



# Citizens' Climate Lobby

## *Contra Costa County Chapter*

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Newsletter – February 2020

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### Measure J: A Proposal to Improve Contra Costa County's Serious Traffic Situation



Photo: Noah Berger / San Francisco Chronicle 2016

Four years ago, Contra Costa County voters rejected a half-cent sales tax for transportation by a narrow margin. It was supported by over 63% of voters, but a two-thirds majority was required for passage. A critical factor in its defeat was the opposition of environmental groups.

County transportation planners have proposed a half-cent sales tax again on the March 3 ballot: Measure J. The tax is projected to raise more than \$100 million annually over 35 years. This time,

they have developed a plan in cooperation with environmental groups and community groups concerned about social justice. They have come back with a plan that is crafted to better boost public transportation, protect open space, and improve pedestrian and bicycling options. The tax has the endorsement of key environmental groups, including the Greenbelt Alliance, Save Mount Diablo, Save the Bay, the Sierra Club, and the Contra Costa Chapter of Citizen's Climate Lobby.

The bill prioritizes systematic changes in land use and transportation that simultaneously address climate change and inequality. It promotes public transportation, walking, biking and reducing dependence on automobiles, while promoting affordable housing near public transportation. By taking more cars off the road it lowers emissions, thus improving air quality and health. It aims to make BART, buses, and ferries safer, cleaner, more accessible, and more reliable. Roads will be repaired, but not extended. It prioritizes reducing traffic congestion on Highways 680, 580, 80, 24, and 4, as well as Ygnacio Valley Road, Kirker Pass Road, Vasco Road, Bollinger Canyon Road, Central Avenue, and the Richmond Parkway.

All funds stay in Contra Costa County and can't be taken by the State. We ask for your [support for Measure J](#).

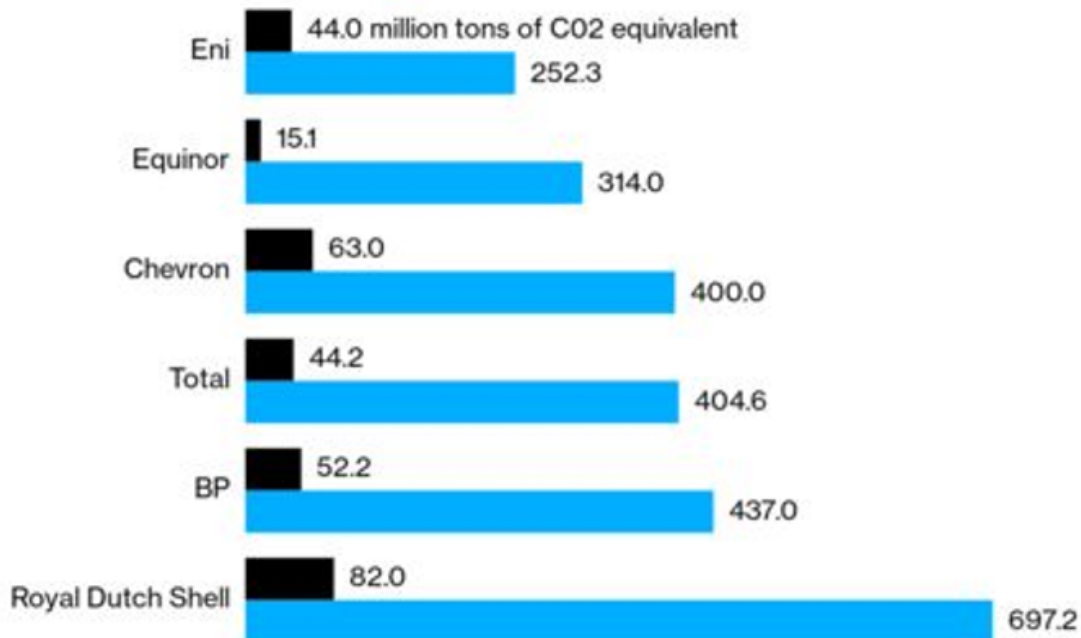
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## **Too Good to be True? BP Raises the Bar**

