

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

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TO: Commissioners and Alternates

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SUBJECT: Comments from March 3, 2016 Rising Sea Level Workshop on Regional Resilience
(For Commission information only)

Workshop Issues and Discussion

The Commission held the second of a series of public workshops to be held throughout the year to discuss rising sea level in light of BCDC's current policy and planning framework and possible options and ideas for the future. This second public workshop, held on March 3, 2016, focused on regional issues and actions. The Commissioners, stakeholders, and members of the public gathered around eight tables and engaged in an exercise to identify the types of regional issues and regional actions that will be necessary to reduce vulnerability to rising sea levels. The tables each identified regional actions that would reduce local and regional vulnerabilities. The tables reported the following issues and actions:

Overarching Regional Issues

1. We need increased collaboration and cooperation with federal agencies
2. We need increased engagement by businesses and communities – could visualizations help engage the private sector and public (a picture is worth a thousand words)

Regional Actions

1. Assessments to Perform

- Economic analyses: what are assets worth, what actions should/can be taken to protect them, and how much will they cost?
- Vulnerability assessments of major infrastructure elements
- Regional system/network assessments to determine where resolving regional priority issues can identify/solve local issues
- Long-range transportation assessment/forecast to prioritize actions (e.g., rail and road networks)
- Better understand natural systems to know how best to use wetlands to reduce flooding

2. Funding

- Funding for infrastructure and other improvements should be made conditional on incorporating adaptation/resilience planning outcomes
- Develop pilot funding mechanisms
- Employ innovative financing mechanisms for operational shoreline adaptation units (e.g., Geological Hazard Abatement Districts) that incorporate shoreline adaptation plans

3. Data Gathering and Sharing

- Build local data and analyses up to regional level
- Identify and fund a regional public entity to be a “go-to” data repository

4. Plans and Policies

- Create a regional rising sea level adaptation plan – a framework – that has a clear implementation strategy, early actions, includes projects based on prototypes, and also includes future actions
- Change regulations to allow and/or mandate multi-benefit solutions
- Incorporate unincorporated areas
- Regional governance approach – should BCDC be a stronger go-to place for action?

5. Education

- Share information across the region
- Educate the public
- Educate those at the local level about how local actions have regional impacts
- Educate local communities about vulnerabilities and consequences across the region to make the case that taking actions elsewhere is beneficial to everyone

6. Physical Solutions

- Plan and build physical interventions on the shoreline and upland

7. Advocacy

- Create a regional coalition to change policies and increase funding
- Explore options to pool and share resources
- “Make gray cool” – develop better information about how to mix grey and green infrastructure and implement more pilot projects that mix them
- Protect the region’s economic assets as one of the most important priorities – need to ensure the economic sector is not disrupted so that communities are protected and quick to recover from any disturbance

Individuals at tables also made recommendations regarding implementation; below is a list of the implementation recommendations:

1. Regional advocacy is an important component to move actions along more quickly from the state to the local level
2. Regional role is crucial in building awareness and support for action
3. Create pilot funding solutions and start implementing projects while developing policy solutions
4. Use ecological boundaries to organize rather than existing governance structures
5. Help prioritize actions to improve the most vulnerable assets at the regional level to avoid pitting communities against each other for funding
6. Help ensure that projects will include benefits to the environment and the socially vulnerable
7. Identify what needs protection and what does not, and how to prioritize projects given limited funding
8. Leverage funding to help fund a blend of green and gray
9. Use Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts and similar measures to fund actions
10. Think regionally about the Bay's and creeks' ecological systems, sediment research, options for transition zones, and where there are opportunities to increase floodplains within the region
11. Perform "post-mortems" on projects to identify persistent issues and problems
12. Region should guide, lead, and coordinate work among all agencies and stakeholders
 - Guide local, federal and state agencies and jurisdictions
 - Lead – be brave and courageous, do something bold and think big
 - Coordinate between the agencies and stakeholders
13. Region's best role is to convene and lead (e.g., support coalition of local areas seeking funding)
14. Integrate resilience into ongoing activities and efforts, such as:
 - Economic development
 - Emergency preparedness and national security/safety
 - Goods movement/freight transportation
 - Water, sewer, electricity operations, maintenance, funding, etc.
15. Need students in the room and fellowships for students to get involved

Other comments during the meeting:

- Current regulatory and governance structures may not be able to deal with the challenges of rising sea level
- Different jurisdictions face different challenges at different time scales, which makes building momentum and coordination difficult
- Governance – do we have enough carrots and sticks to incentivize action?
- Plans and regulations need improvement, but we also may need new governance structures to address cross-jurisdictional issues
- Need more NGO participation, and public needs to be brought in
- Add environmental monitoring of tidal wetlands and tidal marsh recovery to all regional actions
- FEMA mapping changes everything and, if it is the driver, how should we think about long-term regional issues – a wakeup call for residents?
- Insurance industry is a crucial player
- San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority could provide funding for projects