July 7, 2016

Honorable Mary Nichols, Chair

California Air Resources Board

1001 I Street

Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairwoman Nichols:

Sustainable Conservation appreciates the opportunity to comment on the 2030 Target Scoping Plan Update Concept Paper. Sustainable Conservation helps California thrive by uniting people to solve the toughest challenges facing our land, air, and water. We have been working closely with our agricultural partners for many years to find solutions to environmental problems that also make economic sense. We have collaborated for over 15 years with California’s dairy industry to develop and implement economically viable practices and technologies that reduce the environmental impacts of dairy waste, including, but not limited to, emissions of methane, a highly potent greenhouse gas (GHG). As a result, our focus in these comments will largely be on the fourth and fifth of Governor Brown’s five key climate change strategy “pillars” - methane and other short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs), and the natural and working lands sector.

We find much to support in the strategy laid out in the Concept Paper, but also find that some of the proposals or concepts raise questions or need further development. What follows are our observations on the relevant component elements of that strategy.

**Integrated System.** Sustainable Conservation has been a long-time and fervent advocate for the need to develop environmental policy in a holistic way that takes into account cross-media impacts and benefits, interagency coordination (or conflict), possible synergistic relationships between different programs, economic impacts and benefits, and stakeholder buy-in. We strongly support CARB’s recognition of the importance of this approach and commitment to incorporating it into the 2030 Scoping Plan. While the concept paper uses future mobility as its example of how this might work, we believe that you could just as easily use the example of methane emission reductions from dairies for this purpose. When considering how to reduce GHG emissions from dairy operations it will be vital to consider how existing goals, programs, and regulatory and permitting requirements from a range of agencies – air quality mandates from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, water quality requirements from both the State and Regional Water Boards, the proposed CV-SALTS amendments to the Central Valley Basin Plan, compost regulations from air and water agencies and CalRecycle, the Healthy Soils Initiative, etc. – can be coordinated and integrated in order to obtain emission reductions while also protecting and enhancing air and water quality and soil health.

**Flexibility.**  We wholeheartedly endorse the statement in the Concept Paper that “[a]ctions and tools recommended by the Draft Scoping Plan must include a flexible framework for implementation.”We also cannot overstate our agreement with the statement that “[t]he State will need to encourage and support near-term actions to reduce emissions through financial incentives, collaboration to overcome barriers, and other market support as needed, *before* some potential regulations will be *feasible*. We also know that successful long-term planning is achievable only through a *collaborative* process” (emphasis added). We believe this is of particular importance in the context of methane emission reductions from dairies. We have expressed our concern that the Proposed SLCP Strategy’s provisions for dairy methane would impose regulations on the dairy industry before incentives, collaboration, and market support have had a chance to work and the regulations have been determined to be feasible. We sincerely hope that the thinking about the relationship of “regulations, incentives, voluntary action, private-public partnerships, and support for non-governmental organizations” proposed here for inclusion into the Draft Scoping Plan will also be incorporated into the SLCP Strategy.

**Promoting Resilient Economic Growth.** Given our longstanding commitment to achieving environmental solutions that also make economic sense, we are fully supportive of this goal. We think it is important to emphasize how it is interrelated with the goal of flexibility. The State needs to ensure that “new policies and incentives that better recognize and award innovation” create opportunities for collaboration with both the developers and users of the cleaner and more efficient technologies and are not impeded by imposition of regulatory mandates. We also believe that flexibility needs to be incorporated into considerations of what sort of GHG reduction strategy may be appropriate to what sort of business sector, and whether they encourage or inhibit resilient economic growth in that sector. Requirements that may be appropriate for large, highly capitalized and organized industries may do serious economic damage to smaller, more decentralized and resource-poor sectors.

