BREN SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE & MANAGEMENT
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

GROUP PROJECT BRIEF

CALIFORNIA CLIMATE ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

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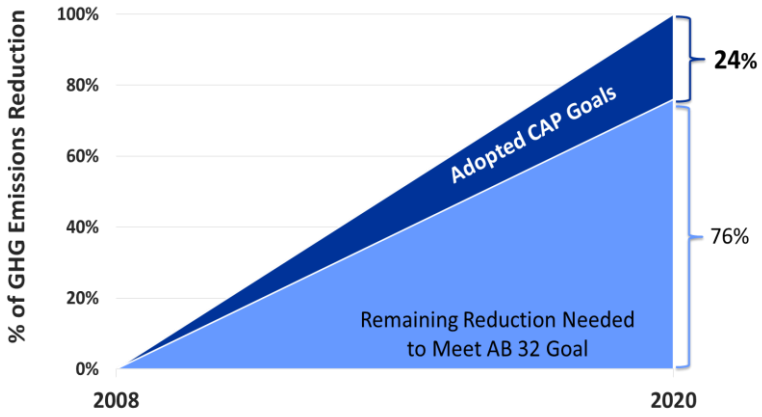
ON THE WEB AT WWW2.BREN.UCSB.EDU/~CAPS/ SPRING 2014

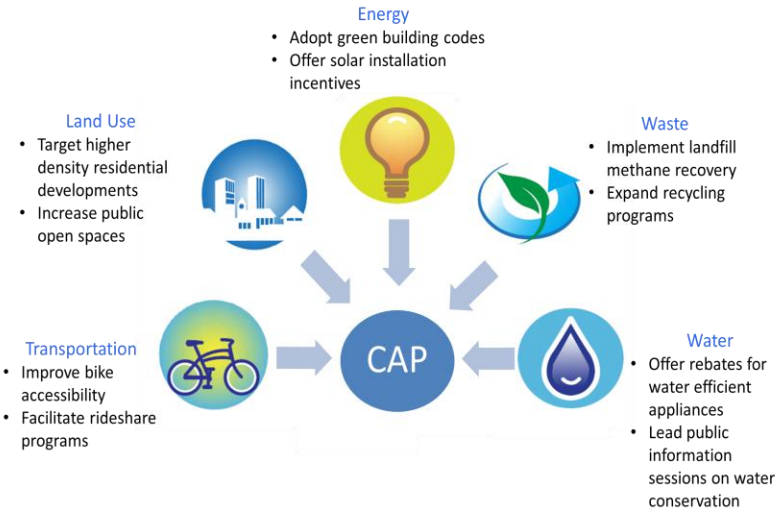
The Problem: Global Climate Change

The threat of climate change is arguably the greatest challenge facing California, the nation, and the world today. In response to failings at the international and federal level, California's state government and local governments are taking action to mitigate climate change through Climate Action Plans (CAPs). Implementation of CAPs at the local level has the potential to achieve significant greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions relative to California's GHG reduction target, set by Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), passed in 2008.



Project Objectives

This project set out to accomplish two objectives:
(1) Conduct a meta-analysis of the status of CAP implementation and monitoring across the entire state.
(2) Develop a set of recommendations for local jurisdictions that currently have or are still developing CAPs to enhance effective implementation and monitoring of CAPs.



What is a CAP?

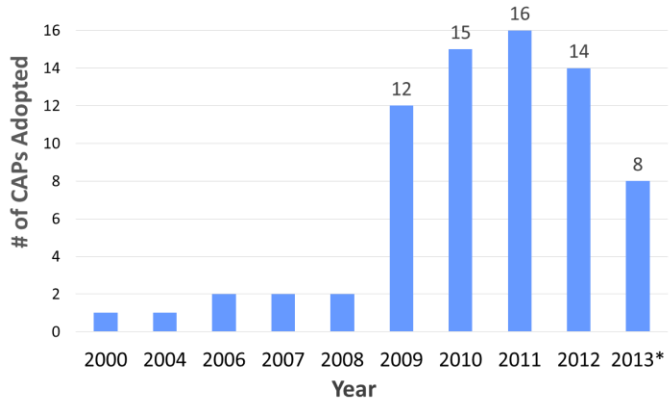
A CAP is a guiding document for a local government to reduce its GHG emissions through sector-based mitigation measures. CAPs must include a baseline for GHG emissions, a GHG target, and a strategy to monitor and report on GHG emission reduction achievements.

