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Comments – 2009 CEQA Guidelines Proposed Rulemaking for Greenhouse Gas Emissions

First, I want to congratulate the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) for developing these draft Guidelines amendments. Addressing GHG emissions in CEQA is a complex undertaking and OPR has taken a very proactive approach.

We would like to see more guidance on cumulative effects and thresholds of significance. Given that this issue is global in nature, it is important that there be consistency in how local lead agencies identify and mitigate significant greenhouse GHG emissions.

In connection with section 15093(d), we must be careful in dismissing local adverse environmental effects in the interest of region-wide or statewide benefit. Local effects have a very real impact on the local communities being impacted. This kind of consideration by lead agencies may create environmental justice issues and provide an excuse for lead agencies to ignore environmental impacts from projects.

15126.4(c) of this section includes discussion of mitigation measures appropriate for greenhouse gas emissions. This includes reducing energy consumption, purchasing carbon offsets, and sequestering carbon emissions. While all measures should be utilized to achieve the goals, we would like to see an emphasis in the Guidelines on reducing energy consumption as opposed to directing emissions underground or relying on emissions reductions elsewhere.

In general, I think these amendments should make a stronger statement regarding lead agency responsibility to address GHG emissions from projects. This draft gives significant latitude to lead agencies to determine when and how they will address GHG emissions. While this approach is important in the context of impacts that are truly local in nature, the global scale of the GHG problem requires a more consistent approach statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I look forward to following this process in the coming months.

Sincerely,

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