



Agenda Item #: _____

Staff Report

City of Manhattan Beach

TO: Honorable Mayor Montgomery and Members of the City Council

THROUGH: David N. Carmany, City Manager

FROM: Sona Kalapura, Environmental Programs Manager

DATE: April 05, 2011

SUBJECT: Consideration of a Letter of Support for the Clean Air Act

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council approve a letter of support for the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to regulate clean air standards.

FISCAL IMPLICATION:

There are no fiscal implications associated with the recommended action.

BACKGROUND:

Environmental Protection Agency and the Clean Air Act

Since 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has made significant progress in improving the nation's air quality. According to a study recently released by the EPA, clean air regulations have saved 160,000 lives and prevented more than 100,000 hospital visits in 2010, and reduced air pollution by more than 60% since 1970. Further, the study shows that the benefits of the Clean Air Act outweigh the costs by more than 30 to 1.

New Clean Air Regulations

The EPA is undertaking a series of significant rulemakings to reduce harmful air pollution. This is part of a broad effort to help millions of Americans breathe easier, live healthier, protect the environment, and facilitate the country's transition to cleaner, more efficient energy resources. The coalition of American Businesses for Clean Energy and the Clean Air Campaign, support EPA's ongoing efforts to protect the public health and environment with these new clean air standards. These new regulations include the:

- Clean Air Transport Rule (CATR): Focus on reducing sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and nitrogen oxide (NO_x) emissions from power plants in 31 targeted states;
- Toxics Rule (Utility MACT): Sets limits on hazardous air pollutants such as mercury, arsenic, lead, dioxins and hydrochloric acid from coal- and oil-fired power plants; and
- Greenhouse Gas Standards (NSPS): EPA is considering greenhouse gas emissions standards for power plants and petroleum refineries.

Manhattan Beach Efforts to Support Clean Air Programs

The State of California has been a leader in environmental protection, as has the City of Manhattan Beach. The City's sustainability programs are in line with the EPA's efforts to protect the environment. The City has adopted several recommendations from its citizen-based Environmental Task Force to begin reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which lead to improved air quality, such as the Sustainable Building Standards and Climate Action Plan. The City also engages its community members in climate change activities and provides information on solutions that individuals and businesses can implement to reduce their impact on the environment. Successful community outreach on environmental education has been achieved through the City's leadership in the 350 International Day of Climate Action, Earth Hour, National Energy Awareness Month, and the 10-10-10 Sustainability Summit.

DISCUSSION:

In June 2010, City Council unanimously adopted a resolution in support of AB 32, California's landmark climate change legislation, joining a statewide movement to protect climate change policy. Landmark policies intended to protect the environment and health of the nation are once again under attack as Congress attempt to dismantle the EPA, and its ability to regulate the Clean Air Act.

If adopted, EPA's new Air Toxics Rule would protect Americans across the country from hazardous air pollution from toxic emissions like mercury, hydrochloric acid and arsenic. Power plants are the largest source of several of these harmful pollutants. Utilities are aware that pollution controls will be required to comply with new Clean Air Act requirements, and most of the industry has invested in cleaner, more efficient power plants. These utilities have shown that implementing such controls is not only achievable, but actually supports the economy and creates jobs.

The Clean Air Campaign is working to block efforts currently circulating in Congress to remove EPA's ability to enforce clean air standards. A coalition of local governments, businesses, environmental groups, and health organizations have come together to support the Clean Air Campaign's efforts to encourage U.S. Senators to protect the EPA's ability to implement the Clean Air Act. The City Council is being asked to sign on to a support letter to preserve EPA's ability to regulate the Clean Air Act, and further demonstrate the City's commitment to California's clean energy future. If approved, the Mayor will sign the attached support letter, and it will be forwarded to California's Senators asking for their support of clean air standards.

CONCLUSION:

To combat attempts to limit the EPA's authority to regulate emissions and hazardous air pollutants, the City is being asked to join the Clean Air Campaign in its effort to uphold the Clean Air Act. Staff recommends that City Council approve a letter of support indicating its alliance with the Clean Air Campaign, and its efforts to promote the economic and environmental benefits of clean air regulations.

Attachment: Draft Support Letter for the Clean Air Act

cc: Liza Tamura, City Clerk
Jim Arndt, Public Works Director

April 5, 2011

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0505

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0505

Dear Senator Boxer,

We, the undersigned California cities and governments, urge you to support the EPA's ability to enforce clean air standards. We believe that efforts currently circulating in Congress to gut the EPA's authority will result in negative environmental and health impacts, and limit innovation and investment in clean technologies.

New rules under the Clean Air Act, including the Clean Air Transport Rule (CATR) and the Toxics Rule, will mandate reductions in toxic power plant emissions and stimulate investment in clean energy technology. These reductions will reduce emissions by millions of tons per year and prevent 14,000 to 36,000 premature deaths.

California has long been a national leader in environmental protection, and as a result we've benefited from a fast-growing clean tech sector. Strong clean air standards send a clear regulatory signal to dirty plants that they must clean up their act, a process which spurs innovation and development in clean energy technology.

Studies have shown that the benefits of these regulations far outweigh the costs. We have a responsibility to our citizens to do everything we can to protect their air supply and encourage harmful power plants to adopt better technology.

Please join us in supporting the authority of the EPA by opposing efforts to limit these critical clean air standards.

Sincerely,

Mayor Richard P. Montgomery
Manhattan Beach, CA