about why our established GHG baseline trend changed, **we urge elected officials throughout the County to hold off on adopting the Climate Action 2020 Plan in its present form.**

*Transition Sonoma Valley (TSV) is building a responsive network of local citizens, groups and businesses to create a resilient, self-reliant community in response to the challenges of climate change, resource depletion, and economic instability. For more on the world-wide Transition Movement and to learn about TSV's activities please visit [www.transitionsonomavalley.org](http://www.transitionsonomavalley.org), find TSV on Facebook, or email [editor@transitionsonomavalley.org](mailto:editor@transitionsonomavalley.org)*