

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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TO: California Coastal Commission and Interested Parties
FROM: John Ainsworth, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report, October 2020

Local Government Working Group: Joint Statement of Principles for Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning

One of the primary action items coming out of the July 2019 Local Government Workshop was the establishment of the Local Government Working Group. This group consists of representatives from the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), the League of California Cities and a Coastal Commission sub-committee (Commissioners Groom & Wilson). The goal of the Local Government Working Group was to develop strategies to improve collaboration and communications between local governments and the Commission on sea level rise adaptation planning and Local Coastal Program (LCP) updates.

Over the past year, the Local Government Working Group has been working hard to develop a set of shared principles that would provide a foundation for our collective efforts on sea level rise adaptation planning going forward (see [Appendix A](#) - *Shared Principles for Adaptation Planning*). The Draft joint statement outlines guiding principles, opportunities and challenges associated with proactive and effective sea level rise adaptation for California's coastal communities. It focuses specifically on what these three entities, while working together, can do to address sea level rise in coastal California, specifically relating to Local Coastal Program (LCP) policy development, adaptation planning, and project decision-making.

The plan is to bring the Draft *Shared Principles of Adaptation Planning* to the Commission for discussion and possible adoption at the November 2020 Commission meeting. Adoption of the principles by the Commission, League of Cities and CSAC will set the stage for the December 17, 2020 Local Government Workshop that will focus on the next steps regarding how we will apply these shared principles to advance the development of meaningful sea level adaptation plans and LCP updates for coastal jurisdictions across the state.

Meetings and Events

Congressman Rouda Meeting - Newport Beach flooding and SLR planning

On September 2nd, Commission staff participated in a socially-distanced site visit in Newport Beach organized by the office of Rep. Harley Rouda (CA-48). Rep. Rouda and Commission staff were joined by Jeff Herdman, Newport Beach City Council member, Dave Webb, Newport Beach Public Works Director, and Steve Rosansky, President of the Newport Beach Chamber of Commerce. Commission staff heard from representatives of the City about flooding and erosion experienced on the Balboa peninsula during the recent July 4th high wave/tide event, and how the City's Public Works Department responded through construction of sand berms on the beach. The Public Works Director also expressed interest in discussing potential for more opportunistic beach and wetland nourishment. Coastal staff shared information about how sea level rise will make such events more frequent, and shared statistics from the Climate Central's *Surging Seas Risk Finder* report that without adaptation planning measures, 11 square miles, associated with over \$13 billion of property value, 50,000 residents, and over 200 miles of roads would be vulnerable to tidal flooding in Orange County alone.

Commission staff also shared resources we offer to cities to help them proactively plan for impacts of sea level rise, including the Commission's Local Assistance Grant Program, and discussed the potential for future assistance with LCP updates if funding is available. The City also expressed interest in exploring the formation of City Council Sea Level Rise workgroup to coordinate the City's response and planning for sea level rise, which Staff welcomed. Lastly, the group discussed the need for continued support from the federal government in achieving coastal resilience through resource management and planning done by coastal management programs like our own, federal services and products like the U.S. Geological Survey's Coastal Storm Modeling System (CoSMoS), and direct project implementation such as sediment management by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Pesticide Working Group

This past June, at the Direction of the Executive Director, Commission senior ecologist, Dr. Jonna Engel, established a Pesticide Working Group with staff from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The vision for the group is to discuss pesticide use in the coastal zone and California in general, learn about each other's respective laws and mandates, and discuss ways we can collaborate on and encourage integrated pest management (IPM), a program that focuses on an ecosystem-based strategy using a combination of techniques such as biological control, habitat manipulation, modification of cultural practices, and use of resistant varieties, before chemical alternatives are used.

Dr. Engel and Dr. Karen Morrison (DPR Assistant Director and Science Advisor) organized the first several meetings. Our first official meeting on June 3 included a broad overview of DPR's scientific review of pesticides and IPM work, CDFW's work on wildlife exposure and

management, rodenticide concerns and IPM approaches, and overall work group goals and desired outcomes. During our second meeting on June 19, we looked at rodenticide use in California as a case study and DPR talked about their product registration process including the factors considered and addressed during registration. DPR also covered their work on BMPs for rodenticides at schools and DPR grant programs. And we discussed rodenticide concerns from the Commission perspective and IPM approaches for rodents (e.g. exclusion, trapping, appropriate rodenticide application). Our third meeting was on July 13 when we really dug into the pesticide registration process and the legal requirement to follow pesticide label instructions. We also talked in more depth about IPM at the level of schools and communities and how the Commission could incorporate IPM into our work.

