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Palm Desert Environmental Sustainability Plan and First Greenhouse Gas Inventory Approved by Council

EcoMotion Designs Unique Tool to Help City Set Course to Meet AB 32 Goals

At its February 11, 2010 meeting, the Palm Desert City Council unanimously approved the City's first Environmental Sustainability Plan. Concurrently, Council approved the City's first Greenhouse Gas Inventory and a resolution that redefines the City's GHG reduction commitment. Both documents were prepared by EcoMotion.

“Over the years Palm Desert has taken many actions for environmental sustainability, energy efficiency and conservation,” said Mayor Cindy Finerty. “Now, thanks to the Sustainability Plan and the GHG Inventory, we have an idea of the effect of past efforts and we will be able to monitor and measure as we move forward.”

The Environmental Sustainability Plan melds public input with staff convictions, management guidance, and Council direction. During its year-long development, over 175 people participated in a series of interviews and resource team meetings; 300 action steps were considered and 149 were presented and prioritized in the Plan.

“For Palm Desert we created a unique decision-making tool,” said Ted Flanigan, President of EcoMotion. “It is a spreadsheet listing all recommended actions, rated on five key variables. The spreadsheet makes the process interactive, allowing the City to rank actions according to its priorities – and continue to fine-tune as necessary.”

The result of the collaborative process is a three-phase approach to meeting AB 32 goals. Phase I activities are no-cost and low cost measures, feasible given the current economic situation and achievable over the next two years. Phase II activities will build on Phase I, and will take place in the subsequent two years. Phase III activities, slated for 2015 – 2020, will require sustainability investments and will build on initiatives already begun.

In the first two years, Phase I measures will trim the City's 2008 baseline GHG inventory (621,225 metric tonnes CO₂e) by 35,829 tonnes, a 6% reduction, reversing the growth of

GHGs in Palm Desert and completing 17% of the reduction required to achieve the 2020 AB 32 goal of 1990 levels.

Accompanying the Plan is Palm Desert's first Greenhouse Gas inventory. Created following the Protocol for Local Governments, the Inventory uses the Clean Air and Climate Protection (CACP) software to calculate greenhouse gases for a baseline year of 2008. Historical data on electricity and gas usage, transportation emissions and waste were collected to build the inventory. Selecting a baseline provided a challenge for Palm Desert, whose population has grown dramatically but unevenly over the past 15 years due to several annexations. In order to understand its CO₂ emissions profile, per capita growth as well as absolute growth was measured.

EcoMotion and its principals have worked with Palm Desert on energy issues since 2002. Headquartered in Irvine, CA, the company delivers cost-effective greening solutions to cities, corporations and campuses, applying communications and technical expertise to help clients define and achieve their goals.

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