



Chapter 5

Addressing Sea Level Rise in Local Coastal Programs

The Coastal Act requires that the 61 cities and 15 counties in coastal California prepare Local Coastal Programs (LCPs) to govern land use and development in the coastal zone inland of the mean high tide. LCPs become effective only after the Commission certifies their conformity with the policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act.

LCPs contain the ground rules for future development and protection of resources in the coastal zone. Each LCP includes a Land Use Plan (LUP) and an Implementation Plan (IP). The LUP specifies the kinds, locations, and intensity of uses, and contains a required Public Access Component to ensure that maximum recreational opportunities and public access to the coast is provided. The IP includes measures to implement the LUP, such as zoning ordinances. LCPs are prepared by local governments and submitted to the Coastal Commission for review for consistency with Coastal Act requirements.²²

Once an LCP's certification becomes effective, the local government becomes responsible for reviewing most Coastal Development Permit (CDP) applications. However, the Commission retains continuing permit authority over some lands (for example, over tidelands, submerged lands, and public trust lands) and authority to act on appeals for certain categories of local CDP decisions.

To be consistent with the Coastal Act hazard avoidance and resource protection policies, it is critical that local governments with coastal resources at risk from sea level rise certify or update Local Coastal Programs that provide a means to prepare for and mitigate these impacts. The overall LCP update and certification process has not changed. Now, however, the impacts of accelerated sea level rise should be addressed in the hazard and coastal resource analyses, alternatives analyses, community outreach, public involvement, and regional coordination. This Guidance is designed to complement and enhance the existing LCP certification and update steps. Although the existing LCP certification and update processes are still the same, sea level rise calls for new regional planning approaches, new strategies, and enhanced community participation.

LCPs are essential tools to fully implementing sea level rise adaptation efforts. Since many existing LCPs were certified in the 1980s and 1990s, it is important that future amendments of the LCPs consider sea level rise and adaptation planning at the project and community level, as appropriate. The [California Climate Adaptation Strategy](#) (CNRA 2009) and [Safeguarding California](#) (CNRA 2014) specifically identify LCPs as a mechanism for adaptation planning along the California coast. For general guidance on updating LCPs, see the LCP Update Guide, available here: <http://www.coastal.ca.gov/la/lcp.html>.

²² In addition there are other areas of the coast where other plans may be certified by the Commission, including Port Master Plans for ports governed by Chapter 8 of the Coastal Act, Long Range Development Plans for state universities or colleges, and Public Works Plans for public infrastructure and facilities. Following certification of these types of plans by the Commission, some permitting may be delegated pursuant to the Coastal Act provisions governing the specific type of plan.

Steps for Addressing Sea Level Rise in Local Coastal Programs and Other Plans

The Commission recommends the following six steps to address sea level rise as part of the development of an LCP, LCP Amendment, or other plan.²³ These steps can be modified and adapted to fit the needs of individual planning efforts and communities and to address the specific coastal resource and development issues of a community, such as addressing bluff erosion or providing for effective redevelopment, infill, and concentration of development in already developed areas. At the start of an LCP update to address sea level rise or a new LCP project, local government planners should contact their local Coastal Commission district office to discuss the LCP goals and to establish a plan for Coastal Commission staff coordination and public involvement throughout the entire process. A key element of any LCP project is public involvement. This can include establishing technical and community stakeholder advisory committees, establishing an interdepartmental sea level rise team of City and County staff representatives, and planning a series of public workshops to gather feedback, in addition to the required public hearings on the LCP.

The steps of this process are illustrated in [Figure 9](#) and described below. They are similar to the standard steps of a long-range planning process and should be familiar to local planners. Steps 1-3 are often referred to as a “sea level rise vulnerability assessment” in other sea level rise planning contexts and therefore are similar to other sea level rise-related resources.

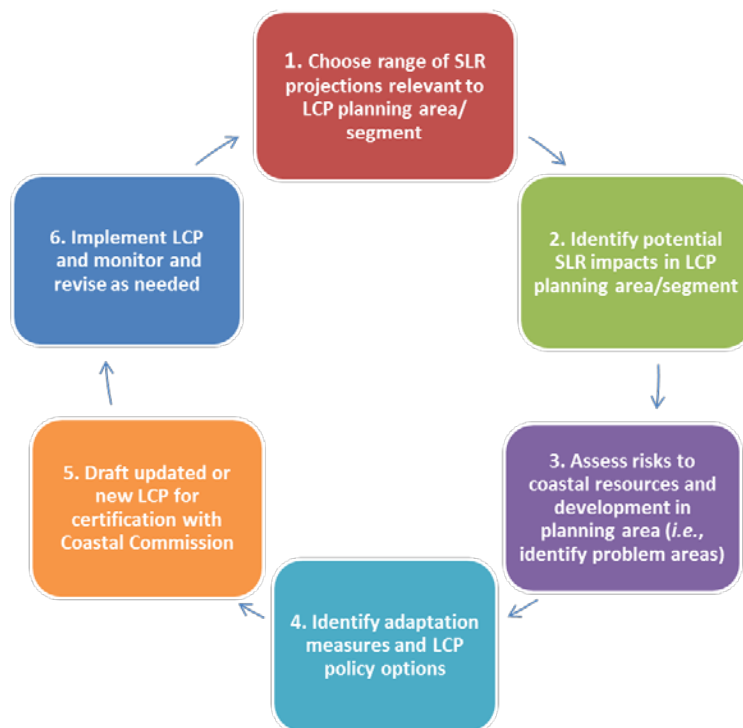


Figure 9. Sea level rise adaptation planning process for new and updated Local Coastal Programs

²³ This Guidance uses the term ‘LCP process’ to refer to the LCP process, but many of the concepts included here are applicable to other planning processes, including Long Range Development Plans, Public Works Plans, and Port Master Plans. For example, recommendations for how to analyze sea level rise impacts and perform a vulnerability assessment are broadly applicable. Many adaptation strategies may also be applicable, though in all cases, individual actions taken will vary based on relevant policies, local conditions, feasibility, and other factors.

The Coastal Commission also offers a [Local Coastal Program \(LCP\) Update Guide](#) (2013b) that outlines the broad process for amending or certifying an LCP, and there is naturally some overlap between the content of that document and this Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance document. The general LCP amendment steps are outlined below, in a flow chart (see [Appendix D](#)), and in the [LCP Tips/Best Practices document](#) (2013c), which is available in the [Resources for Local Governments](#) section of the Commission’s website. Local governments should contact the Coastal Commission planner for their area when pursuing a new LCP or LCP amendment.

1. **Initial Amendment scoping and development:** Conduct issues assessment, identify need for amendment, prepare preliminary draft, coordinate with Commission staff, and share early drafts
2. **Local Amendment process:** Notify public, conduct local outreach and hearings, meet with Commission staff to discuss any issues, and adopt LCP at the local level
3. **Prepare Submittal:** assemble LCP materials, discuss with Commission staff prior to submittal, transmit to Coastal Commission, and make available to public
4. **Process Amendment at Coastal Commission:** Commission staff will review submittal within 10 working days for completeness; will address outstanding information needs; will prepare and write staff report; hold public hearing and vote; and transmit action to local government
5. **Effectuate Amendment:** Local acceptance of any modifications or resubmittal within 6 months, finalize local approval, and complete Coastal Commission Executive Director check-off
6. **Implement LCP Amendment, monitor and revise as necessary.**

The step-by-step process for incorporating sea level rise into LCPs outlined in the rest of this chapter fits into these broader LCP amendment steps. Local government planners should use the LCP Update Guide in conjunction with the Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance to inform the LCP.