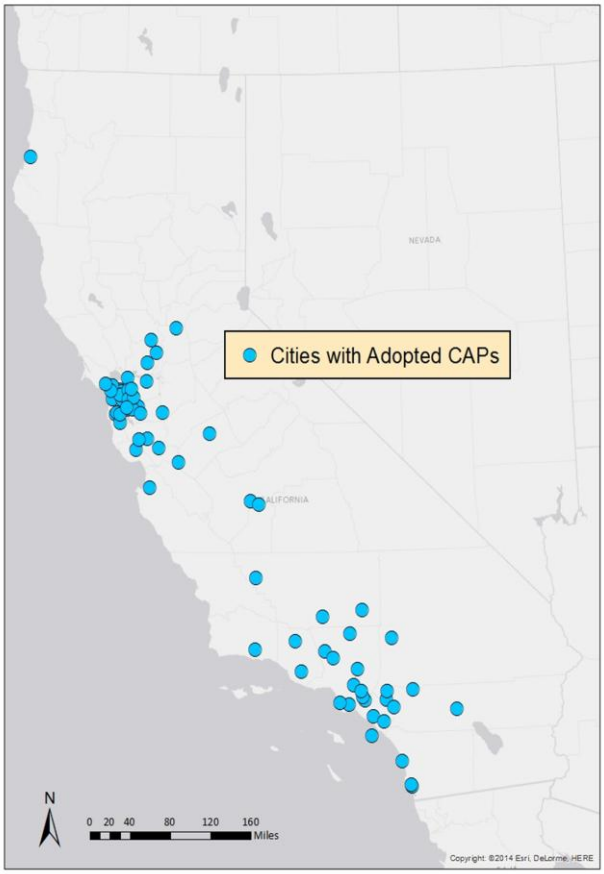
Which Cities have CAPs?

There are currently 67 city-adopted CAPs out of California's 487 municipalities. The cities that have adopted CAPs are on average larger and have higher median household incomes than the statewide average.

How Old are the CAPs?

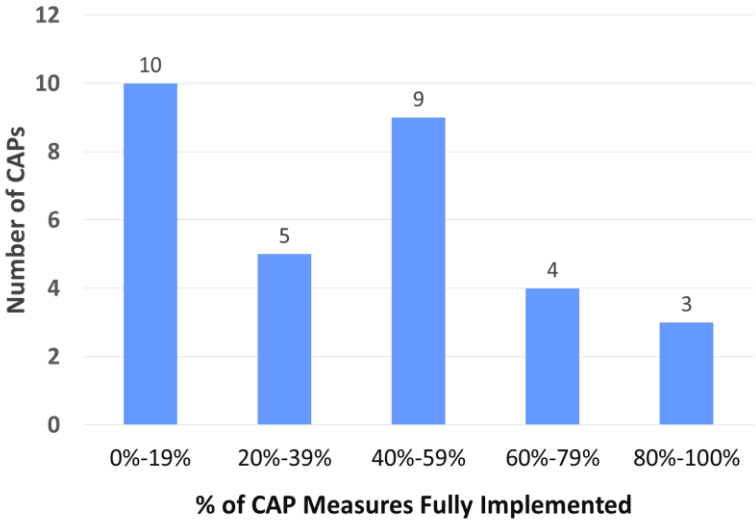
The majority of CAPs are less than 5-years old. 59 out of 67 CAPs have been adopted since 2009. The majority of CAPs are over 50 pages, with an average document size of 119 pages, a potential reflection of the detail and ambition of a CAP.





How is CAP Implementation Progressing?

To better understand CAP implementation, we reached out to all 67 cities in California with adopted CAPs and obtained 40 survey responses. Most respondents indicated that less than 40% of their CAP measures were fully implemented. Interestingly, 1/4 of the respondents did not answer the question, likely because they did not know what percentage of their CAP has been implemented or it was too difficult to estimate.



What Factors Predict Implementation Progress?

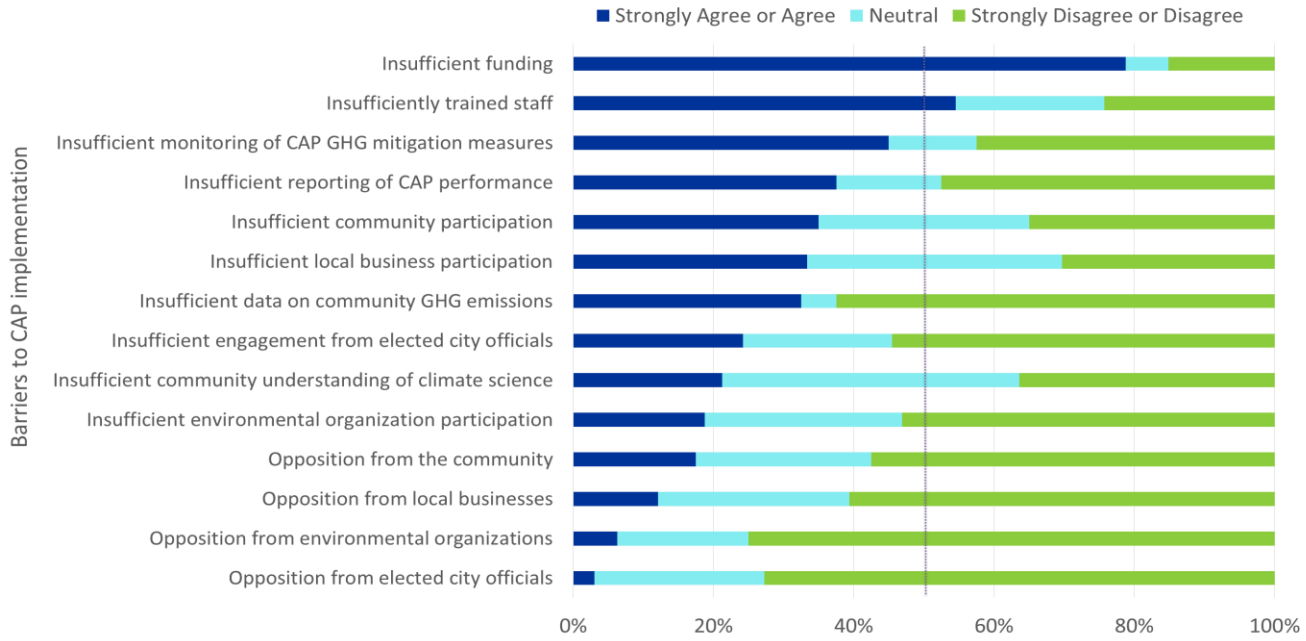
A multiple regression analysis revealed that 30% of CAP implementation progress is influenced by the following three factors:
(1) Household median income
(2) CAP length in pages
(3) CAP age since adoption