## Calculating Carbon

Oil companies' carbon footprints are mostly due to scope three emissions

■ Scopes 1 and 2 emissions ■ Scope 3



Source: Bloomberg

Note: emissions data taken from latest available company publications

**Bloomberg**

According to [Laura Hurst](#) of *Bloomberg News*, [BP's](#) new CEO, Bernard Looney, has set an ambitious agenda, pledging to eliminate almost all of the carbon emissions from its operations and the fuel it sells to customers by 2050. While peers including [Royal Dutch Shell](#), [Total](#) and [Equinor](#) have responded to investor pressure by adopting targets for emissions curbs, none has promised to zero-out *all* emissions from the fossil fuels they extract from the ground.

The chart above compares Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions for some major oil companies. Scope 1 and 2 emissions are generated while producing the product and by offsite utilities procuring electricity for company operations. Scope 3 emissions include emissions generated by other people (customers) burning the company's products. Scope 3 emissions dwarf Scope 1 and 2 emissions for all the companies shown. BP's ambition to eliminate Scope 3 emissions is a game-changer. Until now, no major oil company has been willing to shoulder that responsibility.

Looney faces an enormous task. For BP to survive the energy transition, it will need to make big investments in new sources of clean energy and ensure cash keeps flowing from its fossil fuel assets, while also funneling generous returns to investors. It's a tricky balancing act that its closest peer Shell is [struggling to master](#). To fulfill the pledge, BP may face a hard reckoning -- either shift energy production to renewables, develop commercially viable technology to remove and store the carbon emitted from burning oil and gas, sell no- or low-carbon fuels, or stick with fossil fuels and accept that production will have to drop.



BP's move increases the divide between oil companies on either side of the Atlantic. The European majors are heeding societal and investor pressures to drastically reduce their carbon footprint. Pledges from their American counterparts ExxonMobil and Chevron are more modest, focusing on reducing methane emissions and more generally aligning themselves with the Paris Climate Agreement.

