

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

375 Beale Street, Suite 510, San Francisco, California 94105 tel 415 352 3600 fax 888 348 5190

State of California | Gavin Newsom – Governor | info@bcdc.ca.gov | www.bcdc.ca.gov

October 15, 2021

TO: Commissioners and Alternates

FROM: Lawrence J. Goldzband, Executive Director (415/352-3653; larry.goldzband@bcdc.ca.gov)
Jessica Fain, Director of Planning (415/352-3642; jessica.fain@bcdc.ca.gov)
Dana Brechwald, Adapting to Rising Tides Program Manager (415/352-3656; dana.brechwald@bcdc.ca.gov)

SUBJECT: Staff Recommendation on Possible Adoption of Bay Adapt: Regional Strategy for a Rising Bay
(For Commission consideration on October 21, 2021)

Summary

For the last two years, BCDC has led *Bay Adapt: Regional Strategy for a Rising Bay* — a voluntary, diverse, and collaborative regional initiative to develop a consensus-driven strategy to protect people and the built and natural environments from a rising Bay. The Bay Adapt Joint Platform (see Attachment A) lays out nine priority actions and 21 tasks that will enable the region to adapt faster, better, and more equitably to a rising Bay. Hundreds of local and regional leaders, community members, and technical experts were instrumental in shaping the Joint Platform. Staff recommend that the Commission adopt the following resolution:

1. The San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission adopts, supports, and champions the Bay Adapt Joint Platform, a regional strategy for a rising Bay, including the guiding principles, actions, and tasks contained within; and
2. The Commission will lead and support the implementation of Bay Adapt by serving as the “backbone” agency responsible for leading and managing the overall program, acting as the Lead or Co-Lead for key tasks, and participating in and advising numerous other tasks.

Background

Coastal adaptation to rising sea level is a state priority to avoid devastating impacts to people, the economy, and natural habitats. Despite having only one-third of the state’s coastline, two-thirds of California’s economic losses due to rising sea level are forecast to occur in the nine-county Bay Area, absent adaptation actions. The San Francisco Bay is a state-protected resource that is the largest estuary on the West Coast of North and South America, a key part of the Pacific Flyway for migrating waterfowl, and a critical economic driver of the State’s economy.

BCDC is a pioneer in the realm of sea level rise planning, both within the Bay Area and nationally. BCDC considered sea level rise in its coastal planning efforts as early as 1982. Over the past decade, the Commission’s rising sea level emphasis has expanded from being primarily



regulatory in nature to also leading and collaborating with diverse stakeholders to provide more direct adaptation services to communities, local governments, and the region. BCDC has earned the reputation of being a trusted partner in adaptation and a strategic convener and facilitator to catalyze local and regional action. Major milestones and accomplishments related to adapting to rising sea level include:

- In 2008, SB 2094 authorized BCDC to develop Bay Area regional strategies to address the impacts of rising sea level and other impacts of global climate change on the Bay and affected shoreline areas, in coordination with local governments, regional councils of governments, and other agencies and interested parties.
- In 2011, BCDC adopted the nation's first Climate Change policies into the San Francisco Bay Plan. These policies guide BCDC permitting, and also require BCDC to "formulate a regional sea level rise adaptation strategy for protecting critical developed shoreline areas and natural ecosystems, enhancing the resilience of Bay and shoreline systems and increasing their adaptive capacity" in collaboration with local, regional, and state agencies and the public.
- Concurrently, BCDC launched its award-winning Adapting to Rising Tides Program that continues to work with local jurisdictions around the Bay to develop multi-sector, cross-jurisdictional projects to understand what is at risk and assess adaption responses.
- In 2016, following a series of public workshops on rising sea level, the Commission adopted a set of sea level rise policy recommendations, including the need to develop a regional sea level rise adaptation plan (the genesis of Bay Adapt), to modify a series of other BCDC policies, and to create several public-facing Commissioner Working Groups on various rising sea level issues.
- In 2019, following robust public and Commissioner engagement, the Commission adopted two groundbreaking Bay Plan policy changes that (1) enable larger amounts of Bay fill to be placed in the Bay to protect and enhance natural habitat and (2) create policies to promote and enforce environmental justice and social equity. Others are planned over the next few years.
- BCDC is also a founding member of the San Francisco Bay Restoration Regulatory Integration Team (BRRIT), a multi-agency permitting team that collaborates to reduce permitting times for nature-based projects and advances the California Natural Resources Agency's Cutting Green Tape initiative within the Bay Area region.
- In 2020, the Adapting to Rising Tides Program, with MTC/ABAG and BARC, released *Adapting to Rising Tides Bay Area* – the first major comprehensive analysis of the risks and consequences facing the Bay Area's transportation network, people, built environment, and natural areas due to projected sea level rise.

