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TO: California Coastal Commissioners and Interested Public

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SUBJECT: Background report for the December 17, 2020 Local Government Workshop on sea level rise adaptation planning

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I. BACKGORUND

The California Coastal Commission is holding a joint workshop with the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and the League of Cities on Thursday, December 17th to discuss sea level rise adaptation planning. This will be the fifth workshop held between the Coastal Commission and locally elected officials for the purpose of fostering coordination on a variety of issues through the LCP process. This workshop will be moderated by Caelan McGee, Senior Facilitator of Zephyr Collaboration.

This Background Report provides a brief summary of past local government public workshops, as well as a short overview of topics anticipated to be discussed at this year's Workshop, including the recently adopted [Joint Statement on Adaptation Planning](#) and next steps for advancing sea level rise adaptation.

A. Workshop History

The Commission has held four public workshops conducted with local coastal government officials to discuss topics related to the development of LCPs. These workshops recognize the importance of the Commission's partnership with local governments and the public in carrying out the Coastal Act through the LCP process. The first two workshops focused on improving communication and coordination between the Coastal Commission and local governments in an effort to improve the LCP planning process. The two subsequent workshops continued this conversation and included additional focus on special topics, notably including sea level rise planning. Below is a brief summary of each of the public workshops and some of the progress made as a result of those workshops.¹

2009 Local Government Workshop²

The first Coastal Commission and Local Government Workshop was held in August 2009 and focused on ways to improve the LCP planning process, including the need for improved coordination with the Commission. In particular, the workshop discussions centered on improving communication and collaboration between Commission staff and local governments; increasing local assistance by providing LCP training and guidance; and streamlining LCP actions and encouraging a more consistent and predictable process for LCP review. Discussions also noted the financial constraints on the Commission and local governments in implementing program enhancements to address these issues.

Notable actions and outcomes following the 2009 workshop included an increase in regular and early coordination between CCC staff and local governments, particular on

¹ For a more detailed summary of past workshops, see the [staff report](#) for the 2019 CCC and Local Government Public Workshop

² More information on the 2009 workshop can be found in the [staff report](#) for the workshop, the [recording](#) of the workshop, and the [follow-up report](#).

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priority issues; a focused effort to eliminate the backlog of pending LCP actions and to streamline LCP actions; acquisition of grant funding to continue the Commission's LCP Communication Initiative work and for CCC staff participation in the Local Government Working Group; and the completion of new or updated LCP assistance documents.

2012 Local Government Workshop³

The second public workshop was held in December 2012 and continued the dialogue on ways to renew and enhance the LCP planning process between the Commission and local coastal governments. Discussions focused on various elements of the LCP coordination process, including efficiency and general communication improvements. For example, some participants raised concerns about "scope creep" and ensuring that comments and recommended changes on priority issues are received early on in the coordination and LCP development process. Some discussion also addressed broader communication issues, including perceived inconsistencies in direction from Commission staff or prior decisions on other LCP amendments becoming precedent for future items without adequate communication and input from other local governments. Participants also recognized how uncertified or outdated LCPs might impact Commission staff workload and their review of LCP amendments.

Following the 2012 workshop, Commission staff continued its efforts to reduce the backlog of pending LCP actions, to decrease processing timelines for LCP actions, and to maintain and enhance regular and early coordination with local governments on priority issues, policy development, and procedural matters. Further, the Commission was able to award planning grants to local governments to update LCPs and to address sea level rise, and to hold additional workshops focused on priority Coastal Act topics such as agricultural resources, lower cost visitor serving accommodations, and sea level rise guidance. All of this work was supported by an increase in funding approved by the Legislature that allowed for hiring of additional Commission staff.

2015 Local Government Workshop⁴

The third public workshop was held in November 2015. The workshop continued the dialogue on improving the LCP process and included a focused session to discuss the Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance document that had been adopted a few months prior to the workshop.

Discussions during the first part of the workshop focused on the LCP planning process, highlighted the benefits of regular and early coordination to avoid last minute surprises and to respect the local public process by limiting suggested modifications; emphasized the need to bring other regulatory agencies, such as the State Water Resources Control Board and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, into the LCP process as early

³ More information on the 2012 workshop can be found in the [staff report](#) for the workshop, the workshop [recording](#), and the [follow-up report](#).

⁴ More information on the 2015 workshop can be found in the [staff report](#) for the workshop, the workshop [recording](#), and the [follow-up report](#).

as possible; and noted that incremental, phased approval and topical updates may be a favorable alternative to time consuming and expensive comprehensive updates. Participants also noted that greater access to certified LCP language could serve as guidance to those jurisdictions updating their LCPs.