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## A Trillion Trees

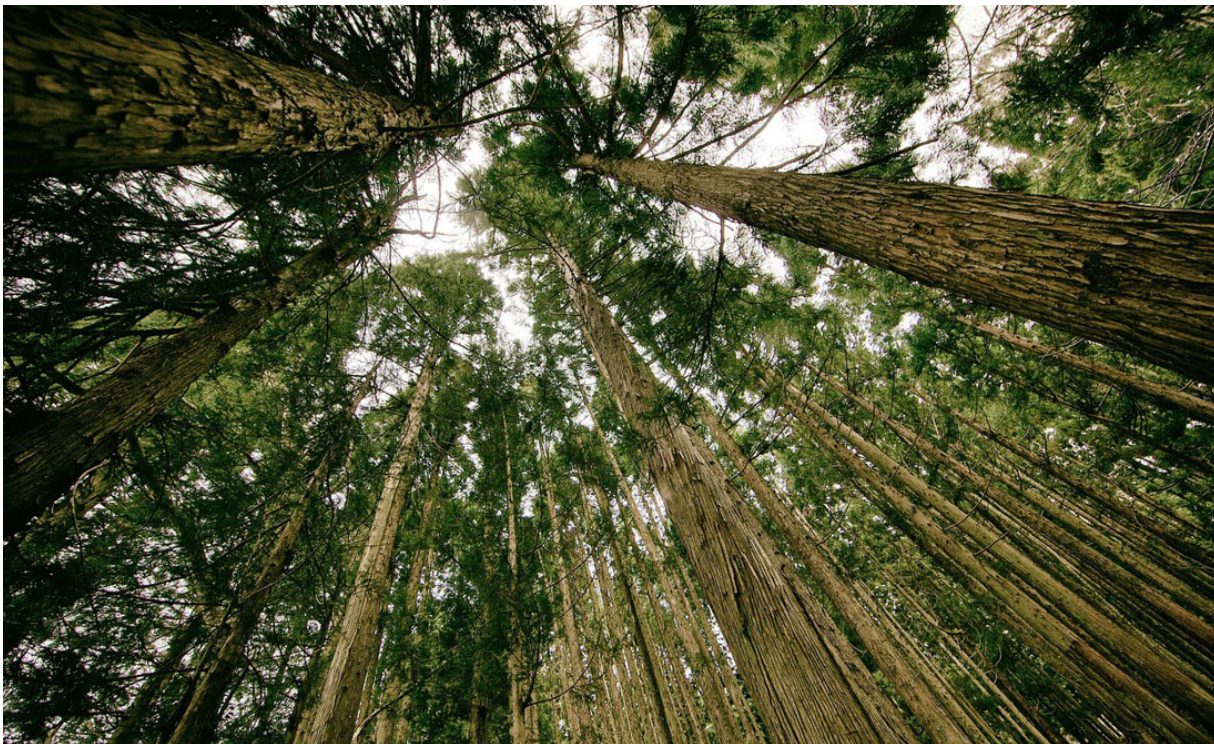


Photo: [NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory](#)

Marc Benioff, billionaire chief executive of Salesforce, tech mogul and environmental philanthropist, felt sure he had found a climate-change solution that even President Trump could love, [writes](#) Lisa Friedman of *The New York Times*: planting trees. Despite problems with its implementation and uncertainties about its outcome, the idea had an enormous political advantage: It was practically sacrifice-free; no war on coal, no transition from fossil fuels, no energy conservation or investment in renewable sources of power that Mr. Trump loves to mock, like [the windmills that cause cancer](#) or [the solar panels that are not “strong enough.”](#) Everyone loves trees.

How the trillion trees initiative migrated from Mr. Benioff's PowerPoint presentations to the president's pronouncements, first at the [World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland](#), last month, then his State of the Union address last week, is a study in ad hoc policymaking at the Trump White House. A personal appeal from a celebrity voice got the idea past gatekeepers, a back channel through Jared Kushner gave it life, and a re-election campaign seeking to soften

some of Mr. Trump's sharper edges ensured its publicity.

[Tom Crowther](#), an environmental scientist and an author of the study that sparked the movement, warned that a trillion trees would not do much in the near term to stop the worst effects of planetary warming. The full benefits would not be seen for about 100 years, when most of the new trees would reach full maturity. During that time, he said, the world needs to drive down fossil fuel emission. "If tree planting is just used as an excuse to avoid cutting greenhouse gas emissions or to further limit environmental protection, then it could be a real disaster," said Dr. Crowther.

Such details might be beside the point for a White House interested in politics far more than science. A senior administration official described the tree initiative as one the president believes will "bring people together." "We're committed to conserving the majesty of God's creation and the natural beauty of our world," Mr. Trump told investors and world leaders in Davos.

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## Trump Rule Would Exclude Climate Change in Infrastructure Planning



Sections of unused pipe, intended for the Keystone XL project, near Gascoyne, N.D., in 2014.  
Credit: Andrew Burton/Getty Images

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the federal government to prepare

detailed analyses of projects that could have significant environmental effects, including long-term impacts that courts have said include climate change. According to an [article](#) by Lisa Friedman of *The New York Times*, a proposal by the Trump administration would severely weaken that law. Federal agencies would no longer have to take climate change into account when they assess the environmental impacts of highways, pipelines and other major infrastructure projects.

The proposed changes to NEPA could sharply reduce obstacles to the Keystone XL oil pipeline and other fossil fuel projects that had been stymied when courts ruled that the Trump administration did not properly consider climate change when analyzing their environmental impacts. The changes will also narrow the range of projects that require environmental review. That could make it likely that projects will be approved without having to disclose plans to do things like discharge waste, cut trees, or increase air pollution. The changes “allow private companies with a financial interest in the outcome to prepare their own analysis. They would also dramatically curtail public participation in the review process,” [says](#) Michelle Nowlin, a clinical professor at Duke Law School.