Going forward Dr. Morrison has passed the working group organizational responsibility to Leslie Talpasanu in the Integrated Pest Management Branch, and Ms. Talpasanu and Dr. Engel are leading Pesticide Working Group meetings every three weeks that focus on educating each other on the issues each department deals with regarding pesticides with the goal that once we have a better understanding of each Department's challenges and resources we can come together to try to formulate some ideas for how to better assist each other with pesticide related issues in the future. Another goal of the group is to discuss and potentially develop work products such as guidance documents, sample special condition language, Commission workshop(s) on pesticides, etc.

Public Education Unit

Coastal Cleanup Month Update:

September 30th marked the end of California Coastal Cleanup Month, our reinvention of the state's most popular annual volunteer event, California Coastal Cleanup Day. Throughout the month, the Commission and its partnering organizations around the state encouraged volunteers to clean the coast from their own front doors by removing trash from streets and local parks, creeks, and beaches while remaining physically distanced and safe from large gatherings. While the event looked different than it has, it still brought tens of thousands of Californians out to help protect our coast. Staff are still compiling numbers, but at the latest count, California led the entire world in the cleanup effort, with over 3,000 individual cleanups taking place across the state during the month, more than triple the number of any other state or country participating in the International Coastal Cleanup.

The event proved that Californians are willing and excited to help our coast no matter the circumstances. Staff is currently exploring ways to encourage continued neighborhood cleanups throughout the year to continue the momentum of Coastal Cleanup Month.

National Academy of Sciences Committee Appointment:

Public Education staff member Eben Schwartz was recently appointed to a National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Committee on U.S. Contributions to Global Ocean Plastic Waste. The committee, comprised of nine members, is tasked with studying the amounts of plastic waste generated by the U.S., where that waste ends up, how to best track the waste, what knowledge gaps exist, and ultimately, what the potential solutions may be. The study is intended to provide technical knowledge and guidance to the federal government in order to help steer implementation of current legislation and influence future measures taken to reduce plastic pollution. This is a great opportunity for Eben to apply his extensive experience and expertise in the development of solutions to deal with the scourge of plastic waste in our Oceans.

Climate Video Challenge

The Public Education Program has launched a [Climate Video Challenge](#) for middle and high school students to create short videos answering the question, "What does climate justice look like to me?" Entries are due by the end of March 2021.

Art and Poetry Contest

The annual [California Coastal Art & Poetry Contest](#) is now open for K-12 students. For the first time in its long history entries will be submitted online, and they are due January 31, 2021. Instructions and entry materials are also available in [Spanish](#).

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Sea Level Rise Working Group

SHARED PRINCIPLES FOR ADAPTATION PLANNING

The California Coastal Commission, the California State Association of Counties, and the League of California Cities together endorse the following joint statement of guiding principles, opportunities and challenges associated with proactive and effective sea level rise adaptation for California's coastal communities. It focuses specifically on what these three entities, while working together, can do to address sea level rise in coastal California, specifically relating to Local Coastal Program (LCP) policy development, adaptation planning, and project decision making.

State and Local Challenges of Adapting to a Changing Coast

- Extreme storm and weather events are changing the coast of California, which sea level rise is expected to exacerbate, causing increased flooding and inundation, coastal erosion, changes in sediment supply and movement, and saltwater intrusion to water supplies.
- The degree of impact and rate of change sea level rise has on coastal communities and ecosystems varies widely along the State's 1,200-mile coastline.
- These increasing coastal hazards will have significant impacts on coastal economies and put coastal resources and development at risk.
- Sea level rise hazards will disproportionately impact the ability of people who cannot afford to live in close proximity to the ocean to access and recreate along the coast, including those from underserved and vulnerable communities.
- Sea level rise adaptation solutions are resource intensive and each has its own economic, environmental, and social trade-offs; these costs and benefits will also change over time as sea levels continue to rise.
- Choosing an adaptation strategy now may influence options for the future as well as options in adjacent locations. Some options may benefit a few at the expense of many, while others may benefit many at the expense of a few.