Use scenario-based analysis

The Guidance recommends using a method called “scenario-based analysis” (described in [Chapter 3](#) of this Guidance). Since sea level rise projections are not exact, but rather presented in ranges, scenario-based planning includes examining the consequences of multiple sea level rise amounts, plus extreme water levels from storms and El Niño events. The goal of scenario-based analysis for sea level rise is to understand where and at what point sea level rise, and the combination of sea level rise and storms, pose risks to coastal resources or threaten the health and safety of a developed area. This approach allows planners to understand the full range of possible impacts that can be reasonably expected based on the best available science, and build an understanding of the overall risk posed by potential future sea level rise. For example, if there are large changes in the hazard zones between two sea level rise amounts, additional analyses may help determine the tipping points when viable land uses will change. In general, scenario-based analyses can help determine the long-term compatibility of certain areas with certain land uses. For further description of this method, see [Chapter 3](#).

Include other topics as applicable or desired

This Guidance recommends a number of analyses that will generate useful information related to sea level rise and other environmental vulnerabilities. Performing these analyses (and the overall planning process) may provide a useful opportunity to include other studies that will complement the goals of Local Coastal Programs and provide valuable insights for community concerns. For example, planners should expand the Coastal Act consideration of lower cost visitor serving facilities to include considerations of social equity and environmental justice in the analyses by determining how climate hazards or the adaptation measures might differentially impact various demographics. Additionally, planners may want to incorporate analysis of the economic implications of various options for adaptation. Important topics such as these should be incorporated into the analyses already underway for the sake of efficiency.

Leverage analyses and share information with other planning-related processes and documents

Sea level rise is addressed in many other planning-related documents and by many other agencies and organizations. Planners should be aware of these documents and the on-going work of state and federal agencies and make an effort to share information in cases where analyses required for some of these documents may overlap with the studies appropriate for sea level rise planning in LCPs. Additionally, these agencies, organizations, and planning efforts may be good resources from which to gather information when performing these analyses for LCP updates.

For example, there is overlap between the required elements of a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) and Local Coastal Programs, and the Commission recommends coordinating an LHMP update with an LCP update if possible. As part of an LHMP, local governments identify the natural hazards that impact their community, identify actions to reduce the losses from those hazards, and establish a coordinated process to implement the plan.²⁴ In order to be eligible for certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for hazard mitigation projects, local governments are required by FEMA to complete an LHMP²⁵ and to update the plan every 5 years. Any sea level rise hazard avoidance strategies included in an LCP certification or update, such as relocation of critical facilities must be included in the LHMP narrative to be eligible for funding from FEMA to implement future projects. If a local government has recently updated their LHMP, the city or county can add narrative information on sea level rise strategies through an addendum to the plan, referred to by FEMA as an annex.²⁶

In many cases, the analyses and adaptation options identified in this Guidance could be used for hazard mitigation plans or vice versa, as the goal of each of these planning processes is to

²⁴ <http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1524-20490-5927/67fr8844.pdf>

²⁵ Note that recent revisions to the [State Mitigation Plan Review Guide](#), set to go into effect in March 2016, will require states to analyze the probability and possible impacts due to future hazard events in a way that includes the projected changes in natural hazards resulting from climate change. Failure to include such considerations may result in a state's ineligibility for certain non-emergency mitigation grants.

²⁶ For more information on how to complete or update an LHMP, visit <http://hazardmitigation.calema.ca.gov/> or contact the Cal OES office and a hazard mitigation technical expert can assist local governments with the planning process. For contact information, visit <http://hazardmitigation.calema.ca.gov/contact>.

minimize or avoid impacts from coastal hazards. As a result, there may be opportunities to leverage funding and share work efforts.

A number of other similar planning processes, projects, and documents are listed in [Figure 10](#), and planners may be able to use these studies in the LCP planning process, or, alternatively, share analyses and information performed for LCP planning with the groups working on related projects. Additionally, the forthcoming State of California Planning for Sea Level Rise Database (established by Assembly Bill 2516 and pursuant to Public Resources Code Sections 30961-30968) may become an important tool for identifying past and/or ongoing actions that stakeholders have implemented to address sea level rise. In any case, information sharing is highly recommended to promote efficiency.

Coordinate regionally as appropriate

Many impacts of sea level rise will transcend jurisdictional boundaries. Similarly, the adaptation decisions made by coastal communities could themselves have consequences that affect areas outside the local jurisdiction. For these reasons, regional coordination will often enhance the effectiveness of local adaptation decisions. Indeed, many of the projects identified in [Figure 10](#) have taken this regional approach. Planners should keep this concept in mind as they work through these steps and coordinate regionally where appropriate and possible.

Representative Adaptation Planning Stakeholders

Agencies	<p><u>Local/Regional:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City/county governments • League of Cities • Association of Counties • Regional entities (e.g., air districts, water boards, metropolitan planning organizations, regional transportation planning agencies) 	<p><u>State:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Resources Agency • Ocean Protection Council • CA Coastal Commission • State Coastal Conservancy • State Lands Commission • SF Bay Conservation & Development Commission • Office of Planning & Research • Caltrans • Office of Emergency Services • CA Geologic Survey • Dept. of Parks and Rec. • Dept. of Fish and Wildlife • Dept. of Water Resources • State Water Resources Control Board • Air Resources Board • Dept. of Conservation 	<p><u>Federal:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FEMA • EPA • US Fish and Wildlife Service • NOAA • Gulf of the Farallones NMS • Monterey Bay NMS • SF Bay NERR • Elkhorn Slough NERR • Tijuana River NERR • US Geologic Survey • US Army Corps of Engineers • BOEM, BSEE • National Park Service • Sea Grant
Partner Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Government Organizations (e.g., environmental, social) • Professional organizations (e.g., agricultural, fisheries, communications) • Science organizations • Universities • Private consultants/industry <p><i>Examples include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nature Conservancy • Surfrider Foundation • Coastkeeper Alliance • Center for Ocean Solutions • Point Blue Conservation Science • Pacific Institute • Natural Capital Project • American Society of Adaptation Professionals 	Coordinated Planning Efforts	<p><u>Regional Environmental Efforts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Coast Our Future (CoSMoS) • So. CA Coastal Impacts Project (CoSMoS) • Humboldt Bay SLR Adaptation Working Group • Monterey Bay Adaptation Group • LA Regional Adaptation Group • Coastal Resilience Ventura • San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative • Santa Barbara and Ventura Co. resilience planning <p><u>Local/Regional Plans</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Hazard Mitigation Plans • General Plans • Climate Action Plans • Capital Improvement Plans/Programs • Climate Change Adaptation Plans • Integrated Regional Water Management Plans • Regional Sediment Management Plans • Sustainable Community Plans • Regional Transportation Plans

Figure 10. Agencies, organizations, and planning efforts related to sea level rise adaptation

Step 1 – Determine range of sea level rise projections relevant to LCP planning area/segment

The first step in incorporating sea level rise into the LCP planning process is to identify locally relevant sea level rise scenarios that may occur at given time steps into the future. These scenarios will be carried through the rest of the steps in the sea level rise LCP planning process. Follow these steps to determine the locally relevant sea level rise projections to use in the subsequent steps:

- **Determine planning horizons of concern:** The National Research Council (NRC) [report](#) for California uses the time periods of 2030, 2050, and 2100 to project future sea levels. These time periods may be used, or local governments may identify other relevant planning horizons for their plans and development scenarios, as long as the projections for those time frames are based on the best available and relevant scientific projections.
- **Determine the full range of sea level rise projections from the best available science:** Using best available science, currently the NRC report (or other comparable study, provided that it is peer reviewed, widely accepted within the scientific community, and locally relevant), determine the range of sea level rise for the planning horizons of concern. The sea level rise projections from the NRC 2012 report are presented in [Table 4](#) below. If the planning horizon of concern extends past Year 2100, extrapolate from the NRC projections (See [Appendix B](#) for more details on this step). See below for a discussion of scenario-based planning in the LCP context. The LCP should include a policy to use the best available science about sea level rise.