The new rule would no longer require agencies to consider the “cumulative” consequences of new infrastructure. Courts have interpreted that requirement as a mandate to study the effects of greenhouse gas emissions and the impacts of rising sea levels and other results of climate change on a given project.

Environmental activists and legal experts said the proposed changes would weaken critical safeguards for air, water and wildlife. If it survives the expected court challenges, the move could eliminate a powerful tool that climate change activists have used to stop or slow Mr. Trump’s encouragement of coal and oil development as part of its “energy dominance” policy. “It has the potential to distort infrastructure planning by making it easier to ignore predictable futures that could severely degrade the projects,” said Michael Gerrard, director of Columbia University’s Sabin Center for Climate Change Law. Brett Hartl, government affairs director for the Center for Biological Diversity, said, “You’re assuming away massive amounts of harm and you’re not even going to discuss it.”

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## The Republican Climate Agenda





A power plant near Houston with devices to capture carbon dioxide before it is released. Credit: Michael Stravato for The New York Times

Scientists say solving climate change means significantly reducing the use of fossil fuels, [says](#) Lisa Friedman of *The New York Times*, but that's not how many Republicans in Congress see things. The first part of a new House Republican climate agenda includes an ambitious tree-planting program. It also calls for tax breaks to encourage the development of technology to capture emissions from coal and gas plants. Measures to bolster energy storage and advanced nuclear technology are planned, too.

Party leaders openly acknowledge that they hope to solve global warming without sacrificing coal, gas or oil - the fossil fuels most responsible for heating up the planet. "[Fossil fuels aren't the enemy](#)," said Representative Garret Graves of Louisiana, the top Republican on the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis. "It's emissions. So, let's devise strategies that are based on emissions strategies, not based on eliminating fossil fuels."

That approach has political advantages for Republicans. It allows them to attack Democratic-led proposals like the [Green New Deal](#) while offering ideas of their own to appeal to people concerned about the environment. Although the solutions they propose will slowly reduce emissions, scientists say they are not nearly enough to avoid the [worst consequences of climate change](#): That requires a 45% reduction in global carbon dioxide emissions from 2010 levels by 2030, and reaching net-zero emissions by 2050.

Julio Friedmann, a senior research scholar at Columbia University's Center for Global Energy Policy who was a top official in the Department of Energy under President Barack Obama, said all

of the options Republicans have outlined would be needed, but it's still necessary to sharply reduce fossil fuels. "Climate change is an existential threat," Dr. Friedmann said. "We are in the fight of our lives and we need absolutely every option." He called the Republican plans "positive" for helping to build consensus around greater climate ambition, but they're "not a substitute for the rest."

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# QUICK NEWS

- **New congressional support for climate action.** In a hopeful sign for cross-party collaboration to address climate change, four new members joined the bipartisan Senate Climate Solutions Caucus earlier this month, bringing the total to twelve. The new members are Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI). In the House, the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (HR 763) continues to rack up cosponsors (now 80). Since returning from the holiday break, five Members have come aboard – Reps. Ann Kustler (D-NH), Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Mary Scanlon (D-PA), Jason Crow (D-CO), and Frederica S. Wilson (D-FL).
- **Environmental group says [10 million environmentalists didn't vote in 2016](#).** "We live in a time where it is increasingly challenging to change anybody's opinion on climate change," says Nathaniel Stinnett, founder and executive director of the Boston-based Environmental Voter Project (EVP). "But that's not the problem we're trying to solve. There are already millions who believe that climate change is a number one problem. We are focused on getting them to vote. And changing behavior is easier than changing minds or opinions." EVP made contact with close to 40,000 voters in New Hampshire during the recent primary campaign. For more information or if you'd like to be involved, take a look at EVP's [website](#), a [short video](#), or a [presentation and Q&A](#) Stinnett gave on a CCL National Call on June 22, 2018.
- **Climate change accelerates as Earth just had its hottest January on record.** The Earth just had its hottest January in recorded history, continuing an alarming upward trend, [according to](#) the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Global land and ocean temperatures in January were the highest on record at 2.05 degrees Fahrenheit, or 1.13 degrees Celsius, above the 20th century average. 2020 will likely rank among the five warmest years on record, according to scientists from the National Centers for Environmental Information. Article [source](#): Emma Newberger of *CNBC*.



