

Partnering Locally for Climate Action

By Chris Benz and Marilyn Knight-Mendelson

2025 marks the tenth year since Napa Climate NOW!, a grassroots non-profit organization, was started by local residents who wanted to do something about global warming. We've learned a lot, and identified countless ways to reduce climate pollution and increase our community's resilience to climate change.

Working with local partners has made taking action more effective – and more fun! Here are some highlights.

Working with government

Napa Climate NOW! provided extensive comments to help shape the Regional Climate Action and Adaptation Plan by the Napa County Climate Action Committee, an advisory body made up of elected representatives from the county and its municipalities. At our urging, the scope of climate drivers was expanded to include “black carbon”, a highly potent short-lived “super-pollutant” that degrades air quality and impacts the health of our citizens and crops as well as the climate. We also pressed to have carbon sequestration added to the Plan, shining a light on carbon removal by our natural and working lands.

In the City of Napa, we advocated for inclusion of a new Climate Change and Sustainability Element in the 2040 General Plan. This element explicitly sets out goals and policies to combat climate change and address adaptation and community resiliency in alignment with the City's commitment to reach Net Zero Climate pollution by 2030.

Our waste reduction team drafted a Reusable Foodware and Waste Reduction Ordinance aimed at reducing waste and diverting organic waste from landfills. The ordinance was approved by the Climate Action Committee and adopted by the Board of Supervisors for the unincorporated county in November 2024. We're looking forward to adoption by the cities and towns in 2026.

Napa County District 2 Supervisor Liz Alessio, past Chair of the Climate Action Committee, said, “Napa Climate NOW! has been the springboard to education, awareness, and advocacy for me and countless others in Napa County.”

Working with businesses

In 2019, Napa Climate NOW! partnered with Napa Recycling to obtain a grant for organics sorting and processing equipment. The grant also provided funding for student scholarships and for a groundbreaking study of the heat reduction benefits of Napa Recycling's composting operation.

“The Global Heat Reduction protocol showed that composting food scraps and yard trimmings results in an almost 80% reduction in methane emissions compared to landfilling –

a major win for the climate, and a huge return on investment that will continue to grow as we increase diversion of organics from the landfill,” said Tim Dewey-Mattia of Napa Recycling.

The City of Napa Leaf Blower Rebate Program (2023-2025) helped small landscaping businesses obtain electric leaf blowers in a win for climate and noise pollution. The program was a partnership between Napa Climate NOW! and the Solano-Napa Small Business Development Center, funded by a grant from the City of Napa.

Napa City Councilmember Bernie Narvaez said, “Napa Climate NOW! worked with local equipment dealers to promote the rebate and get zero-emission leaf blowers into the hands of Napa’s commercial yard care businesses at a much lower cost.”

Educating Our Community

Napa Climate NOW! fulfills its mission of educating the community about climate issues through this bi-monthly Climate Connections column, and in many other ways, such as:

- collaboration with other non-profits whose work benefits climate (e.g., Napa County Bicycle Coalition and Napa County League of Women Voters);
- community seminars on climate issues;
- free “Green Screen” film series, now in its third year;
- annual Napa Climate Summit;
- recycling education for middle schoolers; and
- support for high school students participating in Schools for Climate Action.

Napa librarian Katie Olding, an enthusiastic partner in the Green Screen film series, said, “The mix of films, discussions, and guest speakers makes climate issues feel accessible and actionable, whether it’s rethinking consumption, conserving water, reducing waste, or restoring nature. Patrons leave not just informed, but motivated to make meaningful changes.”

Mark your calendars!

- Our next Green Screen film is “Brave Blue World” – Napa County Library, January 18, 2:00-4:00 pm.
- Our 2026 Climate Summit will address local resiliency against wildfire, sea-level change, and other imminent climate challenges – Napa Valley College Performing Arts Center, March 26, 3:00 to 6:00 pm).
- Join our grassroots team and make a difference in the community. Contact us: napa.350bayarea.org/contact-us

Chris Benz and Marilyn Knight-Mendelson serve on the Steering Committee of Napa Climate NOW!

Napa Climate NOW! is a local nonprofit citizens’ group advocating for smart climate solutions based on the latest climate science, part of 350 Bay Area.

Photo credit: Chris Benz

Photo caption: The 2025 Climate Summit and Job Fair was hosted by Napa Climate NOW!