**Protecting, Enhancing, Innovating and Increasing Sequestration in the Natural Environment.** Sustainable Conservation applauds the significantly increased emphasis on natural and working lands in the development of the 2030 Scoping Plan. We support all of the high-level objectives for the strategy for natural and working lands. We have a particular interest in the development of the third of these objectives: “Seek synergies that optimize contributions from natural and working lands while sustaining local economies by researching and developing appropriate bioenergy, food crop, water system and waste management technology, as well as product manufacturing, that serves to support sustainable resource management.” We believe that an excellent example of this sort of potential synergy on working lands is the production and use of compost from dairy manure (both waste management and product manufacturing), which can reduce both GHG and water quality impacts, create a significant source of compost for increasing carbon storage in soils, and provide an additional revenue stream for dairies. We would add that developing integrated mechanisms for addressing multiple, and often conflicting, regulatory and permitting requirements is as important as developing technologies.

**Improving Public Health.** While we agree that “addressing climate change presents a significant opportunity to improve public health for all of California’s residents,” we also

believe that the State needs to avoid an excessively tight focus on GHG reduction strategies that fails to take into account the possible impacts of those strategies on air and

water quality and other environmental factors. Considerations about public health must be made in the context of the integrated systems approach referred to earlier, and assumptions of health co-benefits must be based on solid data.

**Environmental Justice.** In the area of environmental justice, we would reiterate the point just made that any assumptions of the co-benefits of GHG reduction projects or strategies to disadvantaged communities (DACs) need to be based on real data. For example, it should not be assumed that siting an anaerobic dairy digester or converting a dairy from flush to scrape manure management will necessarily provide a benefit to a nearby DACs. The potential unintended consequences of any and all GHG reduction strategies on adjoining communities, particularly DACs, need to be as fully understood as possible before the strategy is put in place. For example, optimistic projections of investment and employment opportunities resulting from implementation of GHG reduction strategies on dairies in the San Joaquin Valley need to be balanced against the possibility of potential loss of jobs and revenue if some dairies close down or relocate as a result of new regulatory requirements. There is no question that environmental justice issues need to be at the center of the Draft Scoping Plan, but we believe that both the potential benefits and the potential negative impacts of GHG reduction strategies need to be assessed based on a realistic and complete assessment of solid data.

**Relying on Sound Science and Research.** Asa science-based organization, Sustainable Conservation believes this to be an essential component of all of the other components of the strategy proposed for the 2030 Scoping Plan. It has been our consistent practice to make sure to generate or obtain the needed science and research before deciding to pursue any significant project. We would note that the proposed SLCP Strategy for dairy methane expressly states that more research is needed in order to understand and quantify key elements of practices upon which the Strategy relies. We believe that research such as that referred to the SLCP Strategy needs to be done, ideally before targets are set but certainly before targets become mandates. We hope that one of the benefits of the 2030 Scoping Plan will be the incorporation of the emphasis on policies based on solid science and research and the identification of future research needs from the Concept Paper into all of the State’s GHG reduction strategies.

**Intergovernmental Collaboration.** While we recognize the importance of developing collaboration between the State and regional and local governments, as stated in the Concept Paper, we believe that equal attention should be paid to the need for more structured and robust tools for intra-governmental collaboration between state agencies. We recognize that this would overlap with the Integrated System Approach, but long

experience leads us to the conclusion that interagency collaboration at the State level needs specific and focused attention.

**The Four High-Level Concepts.** We find Concept 2 – Ambitious Complementary Policies Without Cap-and-Trade; a Focus on Industrial Sources – to be of real concern. The current target in the SLCP Strategy of a 40% reduction in methane emissions by 2030 relies heavily on a 75% reduction of emissions from dairy manure. This is an extremely ambitious target, for which insufficient science and research currently exists to be able to say how it can be achieved. Any proposal to increase the methane reduction target to over 40% that also increased the percentage of reductions required from dairies could create even more pressure for dairies to move out of state, resulting in significant leakage. We recommend that this be seriously considered as these concepts are further developed.

To conclude, Sustainable Conservation believes that the Concept Paper’s proposed components on an integrated system, flexibility, natural and working lands, and sound science contain valuable elements that should be developed and integrated into the SLCP Strategy and other elements of the State’s climate policy. We believe that the application of elements of the integrated system, flexibility, and sound science components could improve those concerning resilient economic growth, public health, environmental justice, and intergovernmental collaboration. CARB has both the opportunity and the need to not only develop these concepts into the 2030 Scoping Plan but also ensure that they are put into practice in all of the State’s climate change strategies. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



J. Stacey Sullivan

Policy Director