

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Board of Supervisors Votes to Prohibit the Use of Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers

SANTA CRUZ – Today, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors approved an ordinance in concept that would prohibit the use of gas-powered leaf blowers in unincorporated areas of the county. Enforcement of this ordinance would begin on July 31, 2025.

The law aims at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving air quality, and promoting the health and well-being of residents, and landscapers by banning the use of gas-powered leaf blowers. "The science is clear that gas-powered leaf blowers are harmful to our environment and to the people that use them. They're also extremely annoying. That's why our state legislature has already acted to ban the sale of new gas-powered leaf blowers. Now it's the County's responsibility to get the polluting equipment that's currently being used out of service as quickly as possible," said Supervisor Koenig, who brought the ordinance forward.

The ordinance expands the transition to electric-powered landscaping equipment, which is already underway at County parks and other County facilities.

The roughly year-long lead time till the ordinance is enforced with fines is designed to minimize the impact on landscapers, especially those who are low income. Rebates of up to \$15,000 are currently available for businesses through the Monterey Bay Air Resources District's Landscape Equipment Exchange Program (www.mbard.org/leep). The program requires that you apply and surrender gas powered equipment before buying new electric equipment. It provides an 80% rebate for new equipment including up to four additional batteries per new electric leaf blower.

"By passing this ordinance now we are encouraging people to act sooner rather than later and claim their rebates while funds are still available" said Supervisor Koenig.

Community outreach will be essential to ensuring residents, small business owners, and landscaping companies are informed of the available incentives and able to take advantage of these resources. Tuesday's direction instructed staff to collaborate with the City of Santa Cruz, which is pursuing a similar ordinance, the California Air Resources Board, and the Monterey Bay Air Resources District on a robust community outreach effort prior to enforcement.

Fines for using a gas-powered leaf blower will begin at \$100 for a first offense. Subsequent fines are \$200 for a second offense and \$500 for a third offense. Property owners where gas powered leaf blowers are used will be held responsible, not employees of landscaping businesses.

The Information Services Department and the Sheriff's Office are currently developing the reporting portals that residents can use to report violations. Evidence to support a violation may include photographic or video evidence and a declaration attesting to the authenticity, date,

time, location, and events from the individual taking the photo or video. More information on how to report a violation will be available later this year.

The ordinance is expected to return to the Board for a second reading and final adoption in August.

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Manu Koenig serves as 1st District Supervisor for Santa Cruz County, having been elected to the Board of Supervisors in 2020 and elected in 2024. The First District includes Live Oak, Pleasure Point, Soquel Village, Happy Valley, Soquel San Jose Rd, and a large portion of the Summit area, as well as parts of Capitola and Santa Cruz.