Shared Principles to Guide Adaptation Planning and Projects

The California Coastal Commission, the California State Association of Counties, and the League of California Cities together commit to:

- Plan for sea level rise adaptation in a way that is responsive and flexible, and based on unique local community contexts.
- Work for creative planning solutions that provide for local flexibility at the LCP and community level and statewide consistency at the policy level.
- Engage and collaborate with all stakeholders, including community members, visitors, business owners, and tribal groups, as well as underserved and other vulnerable communities who live, visit, and recreate along the coast to ensure equitable participation in adaptation planning processes, and equitable outcomes from decisions.
- Incorporate the best available science on sea level rise into guidance, policies, plans, and permits and have explicit processes for updating these with new information.
- Develop phased approaches to adaptation based on thresholds that trigger future policy and planning reviews and updates.

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- Disclose the location, type, timeframe, and severity of coastal hazards due to sea level rise to property owners and the public, for example, through risk disclosure policies, conditions on permits, or publicly available vulnerability assessments.
- Create and refine new tools to support adaptation, such as regional mitigation to offset impacts to public beaches, to achieve better environmental, economic, and community outcomes over the long term.
- Strive for agency cultures and procedures that support predictable and efficient planning, permitting and project delivery.
- Commit to progress over perfection; develop policies and plans that highlight incremental progress in the near-term to lay a foundation for, but not preclude, longer-term progress and outcomes.
- Focus on and prioritize public infrastructure planning to model opportunities for innovative adaptation strategies that benefit coastal resources and communities.

Creative Solutions and Actions

The California Coastal Commission, the California State Association of Counties, and the League of California Cities commit to working together on the opportunities and actions presented by the following top three challenges:

Establishing shared vision, scope, and time horizons associated with LCP updates

Historically, the Commission has approached LCP updates based on a presumption that the LCP will not be updated again for many years to come. As a result, Commission staff often suggest policy recommendations that will result in long-term efficacy. Conversely, local jurisdictions often develop LCP policy updates with shorter timeframes in mind. In other words, they draft policies that are digestible and actionable for their communities in the near term. This disconnect often spawns a continuous comment and feedback loop between the state and local entities that results in an unreasonably long, and sometimes failed, LCP update process.

- ***Opportunity:*** The Commission and local governments can agree on clear and established timeframes under which the LCP update will be operable. Identifying the appropriate scope and time horizon for the update (e.g., for the next 10-20 years) can help support actionable sea level rise policies and adaptation planning approaches. The entities could agree that the present round of policy updates will not be the last, and commit to multiple, more regular updates rather than one major update.
- ***Action:*** The Commission and local governments agree to co-develop guidance on an improved LCP update process that supports more frequent and incremental or 'phased' updates to LCPs, including identifying appropriate time horizons for policy application, 'first order' policy language, and future update requirements.

Maintaining statewide consistency while flexibly addressing unique local issues

The Commission works to maintain a degree of statewide consistency across LCP updates to remain consistent with Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act and avoid inconsistent or arbitrary regulatory

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interpretation. Local governments seek maximum flexibility to address local issues and struggle with 'one size fits all' policies that are born from the state's efforts to maintain statewide consistency.

- **Opportunity:** The Commission and local governments agree that while some degree of statewide consistency is important, all LCP updates should address unique local issues. As a result, not all LCP updates will look the same from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. However, all LCP updates should include baseline hazards policies and concepts, including requirements to use the best available science, policies on disclosure and assumption of risks related to sea level rise hazards, and policies to ensure that new development is appropriately sited.
- **Action:** Draw from recent certified LCP updates to compile successful examples of the baseline policies and concepts detailed above that achieve an appropriate balance between statewide policy consistency and local LCP flexibility. This compilation can serve as a future reference for both local jurisdictions and CCC staff when developing and providing comments and feedback on future LCP updates.

Evaluating coastal resource impacts now and in the future in light of sea level rise, and identifying viable mitigation sites to offset those impacts

- **Opportunity:** Adaptation strategies such as armoring that can impact coastal resources and public trust lands may be viable near-term options to address sea level rise in some locations; however, impacts from such strategies may need to be mitigated. The state and local jurisdictions can collectively develop consistent approaches to armoring where it is appropriate, in addition to conducting economic impact analysis for impacted coastal resources when armoring does occur. The entities can collect the best available mechanisms to value coastal resources and coastal access points to help plan for different activities and accessibility as coastal environments change with sea level rise and mitigate impacts that may arise.
- **Action:** State and local governments agree to work together to develop shared guidance on pathways to creative solutions that allow coastal armoring in certain locations while also properly evaluating, limiting, and mitigating coastal resource impacts. This should include exploring the concept of regional mitigation opportunities across jurisdictions.