For parts of the Humboldt Bay region and Eel River Estuary, modify projections for vertical land motion:²⁷ For project locations in the vicinity of Humboldt Bay and the Eel River Estuary, the regional NRC sea level rise projections will need to be modified to adjust for local vertical land motion (VLM).²⁸ Areas other than Humboldt Bay and Eel River Estuary may choose to undertake an adjustment for vertical land motion. However, since local trends generally follow the regional land trend for most coastal areas, this VLM adjustment is not necessary.²⁹ Since actual VLM is the combination of several


²⁷ Vertical land motion describes the subsidence or uplift of land and is caused by different processes, including tectonic activity, sediment compaction, groundwater or other fluid withdrawal and recharge, and glacial isostatic rebound. Land North of Cape Mendocino is generally found to be rising at a rate of 1.5- 3.0mm/year, with the exception of parts of Humboldt Bay and the Eel River Estuary, which is subsiding. Land South of Cape Mendocino is subsiding at a rate of ~1mm/year, with variation in areas South of Cape Mendocino from -3.7 mm to 0.6 mm/year (NRC 2012, p. 78).

²⁸ See [Appendix B](#) and [Humboldt Bay: Sea Level Rise Hydrodynamic Modeling, and Inundation Vulnerability Mapping](#) (Northern Hydrology and Engineering 2015) for additional information on VLM and sea level rise projections for the Humboldt Bay region.

²⁹ A three-member subcommittee of the OPC Science Advisory Team (OPC-SAT) advised using the NRC projections, without modification, for all California locations except between Humboldt Bay and Crescent City. The OPC-SAT subcommittee stated, “We do not believe that there is enough certainty in the sea level rise projections nor is there a strong scientific rationale for specifying specific sea level rise values at individual locations along California’s coastline” (OPC 2013, p. 10).

unrelated factors, such as seismic events, water withdrawals, and glacial isostatic rebound, historic trends may not be a good indicator of future change. Thus, if sea level rise projections are modified for areas other than the Humboldt Bay region and the modified projections are lower than the unmodified NRC projections, at least one scenario for the analysis of impacts should use the high value from the unmodified NRC projections in order to assess a potential worst-case scenario possibility.

Table 4. Sea Level Rise Projections for California (NRC 2012)

TIME PERIOD*	NORTH OF CAPE MENDOCINO	SOUTH OF CAPE MENDOCINO	
by 2030	-2 – 9 in (-4 – +23 cm)	2 – 12 in (4 – 30 cm)	
by 2050	-1 – 19 in (-3 – + 48 cm)	5 – 24 in (12 – 61 cm)	
by 2100	4 – 56 in (10 – 143 cm)	17 – 66 in (42 – 167 cm)	

*with Year 2000 as a baseline

o **Choose multiple sea level rise scenarios based on range of sea level rise projections.**

The Coastal Commission recommends all communities evaluate the impacts of the highest water level conditions that are projected to occur in the planning area. Local governments may also consider including higher scenarios (such as a 6.6 ft (2 m) scenario³⁰) where severe impacts to Coastal Act resources and development could occur from sea level rise. In addition to evaluating the worst-case scenario, planners need to understand the minimum amount of sea level rise that will cause impacts for their community, and how these impacts will change over time, with different amounts of sea level rise. Planners should evaluate enough scenarios to be able to answer the following:

- What are the impacts from the worst-case scenario of the highest possible sea level rise plus elevated water levels from high tide, El Niño and a 100-year storm?
- What is the minimum amount of sea level rise that causes inundation, flooding, or erosion concerns?
- How do inundation, flooding, and erosion concerns change with different amounts of sea level rise?
- Are there any tipping points where sea level rise impacts become more severe? (For example, is there a point at which seawalls or levees are overtopped?)

There are two main ways to choose scenarios from which to evaluate sea level rise: by sea level rise amount or by time-period. Tools that provide maps by sea level rise amount can then be linked to the relevant time period, as shown below in the *Our Coast Our Future* example. There is no single accepted sea level rise mapping methodology for the

³⁰ The *Global Sea Level Rise Scenarios for the United States National Climate Assessment* (Parris et al. 2012) establishes 6.6 ft (2 m) as the highest global sea level rise scenario for Year 2100.

state of California. Local governments can choose whether to use existing sea level rise tools or to develop their own scenarios and maps. See below for information on scenarios and modeling outputs generated by existing sea level rise modeling tools.

Examples of Choosing Scenarios with Existing Sea Level Rise Modeling Tools

For California, there are two primary methods for identifying sea level rise scenarios, based on two of the currently available SLR mapping tools: CoSMoS (Our Coast Our Future) and Coastal Resilience Ventura (The Nature Conservancy). The type of tool available for sea level rise mapping in a planning area can be a deciding factor for which scenarios to use in the analysis. The Coastal Commission recommends using as many scenarios as necessary to fully analyze the potential impacts to coastal resources, human health, and safety rather than a specific tool or number of scenarios. Examples for choosing scenarios based on the tools available are described below.

Example 1: Identify SLR amounts, then relate to likely time period(s) of occurrence

This method involves first examining different amounts of sea level rise and storm events, and second, looking at the NRC projections to determine the range of years during which those impacts could potentially occur. For example, the Our Coast Our Future CoSMoS-based tool provides sea level rise maps for 9 different amounts in 25 cm (0.8 ft) intervals, three different storm scenarios (annual, 20-year, and 100-year), and a king tide scenario. With this tool, users can first evaluate different amounts of sea level rise and storms, determine how different amounts of sea level rise and storm situations affect the planning area, and then determine when the increased water level is likely to occur based on the NRC report projections. The CoSMoS tool is currently available for Marin, Sonoma, and San Mateo Counties, and preliminary data will be available from Point Conception to the Mexico Border in Fall of 2015. The NOAA Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flooding Impacts viewer similarly provides maps for different amounts of sea level rise (in this case, in 1-ft increments), but does not include impacts from storms, erosion or waves. A methodology for adding in these additional impacts is described in [Appendix B](#).

Example 2: Choose applicable years, then identify high, intermediate, and low scenarios

For this method, planners pick specific years, determine the range of sea level rise amounts that could occur by that year, and examine the consequences of three or more sea level rise amounts within that range. For example, the Coastal Resilience Ventura Tool (The Nature Conservancy) provides maps showing inundation, flooding, wave impact zone, and erosion risk zones with low, medium, and high sea level rise scenarios for the years 2030, 2060, and 2100. For local governments within Ventura County, planners may choose to evaluate scenarios according to the 2030, 2060, and 2100 time periods. The model provides maps for both flooding and erosion.

***Expected outcomes from Step 1:** Upon completing this step, a range of regionally- or locally-relevant sea level rise projections for the time periods of concern should be established. Based on the range of projections, planners will have identified a low, high, and one or more intermediate projections. These projections are the sea level rise scenarios that will be carried through the rest of the planning process.*

Step 2 – Identify potential physical sea level rise impacts in LCP planning area/segment

The next step is to identify the physical hazards and impacts (referred to comprehensively as sea level rise impacts) associated with current and future sea level. As described in Section C of [Chapter 3](#) of this Guidance, broad categories of sea level rise impacts may include inundation, flooding, wave impacts, erosion, and saltwater intrusion. In this step, planners should analyze these physical impacts and their various sub-components in order to understand current and future local hazard conditions. The analysis should answer the following basic questions:

- What are the existing hazard conditions that threaten the planning area?
- What is the projected change in hazard conditions due to locally appropriate sea level rise projections and planning horizons of concern?

