

## CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

455 MARKET STREET, SUITE 300  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2421  
VOICE (415) 904-5200  
FAX (415) 904-5400



To: Local Government Partners  
From: Kelsey Ducklow, Climate Change Analyst, California Coastal Commission  
Date: January 12, 2022  
  
Re: **Coastal Plan Alignment to Support Resilience and Adaptation Planning**

### Coastal Plan Alignment

Over the past several years, Coastal Commission staff have been working with state and federal partners including NOAA, USGS, FEMA Region IX, CalOES, OPR, OPC, and the Coastal Conservancy to understand how our various agencies can better support local sea level rise adaptation planning efforts. The interagency team focused on supporting **“coastal plan alignment”** which refers to the idea that a **proactive effort to align the goals and outcomes of various planning processes and documents** – including but not limited to Local Coastal Plans (LCPs), Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMPs), General Plans (GPs), and Adaptation Plans – **will help support coastal resilience goals, ensure that adaptation actions become routine in all local planning efforts, reduce the potential for policy conflicts, and allow for a more efficient use of federal, state, and local government resources.**

Together, the interagency team has worked to provide information and recommendations for local governments on how the various planning processes and documents that jurisdictions are required (or encouraged) to complete can be aligned to support coastal resilience goals, and how the many informational resources and funding opportunities provided by our agencies can support such plan alignment. This information has been compiled in the [Coastal Plan Alignment Compass](#) available online. Specifically, the Plan Alignment Compass includes information on relevant planning documents, key opportunities for alignment, possible challenges for alignment efforts, and broader tips and best practices for supporting alignment efforts.

### Recommendations for Local Governments

Coastal Commission staff is providing this memo to highlight the importance of aligning local planning documents to support coastal resilience. Staff strongly encourages local jurisdictions to review the [Coastal Plan Alignment Compass](#) online for information on local plans relevant for supporting coastal resilience as well as tips and best practices for aligning these planning documents. Several of the key takeaways identified in the online compass are summarized below. Coastal Commission staff also recommends incorporating a Plan Alignment Policy in new and updated LCPs to further encourage alignment efforts. Example policy language can be found below.

Coastal Commission staff and other interagency team partners are available for questions and additional guidance.

## Key Takeaways

1. Aligning different planning documents, and including coastal resilience goals in all plans, will help ensure that sea level rise adaptation becomes routine within all of a jurisdiction's planning, permitting, and investment decisions.
2. There are areas of overlap among different plans, but whole plans are not interchangeable. However, the differences among plans can be strategically leveraged to better support coastal resilience goals. For example, one generalized alignment approach is for a standalone adaptation plan to lay out a community's vision and the general policy approaches and projects that will help achieve that vision over time. LCPs and GPs can support the vision identified in the adaptation plan by laying out the land use planning framework and ensuring that decision-making moving forward is consistent with the identified approach. The LHMP can include specific, near-term adaptation actions and projects in line with the adaptation plan and LCP and General Plan policies, which helps support funding for these projects.
3. The main avenue for potential conflict related to Coastal Commission processes is LHMPs, adaptation plans, and, to a lesser extent, General Plans calling for or in any way encouraging strategies that are inconsistent with Coastal Act requirements. A primary concern is these plans encouraging the use of shoreline protective devices without consideration of the Coastal Act policies that limit use of such devices. Another common conflict is elevation of structures inconsistent with height limits and other scenic and visual resources policies.
4. Recent statewide legislation, executive orders, guidance, and the like have encouraged, or in some cases required, consideration of climate change, sea level rise, environmental justice, nature-based adaptation, and other similar topics in General Plans. Work on these topics can be integrated into LCP updates to ensure consistency.

## LCP Policies

LCPs are critical tools for laying the foundation for how future land use decisions will support adaptation and resilience goals. While LCPs are the primary standard of review for new development in the coastal zone, an adaptation approach or specific strategies that conflict with Coastal Act requirements that are laid out in LHMPs, GPs, or other local plans can result in confusion, wasted time and resources, and ineffective local and regional adaptation methods. By instead proactively aligning planning documents, resources can be leveraged, and plans can mutually support approaches that ensure that adaptation is consistently and routinely carried out within a jurisdiction. Because of the importance that aligning planning documents can play in supporting coastal resilience goals, Commission staff recommends incorporating the following policy (or similar language) in new or updated LCPs.

*Coordinate across [City/County] departments and seek to align the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), General Plan (GP), and other locally-relevant planning documents with the LCP to ensure that proactive adaptation efforts are coordinated and responses to damage from future coastal hazards are streamlined. Identify and prioritize adaptation projects that meet the goals of the LCP and other plans, and leverage state and federal funding opportunities (e.g., FEMA, CalOES, Coastal Conservancy, Caltrans, SGC) for hazard mitigation and resilience planning to implement such projects.*

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