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## San Bernardino County initiates action on environment plan

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**By IMRAN GHORI**  
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San Bernardino County took the first step toward implementing a plan to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions Tuesday as it agreed in a settlement with the state attorney general in August.

The Board of Supervisors voted to seek a consultant to prepare a plan that will measure the county's greenhouse gas emissions and find ways to reduce them through changes in county operations and land-use decisions.

The board expects to award the contract in April with a draft plan to be completed by December 2008. A final plan is not expected to be ready until March 2010.

That follows the timeline the county agreed to in August in a settlement with California Attorney General Jerry Brown, who had charged in a lawsuit that the county did not adequately account for global warming in its general plan updated in March.

That deal required the county to estimate 1990 greenhouse gas emissions, measure current emissions and their sources, and project how

the county's land-use decisions will affect emissions in 2020.

County spokesman David Wert said the consultant will help put together a methodology for measuring emissions, a process that he says is new territory for county government.

"As far as we know, we're kind of a pioneer as far as local government trying to address this issue," Wert said.

The county's general plan, a blueprint for growth through 2030, projects more homes and increased traffic as the county's population continues to increase. The lawsuit was the first by the state against a public agency for not taking into account global warming.

The state action came only days after the Center for Biological Diversity, the Sierra Club and the San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society filed a similar legal challenge. That lawsuit remains pending but the county is hoping for a settlement, Wert said.

The board approved a separate action aimed at addressing some of the conservation groups' concerns. Supervisors directed the San Bernardino County Museum

to develop a database cataloging native plants and animals as well as important wildlife corridors.

The county will use the data to craft guidelines protecting native species and wildlife corridors when approving development projects. That will be accomplished in part through a land conservation easement program.

Jonathan Evans, an attorney for the Center for Biological Diversity, said he could not comment on settlement talks but called the county's actions a positive step.

"We'll certainly take a look at these measures in light of our litigation," he said.