This analysis should include the following topics, as applicable:

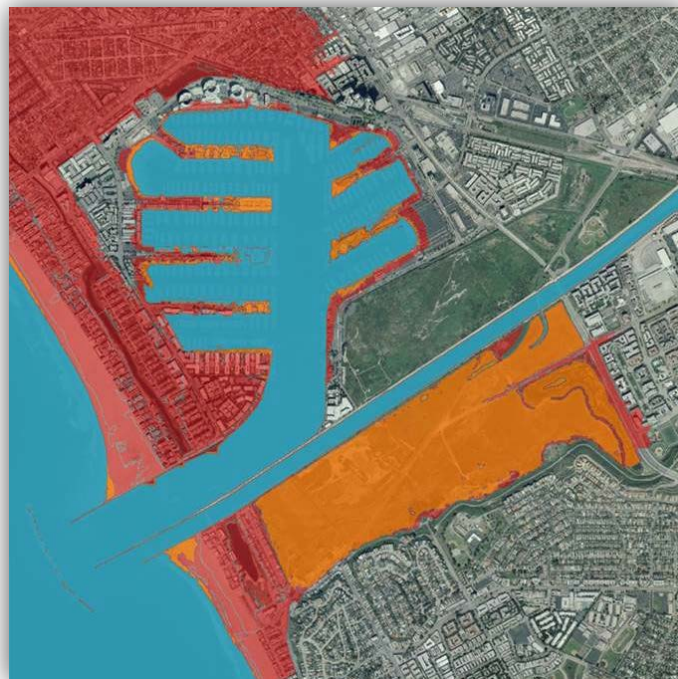
- Local Water Conditions (See [Appendix B](#) for a detailed methodology)
 - Current tidal datum³¹ and future inundation
 - Water level changes from storm surge, atmospheric pressure, the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO), the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), and/or other basin-wide phenomena
 - Wave impacts and wave runup, including wave runup from a 100-year storm, and based on tides, other water level changes, and future beach and bluff erosion
 - Flooding from extreme events such as storms with intervals greater than 100 years, tsunamis, *etc.*
- Shoreline change (See [Appendix B](#) for more information)
 - Current shoreline erosion rates. For future cliff and dune erosion rates, modify historic erosion rates, to account for the influence of sea level rise (*e.g.*, work by the Pacific Institute – Heberger *et al.* 2009; Revell *et al.* 2011). If possible, modify long-term beach erosion rates to account for changes in El Niño frequency, storm intensity, sediment supply or changing transport conditions. Analyzing wetland responses to sea level rise may require site-specific analyses of various physical and biological factors as described in Heberger *et al.* 2009.
 - Sedimentation rates
- Water quality
 - Current and future saltwater intrusion areas

³¹ Tidal datums are based on the latest National Tidal Datum Epoch (NTDE) published by NOAA and are the mean of the observed sea levels over a 19-year period. The latest published epoch is 1983-2001. This tidal epoch can be considered equivalent to the year 2000 baseline for the NRC projections.

- Current and potential future coastal water pollution issues due to inundation of toxic soils, rising water tables, and increases in nonpoint source pollution

Use existing models, tools, reports, historic records, and other materials ([Table 5](#)) to develop or double check the identified hazard areas. Document the current and future hazard areas in the Land Use Plan using maps, GIS products, graphics, tables, charts, figures, descriptions, or other means. This process should be repeated for each planning horizon and/or sea level rise scenario defined in Step 1.

Expected outcomes from Step 2: Upon completing this step, the potential current and future impacts to the planning area from sea level rise hazards should be identified based on sea level rise projections. These should include impacts from the high, low, and intermediate sea level rise scenarios for the planning horizon(s) of concern. Maps, GIS layers, graphics, figures, charts, tables, descriptions, or another system should be developed to communicate the impacts of current and future hazards.



Flooding Extent

	January 2010 Storm
	January 2010 Storm + 0.5 m SLR (~2050)
	January 2010 Storm + 1.4 m SLR (~2100)

Figure 11. Example of analysis of SLR impacts. Flooding hazards predicted from the CoSMoS hindcast of the January 2010 storm, with and without sea level rise (SLR) scenarios, in the region of Venice and Marina del Rey, CA. (Source: [Barnard et al. 2014](#)).

Resources for Sea Level Rise Mapping

[Table 5](#) includes a list of sea level rise mapping tools. The tools vary in their complexity: some are considered “bathtub models,” because they show future inundation with simple rise in sea level (and no changes to the shoreline caused by other forces). Others include factors like erosion, storms, and fluvial inputs. These tools provide a useful first look at possible sea level rise impacts, but may need to be supplemented with additional, site- or topic-specific analyses, depending on the region. See [Appendix B](#) for additional information on determining hazard impacts and tools for mapping sea level rise.

Table 5. Sea Level Rise Mapping Tools

Tool	Description	Link
Statewide		
NOAA Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flooding Impacts Viewer	Displays potential future sea levels with a slider bar. Communicates spatial uncertainty of mapped sea level rise, overlays social and economic data onto sea level rise maps, and models potential marsh migration due to sea level rise. Maps do not include any influence of beach or dune erosion.	NOAA Office for Coastal Management, http://coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools/slr
Cal-Adapt – Exploring California’s Climate	Shows coastal areas that may be threatened by flooding from a 4.6 ft (1.4 m) rise in sea level and a 100-year flood event. Maps were developed using the Pacific Institute SLR Maps (see below) and do not currently include any influence of beach or dune erosion or existing protective structures.	http://cal-adapt.org/sealevel/
Pacific Institute Sea Level Rise Maps	Downloadable PDF maps showing the coastal flood and erosion hazard zones from the 2009 study. Data are overlaid on aerial photographs and show major roads. Also available are an interactive online map and downloadable maps showing sea level rise, population and property at risk, miles of vulnerable roads and railroads, vulnerable power plants and wastewater treatment plants, and wetland migration potential.	http://www.pacinst.org/reports/sea_level_rise/maps/ For the 2009 report <i>The Impacts of Sea-Level Rise on the California Coast</i> visit: http://pacinst.org/publication/the-impacts-of-sea-level-rise-on-the-california-coast/

<p>Climate Central Surging Seas</p>	<p>Overlays sea level rise data with socio-economic information and ability to analyze property values, population, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and income or areas at risk. Can compare exposure across the state or a county.</p>	<p>http://sealevel.climatecentral.org/ssrf/california</p>
<p>North Coast</p>		
<p>Humboldt Bay Sea Level Rise Adaptation Project</p>	<p>This project is a multi-phased, regional collaboration. Phase I produced the <i>Humboldt Bay Shoreline Inventory, Mapping, and Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment</i> which describes current shoreline conditions and vulnerabilities under the current tidal regime. Phase II included hydrodynamic modeling to develop vulnerability maps of areas surrounding Humboldt Bay vulnerable to inundation from existing and future sea levels. Phase II produced the <i>Humboldt Bay Sea Level Rise Modeling Inundation Mapping Report</i> and the <i>Humboldt Bay Sea Level Rise Conceptual Groundwater Model</i>.</p>	<p>All reports are available at: http://humboltdbay.org/humboldt-bay-sea-level-rise-adaptation-planning-project</p>
<p>North Central Coast</p>		
<p>Our Coast Our Future Project (Bodega Head to Half Moon Bay), including the Coastal Storm Modeling System (CoSMoS)</p>	<p>Provides online maps and tools to help understand, visualize, and anticipate vulnerabilities to sea level rise and storms, including seamless Digital Elevation Model (DEM) at 6.6 ft (2 m) horizontal resolution; 9.8 in (25 cm) increment sea level rise projections between 0-6.6 ft (0-2 m) with a 16.4 ft (5 m) extreme; storm scenarios using the Coastal Storm Modeling System (CoSMoS); and interactive maps overlaying infrastructure and ecosystem vulnerabilities.</p>	<p>http://data.prbo.org/apps/ocof/</p>