The second portion of the workshop focused on sea level rise planning and gave participants an opportunity to discuss the recently adopted Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance. In addition to highlighting the vital role of coordination in sea level rise planning, participants raised the need for a multi-agency, regional approach to address sea level rise (as an alternative to individual project or LCP approaches); concerns related to salt water intrusion, risks to groundwater supplies, and the shifting Mean High Tide line; questions about armoring and existing development; and the need for additional guidance related to ports and harbors.

Key actions and outcomes following the 2015 workshop included a continuation of earlier efforts to maintain regular and early coordination with local governments; to prioritize working with local governments receiving LCP planning grants to update their LCPs and to address sea level rise; and to continue and enhance outreach and education related to sea level rise, including through development of additional materials and providing technical assistance.

2019 Local Government Workshop⁵

The fourth public workshop was held in July 2019. This workshop was split into three sessions, one each focused on short term rentals, sea level rise planning, and a continuation of past discussions related to LCP planning.

The first session related to short term rentals (STRs), a topic of growing concern given California's growing housing crisis, the rising cost of overnight accommodations along the coast, and the advent of online booking sites for short term rental of private properties. The discussion centered around the difficulty of how to balance the provision of overnight accommodations for coastal visitors with local housing needs, and how to appropriately address this issue within an LCP context in a way that reflects local conditions as well as statewide goals.

The second session continued the past dialogues on sea level rise adaptation planning. The discussion highlighted that much has been done related to assessing sea level rise vulnerabilities but that more work is needed to overcome challenges and to advance implementation of adaptation strategies and certification of LCP updates that address sea level rise. Participants highlighted the need for common communication and messaging that will help people understand sea level rise risks and adaptation opportunities; locally-relevant case studies, information, data, and so on that will help advance adaptation; continued research into legal concerns, particularly takings issues; understanding options for phased adaptation, including information on how to prioritize adaptation options and balance different trade-offs; and the need to ensure that

⁵ More information on the 2019 workshop can be found in the [staff report](#) for the workshop and the workshop [recording](#).

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underrepresented, vulnerable, and otherwise sensitive communities and populations are included in all sea level rise planning efforts.

The third session continued earlier discussions on the LCP planning and certification process. Participants celebrated the hard work that has been done in past years to improve the LCP planning process, highlighting the important role that improved coordination between Coastal Commission and local government staffs has played. Participants noted that areas for continued improvement include development of agreed upon best practices; reducing instances of inconsistent messages across Commission staff and last minute surprises about policy issues; and increasing predictability through continued coordination, guidance, and availability of easy to access certified LCP language.

A key achievement since the July 2019 workshop is the establishment of the Local Government Working Group. This working group includes members from CSAC, the League of Cities, the Coastal Commission, and Commission staff, and has been meeting regularly over the past year to continue focused discussions on sea level rise planning. Notably, this group developed a [Joint Statement on Adaptation Planning](#) that was adopted at last month's Commission Hearing. This Joint Statement includes a set of shared principles for how the Coastal Commission and local governments can move forward to address sea level rise through LCP policy development, adaptation planning, and project decision making. The Joint Statement also details three specific topic areas with opportunities for action over the short term to advance sea level rise adaptation planning, including establishing shared vision, scope, and time horizons associated with LCP updates; maintaining statewide consistency while flexibly addressing unique local issues; and evaluating coastal resource impacts now and in the future in light of sea level rise, and identifying viable mitigation sites to offset those impacts.

II. DISCUSSION: 2020 LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKSHOP

The 2020 Coastal Commission and Local Government Public Workshop will be held on December 17, 2020 and will bring together Coastal Commissioners and local officials from the League of Cities and the California State Association of Governments. This workshop will again focus on sea level rise planning issues and how to address sea level rise within an LCP context.⁶

The main goals for the 2020 workshop include to present the recently adopted Joint Statement on Adaptation Planning and to discuss next steps for sea level rise planning. In particular, the Local Government SLR Working Group is seeking to understand priorities for work efforts in 2021, including discussion on potential work products, deliverables, and other activities that will help to advance sea level rise adaptation planning.

⁶ Please see the 2020 CCC and Local Government Workshop [agenda](#) for additional information

Members of the public will have the opportunity to provide comments during the workshop⁷ and are also encouraged to provide comments via email to statewideplanning@coastal.ca.gov. All comments are welcome, though the Working Group is particularly interested in hearing about goals for sea level rise adaptation planning; examples of successful, locally-relevant adaptation planning or projects; and communities, information, or knowledge the Working Group should consult.

⁷ See the CCC hearing agenda [website](#) for information on submitting a speaker request