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Contact: Marion Paul, Executive Director, Equinox Center (760)230-2960

Ann Tartre, Program Director, Equinox Center (760)230-2960

The Equinox Center releases groundbreaking “[Quality of Life Dashboard](#)”, a report on key trends in the San Diego region.

Report identifies 13 key areas where San Diego leads, lags behind.

Equinox Center, a non-partisan, independent nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring a healthy environment, vibrant communities and a strong economy for the San Diego Region released its inaugural San Diego Regional Quality of Life Dashboard today. The dashboard provides a new lens through which to view the region’s growth in the past, and identifies critical issues going forward.

“This is the first effort of its kind to assess quality of life and sustainability in our region” said Aaron Contorer, Chair of the Board and founder of Equinox Center. “We intend for the dashboard to provide a baseline by which we can measure our progress toward sustainability and an enhanced quality of life in the future.”

The dashboard includes 13 key metrics, including water and energy consumption, mobility, green jobs and housing affordability, that indicate whether we are using our resources efficiently and effectively from an environmental, economic and community perspective. It compares San Diego to California averages and points to areas where San Diego County is doing better or worse.

The report states that while many aspects of life in San Diego have improved over time, including positive trends such as better air and water quality, other issues need our serious attention. Water supply and demand, transportation and energy issues are all areas that Equinox calls out as priority areas this year.

“I personally will find the dashboard useful for making points directly, whether for lecture or congressional visits” said Mark Thiemens, a professor of chemistry and biochemistry at UCSD and an advisor to Equinox Center.

KEY FINDINGS

- Transportation-San Diego has one of the worst traffic congestion rankings nationally.
- Energy-The county will not meet the State requirements to generate 20% of total energy from renewable sources by the end of 2010.
- Water-The region must use its water supply more efficiently, especially for outdoor landscaping. The county imports 85% of its water and 60% of water is used in residences.

55% of residential use is for landscaping. By 2020, the state requires a 20% per capita reduction in consumption.

“While we applaud the water savings that San Diego residents have achieved in recent months, we believe decision makers, businesses and consumers need to consider the best practices and solutions available to use water as efficiently as possible, and to diversify our water supply in the long term” said Marion Paul, Executive Director of the Equinox Center.

Other Key Findings of the report include:

- San Diegan’s spend 100% more time in traffic delays and 300% more in traffic delay costs today than they did 20 years ago. The majority of local employers consider traffic congestion to be a major impediment to doing business in the region.
- The amount of miles collectively traveled on San Diego’s freeways has doubled in the past two decades.
- Despite an increase in recycling, San Diego residents dispose of more waste than the average Californian, and businesses could still compost or recycle about 50% of their remaining waste stream.
- Beach closures and advisories have declined since 2005, but much of the improvement may be due to lower precipitation (resulting in less runoff which carries contaminants into the ocean) and reduced monitoring of the beaches and bays.
- Residential water use seems to be on par with the California and national averages, but given that 85% of San Diego’s water is imported from outside the region, more needs to be done to increase sustainable, local water sources in addition to conservation efforts.
- Per capita energy consumption has remained relatively stable over the past two decades, but a growing population and new greenhouse gas targets will require us to reduce our per capita electricity consumption by about 20% by 2020.
- The amount of renewable energy used to serve our region is on the rise at 6.1%, almost doubling since 2003, yet below the State’s Renewable Portfolio Standard target of 20% by 2010.
- Residential land development has been progressing faster than our population is growing, although it appears that the trend toward sprawling development may be slowing.
- Home affordability in the San Diego region lags significantly behind the national average, despite the recent collapse of the housing market.
- Air quality has improved over the last decade, but the elderly and children are still exposed to unhealthy air at least 40 days per year.
- There is economic promise in jobs that focus on environmental technology and services, as evidenced by an increase in the percentage of new businesses in 2009 that are focused on this sector.

“The San Diego Foundation is pleased to support this critical new tool for citizens and policy makers alike”, said Emily Young, Senior Director Environment Analysis and Strategy at the Foundation. “Equinox’s work will enhance fact-based decision making and catalyze action on these timely issues.”

More information and the Quality of Life Dashboard are available at www.equinoxcenter.org

About *Equinox Center*

The Equinox Center was founded in 2008 and funded by local donors, foundations and corporations, including *The Contorer Foundation, The Brown Family Trust, The Orca Fund, The San Diego Foundation, San Diego Social Venture Partners*, and others. Equinox researches and advances best practices and innovative solutions to balance San Diego's regional growth with our finite natural resources.