Southern Coast		
Coastal Resilience Ventura	A partnership to provide science and decision-support tools to aid conservation and planning projects and policymaking to address conditions brought about by climate change within the County of Ventura. The primary goals of Coastal Resilience Ventura are assessing the vulnerabilities of human and natural resources, and identifying nature-based solutions.	http://coastalresilience.org/geographies/ventura-county
Southern California Coastal Impacts Project, including the Coastal Storm Modeling System (CoSMoS)	A numerical modeling system to predict coastal flooding due to both sea level rise and storms driven by climate change; conditions will be specifically selected for and downscaled to the southern California region (from Point Conception to the US-Mexico border, including the Channel Islands and coastal embayments). This version will take into account shoreline change and fluvial inputs; additionally, even more robust modeling of coastal erosion and shoreline change will be provided for the Los Angeles region.	http://walrus.wr.usgs.gov/coastal_processes/cosmos/

Step 3 – Assess potential risks from sea level rise to coastal resources and development in LCP planning area/segment

After sea level rise impacts are identified and mapped in Step 2, the next Step is to determine whether sea level rise poses any risks, or potential problems, for coastal resources and development in the LCP planning area (refer to [Chapter 4](#) for a description of the potential consequences of sea level rise for coastal resources). Next, assess whether the LCP planning area's current and planned land uses are appropriate or consistent with Coastal Act or LCP policies given those impacts, or if those land uses should be revised. This step requires an understanding of several characteristics of the coastal resources and development typically found within various land use types. (Much of this information can be produced in a vulnerability assessment, an analysis that is commonly conducted in the planning and climate change adaptation field. See [Appendix C](#) for a list of recent sea level rise vulnerability assessments.) Account for potential impacts to vulnerable, low-income communities and consider coastal development and resources, including but not limited to:

- Existing and planned development
- Coastal-dependent development and uses such as harbors, wharfs, ports, marinas, and commercial and recreational fishing areas and facilities
- Critical infrastructure³² such as wastewater treatment plants, transportation infrastructure, and some power plants and energy transmission infrastructure
- Public accessways, beaches and other recreation areas, and the California Coastal Trail
- State Highway 1, 101, and other state and local roads that provide access to the coast
- Wetlands, environmentally sensitive habitat area (ESHA), and other coastal habitats and sensitive species
- Agricultural areas
- Cultural sites and archaeological or paleontological resources
- Visitor-serving development and uses

Conduct the following tasks for each planning horizon (*e.g.*, the years 2030, 2050, and 2100, or other planning horizons):

1. For the planning horizon of interest, determine what development and coastal resources may be subjected to the sea level rise impacts expected for that time period. Map the coastal resources and development that lie within the sea level rise impact areas for the given time period. (Remember to address the wide range of resources listed above, including both natural resources and development.)

³² Critical infrastructure can vary widely from community to community. For planning purposes, a jurisdiction should determine criticality based on the relative importance of its various assets for the delivery of vital services, the protection of special populations, and other important functions.

2. Determine if sea level rise impacts are a problem or benefit for each resource, and if so, when and to what degree the resource will be impacted. In some instances, sea level rise may result in the creation of new habitat areas that could help to alleviate impacts from the loss of similar habitat in other locations. However, it is more likely, especially in heavily urbanized areas, that sea level rise will result in a net loss of habitat unless steps are taken to preserve these systems.

To accomplish this, consider a wide range of characteristics of each resource, including the following. The questions listed under each characteristic might help guide the consideration of each of these characteristics. These questions are meant to be suggestions rather than a standardized approach, and planners may use scientific literature, best professional judgment, or a variety of other resources to gain a conceptual understanding of the important resources and vulnerabilities in their jurisdictions.

- a. **Exposure.** Will sea level rise impacts affect the resource/development at all?
 - i. Are coastal resources and community assets exposed to sea level rise impacts?
 - ii. Is the resource already exposed to hazards such as waves, flooding, erosion, or saltwater intrusion? If it is, will sea level rise increase hazard exposure?
- b. **Sensitivity.** If resources are exposed, to what degree will coastal resources/development be affected by sea level rise impacts? A simple way to think about this concept is to consider *how easily affected* the resource or development is in regard to sea level rise impacts.
 - i. How quickly will the resource respond to the impact from sea level rise?
 - ii. Will the resource/development be harmed if environmental conditions change just a small amount? What are the physical characteristics of resource/asset (*e.g.*, geology, soil characteristics, hydrology, coastal geomorphology, topography, bathymetry, land cover, land use)? Do any of those characteristics make the resource especially sensitive?
 - iii. Are there thresholds or tipping points beyond which sensitivity to sea level rise increases?
- c. **Adaptive Capacity.** How easily can the resource successfully adapt to sea level rise impacts?
 - i. How well can the resource/development accommodate changes in sea level?
 - ii. Is rate of change faster than the ability of the resource/development to adapt?
 - iii. How easily can development be modified to cope with flooding, inundation, and/or erosion? Can structures be elevated or relocated?

- iv. Are there adaptation efforts already underway? Are there any factors that limit the success of adaptation efforts?
 - v. Do beaches, wetlands and other coastal habitats have room to migrate inland? What is the overall health of existing wetlands and coastal habitats?
 - vi. Are there any other climate change-related impacts to consider? Are there any non-climate stressors that could impair ability to adapt to sea level rise?
 - vii. Is there potential for habitat creation as a result of sea level rise?
 - viii. What are the options to protect, redesign (*e.g.*, elevate), or relocate inland any existing public accessways, recreational beaches, and segments of the Coastal Trail to cope with rising sea levels? Is lateral access compromised with sea level rise?
- d. **Consequences.** When sea level rise and/or sea level rise adaptation measures have impact(s) upon a resource, what are the economic, ecological, social, cultural, and legal consequences?
- i. How severely could each resource be affected? At what scale?
 - ii. Are there cumulative consequences?
 - iii. Are there ripple effects, or secondary consequences to consider?
 - iv. Will human responses cause further adverse impacts?
- e. **Land Use Constraints.** Given the location of sea level rise impacts and the resources currently located in those areas, should the types and intensities of land use be altered to minimize hazards and protect coastal resources?
- i. What is the current pattern of development? Is the area largely developed or does it have significant areas of undeveloped land?
 - ii. Is the area served by infrastructure that is vulnerable to sea level rise impacts?
 - iii. Are large areas of land under common ownership or is land mostly subdivided into smaller lots in separate ownership?
 - iv. What conditions does the land use type, development, or resource require to either exist or fulfill its intended purpose?
 - v. Is it a coastal-dependent use? What is its ideal proximity to the coast?
 - vi. For new development, what is the expected lifespan? Is it economically feasible to locate it in a sea level rise impact area for a certain period of time before it is removed or relocated?
 - vii. For existing development, what are the options available to minimize hazards to the development and protect coastal resources? Note that in

certain situations, the Coastal Act allows existing structures to be protected (Coastal Act Section 30235). What are the coastal resource impacts of such protection, and are there feasible alternatives that avoid shoreline armoring, such as options to provide incentives to property owners to relocate or remove at-risk structures?

- viii. For a natural resource or habitat, what conditions does it require to persist?
- ix. Where would resources/development ideally be located after sea level rise causes environmental conditions to shift?
- x. What changes to existing LCP requirements or other land use restrictions are necessary to maximize opportunities for avoiding hazards or relocating threatened existing development?

