

CWA State Air Quality Task Force Report

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By Roberta Alderete, Santa Maria Chapter President

Now that Donald Trump was elected as the next President of the United States of America, the national policy on climate change, controlled by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), may be significantly revised. State climate control policies may also be revised, including air quality policies controlled by California's Environmental Protection Agency (Cal EPA). The Federal Clean Air Act was passed in 1970, last amended in 1970, forms the basis for the national air pollution control effort. Basic elements of the act include setting limits for national ambient air quality standards for major air pollutants, hazardous air pollutants standards, state attainment plans, monitor vehicle emissions standards, stationary source emission standards and permits, acid rain control measures, stratospheric ozone protection and enforcement provisions. State and regional air quality agencies monitor and regulate state standards, many of which are more restrictive than federal standards.

California's climate policy, initiated and promoted by Governor Brown has even stricter guidelines for air quality than federal policy. California's guidelines have progressively tightened during the Governor's term of office.

During his campaign, Mr. Trump met with agricultural industry representative throughout the nation, discussing their problems and needs, including less federal regulation from the Environmental Protection Agency. Mr. Trump promised he would look into the EPA's policies and would consider easing national EPA regulations affecting agriculture.

In December 2015, 190 parties from around the world met in Paris, France and signed the Paris Agreement, a global agreement to address the problem of global warming caused by the use of fossil fuels. The global use of fossil fuels is charged with melting polar ice caps, rising sea levels and transforming arable land into desert. They committed to transforming away from fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy like wind, solar and hydropower and stop development of new fossil fuel projects. President Obama was a leader in promoting this global agreement.

On November 5, 2016, at the United Nations in New York City, USA, the Paris Agreement became international law, a landmark deal, amid fears that the world is becoming hotter even faster than scientists had predicted. So far, 96 countries, accounting for just over two-thirds of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, have formally joined the accord which seeks to limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit). More countries are expected to join the Paris Agreement in the forthcoming months. While this Agreement is legally binding, the emissions reductions that each country has committed to are not. Instead, the agreement seeks to create a transparent system that will allow the public to monitor how well each country is doing in meeting its goals in hopes that this will motivate them to transition more quickly to clean, renewable energy like wind, solar and hydropower.

It will be interesting to see if the new President will promote climate control policy, loosen federal EPA regulations for national agriculture and if California climate policy will continue to be more restrictive.

Resources: www.calepa.ca.gov; Compliance and Enforcement Report July 2016; Associated Press by Michael Astor Nov. 5, 2016