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## CCL-CCC Chapter: Recent Accomplishments

- **Milt Latta** compared various carbon taxation bills in Congress for the **Mount Diablo Unitarian Climate Series** on February 2.
- **Cynthia Mahoney, Lisa Jackson, Jackie Mann, and Marcia Liberson** attended a **rally in Sacramento** on February 19th during the governor's State of the State message to support making the transition to clean energy in California.
- **Betty Lobos and Emily Hopkins** represented CCL at the February 20 meeting of the [\*\*Interfaith Climate Action Network of Contra Costa\*\*](#).
- **Proposals** submitted by **Emily Hopkins** and **Bill Bray** (Woodlands TX CCL chapter) have led to an invitation to make a CCL presentation at [\*\*Ecumenical Advocacy Days\*\*](#) in Washington DC in April. This annual gathering draws hundreds of folks from across the nation for education and congressional advocacy for peace and social, economic, and environmental justice issues.
- **Marti Roach, Lisa Jackson, Lisa Chang and Marcia Liberson** helped launch a new climate group: [\*\*350 Contra Costa\*\*](#) - a branch of 350 Bay Area.
- At Team Leader **Liz Fisher's** invitation, **Ray Williams** joined CCL's **Team OIL** and attended the latest call, during which they explored the issue of methane emissions, and tentatively agreed to present this topic at the [\*\*June CCL Conference\*\*](#).
- **Ray Williams** received permission from the **University of California Energy Institute** to review its blogs and pass selected ones on to Contra Costa CCL's social media outlets.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Next CCL Contra Costa chapter meeting: Monday, March 16**, at 6:30 pm at St. Anselm's Episcopal Church, 682 Michael Lane, Lafayette. **Doug Merrill** will demonstrate the **En-ROADS Climate Model** at the meeting.
- CCL Contra Costa will host **informational tables** at **three Earth Day events**:
  - On **Saturday, April 18th**, 10 am - 4 pm at the **John Muir National Historic Site**, 4202 Alhambra Ave. in Martinez (Pam Murray, Tracy Westphal, Betty Lobos, and Priyanka Dhavle)
  - On **Sunday, April 19th**, 11 am - 2 pm, on the terrace below the **Lafayette Library**, 3491 Mt Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette (Pam Murray, Betty Lobos, and Priyanka Dhavle)
  - On **Saturday, April 25th**, 11 am - 2 pm, at the **Shields-Reid Community Center**, 1410 Kelsey St. in North Richmond (Pam Murray and Michael Kent)

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## Ask Us to Activate Your Group with a Climate Change Presentation

**Presentations by CCL members are an effective way to educate people about climate**

change. Learn how a Carbon Fee and Dividend policy can combat the problem. To arrange for a 15- to 50-minute presentation, please contact Cynthia Mahoney at [cam8ross@comcast.net](mailto:cam8ross@comcast.net).

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***Find out more about our work. Join a CCL introductory call any Wednesday at 5:00 pm PT. Just [click here](#) for details***

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**Newsletter Editors: Doug Merrill and Betty Lobos**

**Want to find out more about our local activities and meetings? Email the CCL Contra Costa chapter at [CCLContraCosta@gmail.com](mailto:CCLContraCosta@gmail.com).**