After going through the questions listed above, and others that may be relevant to the planning exercise, synthesize the information and determine where sea level rise impacts currently pose problems for coastal resources, what problems may develop over time as sea level rises, and how urgent the problems are. Create maps illustrating the location and extent of vulnerable land uses, such as critical facilities, wastewater infrastructure, and State Highway 1 and other coastal access roadways. This information can also be summarized in narrative form. The analysis should identify resources and development likely to be impacted by sea level rise at various periods in the future, and thus the issues that need to be resolved in the LCP planning process.

Remember that these assessments are not static; existing risks will change and new risks will arise with changes in a community, the emergence of new threats, new information, and the implementation of adaptation actions. For this reason, the analysis should be updated as needed to reflect changes in sea level rise projections, changes in land use patterns, or new threats.

***Expected outcomes from Step 3:** Descriptions of the characteristics that influence risk, including exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity of each coastal resource to sea level rise impacts under each sea level rise scenario identified in Step 1 at the selected planning horizons, along with the expected consequences of those impacts for the resource and broader community. Maps of resources and/or land uses at risk could be produced.*

Example for Step 3

To illustrate the process described in Step 3, consider a hypothetical planning area that includes multiple coastal resources and land use types, including a coastal wetland, bluff-top residential development with a fronting beach, and a wastewater treatment facility, that need to be addressed in the planning process. After Steps 1 and 2, portions of the planning area are found to be subject to current and future sea level rise impacts.

Step 3.1: Map the coastal resources (in this case the wetland, development, and wastewater treatment facility) for the range of time periods and sea level rise projections.

Step 3.2

*a. **Exposure***

- *Wetland:* The wetland is highly exposed to flooding and inundation from sea level rise. By the year 2030, portions of the wetland will trap sediment at a rate such that the elevation keeps pace with sea level rise. By 2050, a portion of the wetland will become inundated and converted to open water, and by 2100 the entire area will be converted to open water. The wetland will be completely lost by this time period if it is not able to move inland.
- *Bluff-top Residential Development:* Houses in the residential development are not exposed to sea level rise impacts in 2030. However, a high rate of retreat along the fronting beach and bluff will put front-line houses in danger of being undermined by the year 2050, and the entire development may be lost by 2100.
- *Wastewater Treatment Facility:* Given that the wastewater treatment plant is set back somewhat from the water, it will not be exposed to impacts from sea level rise until 2050. By 2050, however, portions of the infrastructure will be exposed to impacts from elevated water levels due to 100-year storm events and El Niño occurrences. By 2100, significant portions of the facility will be exposed to flooding as the surrounding area is eroded and inundated.

*b. **Sensitivity***

- *Wetland:* The wetland has high sensitivity to changes in sea level because its functioning is highly-dependent on local physical parameters such as water flow, tidal fluctuation, sediment supply, and water quality. Although it currently has good sediment supply, good water quality, and a number of other characteristics, small changes in sea level rise by 2050 may alter the function of the wetland. In addition, there are concerns that beyond 2050 the wetland will not be able to keep up with accelerated sea level rise, thus increasing sensitivity to further changes in sea level.
- *Bluff-top Residential Development:* The residential development has moderate to high sensitivity to longer-term sea level rise changes. By 2050, the front-line houses will no longer be safe enough for occupancy. Moreover, infrastructure such as roads, sewage systems, and power networks may be damaged as the bluff-face erodes.
- *Wastewater Treatment Facility:* The facility is moderately sensitive to sea level rise. Flooding and erosion from sea level rise could cause damage of the facility, pumps and

other equipment, but the facility was initially built to withstand a high degree of storm and related impacts.

c. **Adaptive Capacity**

- *Wetland:* Unlike many wetlands in the State of California, this particular wetland has a moderate-high adaptive capacity because it has the ability to both accumulate sediment and grow upwards, and, given that the land upland of the wetland is preserved as open space, it can migrate inland. However, by 2050, a part or all of the existing wetland area could be converted to open water if the wetland is not able to migrate inland or accumulate sediment at a rate that keeps pace with sea level rise. In this case, for example, a public trail will need to be relocated to allow inland migration of the new intertidal zone. Additionally, adaptive capacity may be reduced if pollution increases (*e.g.*, as a result of damage to adjacent development) and disrupts the normal functioning of the wetland.
- *Bluff-top Residential Development:* The residential development has a moderate adaptive capacity. As houses become threatened over time, a scenario of managed retreat would allow houses to be removed incrementally and eventually be relocated to safer areas. The feasibility of managed retreat can depend upon lot sizes, ownership patterns, land use restrictions in the safer areas, and the availability of public or private financing. In addition, a protective structure such as a seawall would minimize threats to the residence due to erosion, though if the development is protected by shoreline structures, the fronting beach will eventually be lost.
- *Wastewater Treatment Facility:* The wastewater treatment facility has a very low adaptive capacity. It is large and has expensive infrastructure so it cannot be elevated, and relocation is costly and difficult. In order to be protected in its current location, new structures will need to be built.

d. **Consequences**

- *Wetland:* In many situations, the loss of wetland area is a high risk since wetlands provide flood protection, water quality enhancement, and essential habitat for fish and bird species. However, in this case, wetland migration is not restricted by inland development, so the risks for this wetland are slight to moderate, depending upon the suitability of the inland area for establishment of wetland plants and potential changes in water temperature and water quality. In the short term, the wetland will likely continue to function at normal levels. However, if it eventually can't keep up with sea level rise or if there are barriers to migration, loss of the habitat will result in a loss of important ecosystem services.
- *Bluff-top Residential Development:* The housing development has medium to high risk through 2100. The option to either relocate houses or protect them with a seawall means that they could continue to exist. Importantly, a system of managed retreat will allow for the continued existence of the fronting beach and all of its social, economic, and environmental benefits, whereas the construction of a seawall will result in the loss of the beach and these benefits.

- *Wastewater Treatment Facility:* Given its low adaptive capacity and high sensitivity to higher levels of sea level rise, the wastewater treatment facility is at high risk. Loss or damage to the facility could result in serious social, economic, and environmental consequences. Flooding of the facility and surrounding areas will cause damage to infrastructure and loss of facility function. This could lead to discharge of untreated sewage, which would have adverse impacts to water quality and could impair the health of nearshore ecosystems. Sea level rise could also cause outflow pipes to back up with seawater, leading to inland flooding and additional water quality problems. However, efforts to protect the structure may have unintended consequences including loss of surrounding habitat areas.

e. **Land Use Constraints (discussed further in Step 4)**

- *Wetland:* The high adaptive capacity of the wetland means that minimizing risk to this resource may be accomplished by ensuring that there is space available for it to move into. Land use policies designed to protect areas inland of the current wetland area will be necessary.
- *Bluff-top Residential Development:* The area in question will eventually become incompatible with the current use. Development will not begin to be exposed to sea level rise impacts until 2050, but it is important to start planning now about how best to address the risks to the houses. Managed retreat would necessitate identifying feasible locations into which houses could be moved or a plan to abandon and remove houses. Such a plan might include a Transfer of Development Rights program in which homes are encouraged in less hazardous areas. If a managed retreat strategy is not in place, existing structures may qualify for shoreline protection. Shoreline protection would likely exacerbate beach erosion, degrade public access, impair shoreline habitat, and alter visual character.
- *Wastewater Treatment Facility:* The biggest risk in this scenario is to the wastewater treatment facility. It should be determined how likely it is that the facility will be able to be protected throughout the rest of its expected lifespan under even the highest sea level rise scenarios. It may be that the wastewater treatment facility becomes an incompatible use under future conditions. If so, plans should be made to relocate at-risk portions of the facility, as feasible, or to phase out the facility.