Stakeholders that Influence Success

Stakeholders can be critical to CAP implementation success or failure. City council, community groups, regional government groups, local businesses, and environmental organizations can all influence implementation.

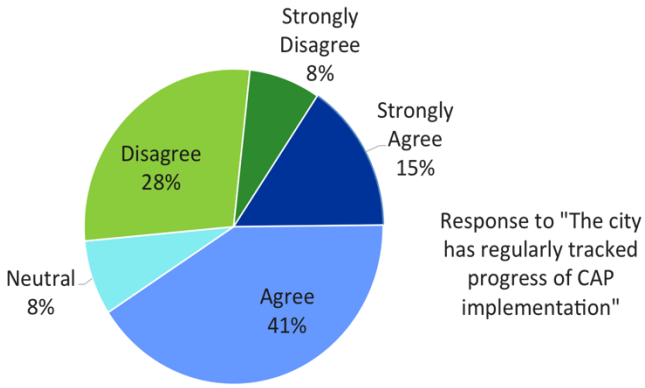
CAP Implementation Barriers

City staff were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed that 14 different factors were significant barriers to CAP implementation.



Monitoring and Reporting Challenges

Monitoring CAP implementation and GHG mitigation programs is important because it provides a reference point for future implementation efforts and GHG reductions. Most cities rely on city-wide GHG inventories as their primary monitoring tool, which are highly complex, expensive and typically conducted every 3-6 years. Overall GHG reductions identified by inventories are difficult to attribute to specific CAP activities, therefore it is difficult to evaluate individual measure contribution. Most cities agreed that they regularly tracked CAP implementation progress, but only a quarter agreed the monitoring process in place accurately captured GHG mitigation achievements.



CAP Implementation Recommendations

Improve Organizational Efficiency

- Create a full-time or part-time position or assign CAP implementation tasks to one individual.
- Organize working groups with representatives from different city departments to share skills and leverage knowledge without requiring a permanent time commitment.
- Consider integrating the CAP into the General Plan to enhance streamlining of city resources for GHG environmental compliance.

Case Study: Organizational Efficiency
To overcome the barrier of internal silos, one city employs an arsenal of strategies. The city integrates environmental sustainability throughout the organization with a multi-departmental working group. High-level staff in public works, housing, IT, and planning departments encourage environmental considerations in all department activities. In addition, every report submitted to city council contains an environmental sustainability section. For example, a council report about a new program that provides food to the homeless includes environmental considerations for food sourcing. To further strengthen the environmental capacity of the organization, all new and existing employees undergo environmental sustainability training.

Collaborate Externally

- Partner with regional external stakeholders on CAP measures to extend limited staffing and funding resources further.
- Participate in regional governmental bodies to align climate policy goals across jurisdictional boundaries and share best practices.
- Leverage the knowledge and resources of local universities through educational opportunities for students in CAP implementation activities.

Case Study: Regional Collaboration
A county created an energy partnership to leverage the resources of cities and small towns in the county. Each city or town in the county contributes an annual dollar amount to the partnership that cumulatively provides enough funds to hire a consultant. The consultant provides assistance to all participating communities through grant applications, CAP development and monitoring, and other climate mitigation-related activities. This partnership is an example of small communities within a region pooling their resources to hire outside assistance to assist with CAP implementation activities that otherwise would have been too expensive for an individual city or town.

Emphasize Co-Benefits of CAP Measures

- Highlight the public health benefits of CAP measures to the community and city officials.
- Highlight the cost savings of CAP measures to the community, city officials and external stakeholders.
- Be aware of the language and framing of climate change and GHG emissions in a city with a community resistant to climate change policy

Case Study: Co-benefits
A city that highlighted the co-benefits of the CAP was able to gain public support for both the adoption and now implementation of the CAP. The framing of co-benefits is particularly advantageous in this more conservative political climate. Instead of talking about climate change and the impacts from greenhouse gases, the city pitches sustainability issues as “if you save energy, you save money.” The city is sensitive about the language they use to promote CAPs and reduction measures. The city has successfully implemented its CAP by focusing on the operational benefits of energy projects. The city recognized that even though they emphasized the health benefits and energy and cost savings, it really translated into reductions in GHG emissions.