Note that this is a simplified example used to demonstrate the process described in Step 3. Decisions about how to address various challenges presented by sea level rise will be more complex than those illustrated above and may require prioritizing the different resources based on Coastal Act requirements taking into account the goals and circumstances of the community and the various characteristics of each resource. An understanding of the exposure, sensitivity, adaptive capacity, consequences, and land use constraints for the particular resources and scenarios will need to be kept in mind as planners move into Step 4 to identify possible adaptation strategies. Updated LCP policies and ordinances should be considered to support strategy implementation over the long term.

Step 4 – Identify LCP adaptation strategies to minimize risks

Whether as part of a new LCP or as part of an amendment to update an existing LCP, coastal planners should work with the Coastal Commission and relevant stakeholders at all steps, but particularly to evaluate potential options and adaptation strategies to address the sea level rise impacts identified in Step 2 and the risks to coastal resources identified in Step 3. Planners will then develop new or revised land use designations, policies, standards, or ordinances to implement the adaptation strategies in the LCP.

An LCP as certified by the Commission should already have land use policies, standards, and ordinances to implement Coastal Act Chapter 3 policies, including policies to avoid and mitigate hazards, and to protect coastal resources. However, in older LCPs, many of these policies may not address changing conditions adequately enough to protect coastal resources over time as sea level rises. Similarly, policies to protect resources and address coastal hazards may not reflect new techniques that can be utilized to adaptively manage coastal resources in a dynamic environment. As such, the LCP should be evaluated to identify the land use designations, policies, or ordinances that need to be amended. An LCP update may need to include a variety of adaptation measures depending on the nature and location of the vulnerability. In addition, local governments may need to add new “programmatic” changes to address sea level rise, such as transfer of development credit programs, regional sediment management programs, or a land acquisition program.

In Steps 1-3, planners will have analyzed several possible sea level rise scenarios, and this analysis will have revealed valuable information about areas and specific coastal resources that are especially vulnerable to sea level rise hazards under possible scenarios. The results should show areas that are particularly resilient to future change and trigger points at which sea level hazards will become particularly relevant to certain areas. Step 3d (identifying the *Consequences* of sea level rise impacts) and Step 3e (considering the *Land use constraints*) will be particularly useful in thinking through what resources are particularly vulnerable and what the local priorities may be.

In Step 4, planners should weigh information from the previous steps, keeping in mind the hazard avoidance and resource protection policies of the Coastal Act, and begin identifying, choosing, and/or developing adaptation strategies to be included in a new or updated LCP. The options available to minimize risks from sea level rise are dependent upon the specifics of the local community, and will vary widely depending on whether the area is an urban, fully-developed waterfront, or a rural, undeveloped coastline. In undeveloped areas, the options may be clear: strictly limit new development in sea level rise hazard zones.

However, in urban areas, sea level rise can present unprecedented challenges, and the options are less clear. The Coastal Act allows for protection of certain existing structures. However, armoring can pose significant impacts to coastal resources. To minimize impacts, innovative, cutting-edge solutions will be needed, such as the use of living shorelines to protect existing infrastructure, restrictions on redevelopment of properties in hazardous areas, managed retreat, partnerships with land trust organizations to convert at risk areas to open space, or transfer of development rights programs. Strategies will need to be tailored to the specific needs of each

community based on the resources at risk, should be evaluated for resulting impacts to coastal resources, and should be developed through a public process, in close consultation with the Coastal Commission and in line with the Coastal Act.

Adaptation strategies should be selected based upon the local conditions, the results of the scenario-based analysis, and Coastal Act requirements, taking into account the particular goals of the local community. If certain adaptation strategies should be implemented when conditions reach pre-identified trigger points, those caveats should be included in the LCP. Similarly, LCP adaptation policies should be developed and implemented in such a way as to be flexible and adaptive enough that they can be changed or updated as conditions change or if sea level rise impacts are significantly different than anticipated. Additionally, many adaptation strategies should be implemented in a coordinated way through both the LCP and individual CDPs. For example, current land uses that will conflict with future conditions may be amended through updated zoning designations in an LCP. In turn, zoning designations could carry out specific policies or requirements regarding new development or redevelopment that need to be addressed in a CDP to ensure that projects are resilient over time. Planners are encouraged to work with Coastal Commission staff to ensure compliance with the Coastal Act and to coordinate and share information with other local partners including those in charge of emergency management, law enforcement, and related services, and those identified in [Figure 10](#) as applicable and feasible.

A key issue that should be addressed in the LCP is the evaluation of strategies to minimize hazards related to existing development. Under the Coastal Act, certain improvements and repairs to existing development are exempt from CDP requirements. Non-exempt improvements and any repairs that involve the replacement of 50% or more of a structure, however, generally require a CDP and must conform to the standards of the relevant Local Coastal Program or Coastal Act.³³ Redevelopment, therefore, should minimize hazards from sea level rise. For existing structures currently sited in at-risk locations, the process of redeveloping the structure may require the structure to be moved or modified to ensure that the structure and coastal resources are not at risk due to impacts from sea level rise. As described in Guiding Principle 6, sequential renovation or replacement of small portions of existing development should be considered in total. LCPs should include policies that specify that multiple smaller renovations that amount to alteration of 50% or more of the original structure should require a Coastal Development Permit, and require that the entire structure to be brought into conformance with the standards of the Local Coastal Program or Coastal Act.³⁴

³³ Section § 13252(b) of the Commission’s regulations states that “unless destroyed by natural disaster, the replacement of 50 percent or more of a single family residence, seawall, revetment, bluff retaining wall, breakwater, groin or any other structure is not repair and maintenance under Coastal Act Section 30610(d) but instead constitutes a replacement structure requiring a Coastal Development Permit.”

³⁴ In addition, for existing structures located between the first public road and the sea or within 300 feet of the inland extent of a beach, improvements that increase the height or internal floor area by more than 10% normally require a CDP. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §§13250(b)(4), 13253(b)(4).) Depending upon the location of the structure, smaller improvements may also require a CDP. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §§ 13250(b), 13253(b).)

General Adaptation Strategies:

[Chapter 7](#) describes a number of adaptation policies and strategies and is organized by resource type to allow users to easily identify the types of policies that may be relevant to local resource vulnerabilities. However, there are a number of adaptation strategies or related actions that apply to a variety of resources or that may be generally useful when adopting or updating an LCP. Some of these adaptation strategies and actions are broadly described below.

- **Update resource inventory and maps:** An important first step for addressing sea level rise hazards and vulnerabilities in a new or updated LCP will be to compile a set of maps that clearly show the current locations of the range of coastal resources present in an LCP jurisdiction (*e.g.*, beaches and public accessways; agricultural land, wetlands, ESHA, and other coastal habitats; energy, wastewater, transportation, and other critical infrastructure; and archaeological and paleontological resources), as well as existing land use designations, and hazard areas. It may also be helpful to map possible future conditions based on the analysis done in Steps 1-3. Doing so will help planners begin to identify possible land use and zoning changes and other adaptation strategies that will be necessary to meet hazard avoidance and resource protection goals.
- **Update land use designations and zoning ordinances:** One of the most common methods of regulating land use is through zoning designations and ordinances, and updating these policies is one of the most fundamental ways of responding to sea level rise impacts. Planners may address particular vulnerabilities and local priorities by updating land use designations and zoning ordinances to protect specific areas and/or resources. For example, areas that are particularly vulnerable to sea level rise impacts can be designated as hazard zones and specific regulations can be used to limit new development and/or to encourage removal of existing development in such zones. Similarly, open areas can be designated as conservation zones in order to protect and provide upland areas for wetland and habitat migration or for additional agricultural land.
- **Update siting and design standards:** Updated siting and design standards may go hand in hand with updated land use designations and zoning ordinances in that specific standards may be required for development or projects in certain zones. For example, development in hazard zones may require additional setbacks, limits for first floor habitable space, innovative stormwater management systems, special flood protection measures, mitigation measures for unavoidable impacts, relocation and removal triggers and methodologies, and so on.
- **Establish methods to monitor local changes from sea level rise:** Add policies that establish actions to conduct long-term sea level rise monitoring and research on areas of key uncertainties, areas sensitive to small changes in sea level rise, or areas with high sea level rise risk.
- **Research and data collection:** Support research to address key data gaps and better utilize existing information. Local governments may find it useful to collaborate with local, regional, and state partners to pursue new research to better understand the factors controlling sea level rise, baseline shoreline conditions, ecosystem responses to sea level rise, potential impacts and vulnerabilities, and the efficacy of adaptation tools. Related efforts may include monitoring programs designed to track trends in local shoreline

change, flooding extent and frequency, or water quality. Monitoring of the results of various adaptation strategies and protective structures could be included as part of a Coastal Development Permit for projects in hazard zones.

- **Outreach and education:** Education and outreach efforts involve formal instruction and provision of information to stakeholders, and can help generate support for planning and action implementation. It is important to coordinate with partners and include all relevant stakeholders in these processes, particularly those that are typically isolated, such as low-income or underserved communities. For many people, sea level rise is a new issue. Information on sea level rise science and potential consequences may motivate stakeholders to take an active role in updating the LCP for sea level rise issues, or in the vulnerability and risk assessment efforts. Additionally, education efforts regarding the risks of sea level rise as well as possible adaptation strategies may encourage people to take proactive steps to retrofit their homes to be more resilient or to choose to build in less hazardous areas.

As stated above, a more extensive and detailed list of possible adaptation strategies can be found in [Chapter 7](#). The list should neither be considered a checklist from which all options need to be added to an LCP, nor is it an exhaustive list of all possible adaptation strategies. Sea level rise adaptation is still an evolving field and decision makers will need to be innovative and flexible to respond to changing conditions, new science, and new adaptation opportunities. The important point is to analyze current and future risks from sea level rise, determine local priorities and goals for protection of coastal resources and development, and identify what land use designations, zoning ordinances, and other adaptation strategies can be used to meet those goals within the context of the Coastal Act.

Expected outcomes from Step 4: Identified sections of the LCP that need to be updated, a list of adaptation measures applicable to the LCP, and new policies and ordinances to implement the adaptation measures.

Step 5 – Draft updated or new LCP for certification with the Coastal Commission

Once potential adaptation strategies have been identified, LCP policies that address sea level rise should be incorporated into a new LCP or LCP amendment. For jurisdictions with a certified LCP, adaptation measures will be implemented through development of amendments to the certified LCPs. For jurisdictions that currently do not have a certified LCP, the sea level rise policies will be part of the development of a new LCP. In areas without a certified LCP, the Coastal Commission generally retains permitting authority, and the standard of review for development is generally Chapter 3 of the California Coastal Act.

As noted in Step 4, sea level rise has the potential to affect many types of coastal resources in an LCP planning area/segment, and it is likely that policies throughout the LCP will need to be revised or developed to address impacts from sea level rise. Two major types of updates to the LCP will likely be needed to address sea level rise:

1. New or revised policies/ordinances that apply to all development in the planning area. For example, policies such as “All new development shall be sited and designed to minimize risks from sea level rise over the life of the structure.”
2. Updated land use and zoning designations, as well as programs to facilitate adaptive community responses, to reduce risks to specific coastal resources. For example, the LCP could modify the zoning of undeveloped land located upland of wetlands from residential to open space in order to provide the opportunity for wetlands to migrate inland, and protect wetlands for the future.

Local government staff should work closely with Coastal Commission staff and relevant stakeholders, including ensuring there is opportunity for public input, to develop the new LCP or LCP amendments. Once the updates and plans are complete, local governments will submit to the Commission for certification. The Commission may either certify or deny the LCP or LCP amendment as submitted, or it may suggest modifications. If the Commission adopts suggested modifications, the local government may adopt the modifications for certification or refuse the modifications and resubmit a revised LCP for additional Commission review. For more information on updating LCPs, see <http://www.coastal.ca.gov/la/lcp.html>.

Expected outcomes from Step 5: Certified/updated LCP with policies and land use designations that address sea level rise and related hazards and ensure protection of coastal resources to the maximum extent feasible.

Step 6 – Implement LCP and monitor and revise as needed

Upon certification of the updated LCP, sea level rise adaptation strategies will be implemented through the certified implementing ordinances and related processes and actions (e.g., local review of CDPs, proactive action plans). Additionally, an important component of successful adaptation is to secure funds for implementation, regularly monitor progress and results, and update any policies and approaches as needed. Sea level rise projections should be re-evaluated and updated as necessary.

- **Secure resources for implementation:** There are a number of different sources of funds available to help local governments implement adaptation strategies. For example, the Coastal Commission, the Ocean Protection Council, and the Coastal Conservancy have grant programs designed to support local adaptation efforts (see [Chapter 1](#) for additional details on each of these programs).

As described previously there may also be overlap between LCP planning and Local Hazard Mitigation planning. FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant programs provide significant opportunities to reduce or eliminate potential losses to State, Indian Tribal government, and local assets through hazard mitigation planning and project grant funding. Currently, there are three programs: the [Hazard Mitigation Grant Program \(HMGP\)](#); [Pre-Disaster Mitigation \(PDM\)](#); and [Flood Mitigation Assistance](#)

(FMA)³⁵. Cal OES administers the HMA and FMA programs. More information can be found at <http://hazardmitigation.calema.ca.gov/grants> or the FEMA HMA Web site at <https://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance>.

A list compiled by Cal OES of additional funding options for hazard mitigation can be found in [Appendix E](#). The Commission recognizes that funding opportunities are constantly evolving, that demand for funding is increasing, and that there is a significant need for the development of additional funding opportunities.

- **Identify key resources to monitor:** Certain species can be indicators of whether sea level rise is affecting an ecosystem. For instance, the presence of certain plant species can indicate the salinity of soils. Also, monitoring plans should reflect the outcome of the scenario-based analysis of sea level rise. Some adaptation measures might be earmarked for implementation when a certain amount of sea level rise (or a particular sea level rise impact) occurs. Monitoring programs should ensure that these triggers are recognized and responded to at the appropriate time.
- **Periodically Update LCPs:** Local governments should try to review their vulnerability and risk assessments on a regular basis as significant new scientific information becomes available and propose amendments as appropriate. Given the evolving nature of sea level rise science, policies may need to be updated as major scientific advancements are made, changing what is considered the best available science. Modify the current and future hazard areas on a five to ten year basis or as necessary to allow for the incorporation of new sea level rise science, monitoring results, and information on coastal conditions. Regular evaluation of LCPs is important to make sure policies and adaptation strategies are effective in reducing impacts from sea level rise.

Expected outcomes from Step 6: Plan to monitor the LCP planning area for sea level rise and other impacts and for effectiveness of various adaptation strategies that are implemented; plan to revise the LCP when conditions change or science is updated.

This six-step process discussed in this chapter is illustrated in the flowchart below ([Figure 12](#)). Notice that the process is circular. Because sea level rise science will be refined and updated in the future, planners should periodically repeat this six-step process to update and improve their LCPs.

For additional resources and examples of ways to incorporate sea level rise into the LCP, see [Appendix C](#).

³⁵ Each HMA program was authorized by separate legislative action, and as such, each program differs slightly in scope and intent.

Planning Process for Local Coastal Programs and Other Plans



Figure 12. Flowchart for addressing sea level rise in Local Coastal Programs and other plans