With the assistance and influence of BCDC, significant progress has been made in the Bay Area by cities and counties to plan for a changing shoreline and establish shoreline ecosystem restoration and other flood protection projects. Yet many of the adaptation plans and projects already occurring within the Bay Area are disconnected and disjointed. Absent regional collaboration and a shared vision, we risk: disproportionate impacts to less affluent,

disadvantaged communities; a patchwork of protective actions with varying levels of protection; inconsistent interpretation and application of the best statewide science; competition, not collaboration, for limited funding; near-term loss of wetlands; and, no way to measure collective progress.

To protect people, property, and habitat and prevent this “tragedy of the commons,” BCDC created and has dedicated the last two years to leading Bay Adapt — a voluntary, diverse, and collaborative regional initiative to develop a consensus-driven strategy to protect people and the built and natural environments from a rising Bay. The Bay Adapt Joint Platform (see Attachment A) lays out guiding principles, nine priority actions, and 21 tasks whose implementation will enable the region to adapt faster, better, and more equitably to a rising Bay. A Leadership Advisory Group (LAG) of 35 executive-level leaders from the Bay Area’s public, private, and non-profit sectors met on ten occasions and guided the effort. Hundreds of local and regional leaders, community members, and technical experts were instrumental in shaping the Joint Platform via working groups, focus groups, and outreach presentations around the region. Two Public Forums were held on April 16, 2020, and August 25, 2021, with nearly 200 attendees at each event. Over 130 survey responses and individual comments were collected during a public feedback period between August 25 and September 24, 2021. (See Attachment B: Public Comment Log.)

Together, fulfilling the Joint Platform will:

- Reduce flood risks for communities, businesses, infrastructure, and habitats.
- Protect natural areas and wildlife.
- Integrate adaptation into community-focused local plans.
- Recognize and equitably support low-income communities.
- Accelerate permitting and project construction.
- Increase technical assistance for local governments.
- Develop and implement a funding strategy to help pay for what is necessary.

On September 16, 2021, the Bay Area Regional Collaborative (BARC) Governing Board — comprised of representatives from MTC, ABAG, BCDC, and the Air Quality Management District — unanimously approved two Joint Resolutions. The first, on Climate Change, committed its member agencies, with BARC staff, to develop a Shared Work Plan to advance a far more coordinated implementation schedule of the agencies’ highest-priority actions related to climate change. The second endorsed the Bay Adapt Joint Platform, per se, and included its implementation through the Shared Work Plan. On October 12, 2021, the LAG agreed to support, foster, and take part in its implementation. By adopting Bay Adapt, the Commission signals its support of this collaboration and its continued leadership on this critical regional issue.

Implementing Bay Adapt will require the work of many agencies and groups — it is larger than any single agency. Bay Adapt’s diverse leadership has made it clear that it requires a “backbone agency” to support, guide, and implement the incredibly wide variety of organizations and individuals that will be involved with implementing the Joint Platform — and that BCDC is best suited to serve this critical role. Therefore, the staff believes that BCDC should continue to serve as the “backbone agency” for the Bay Adapt implementation, continue to convene the Leadership Advisory Group, track accomplishments and successes, and serve as a general

project manager. Additionally, BCDC should take on a leadership role for many tasks outlined in the Joint Platform, along with participating and advising on others. An initial description of these tasks is included in the Implementation Chart included in the Joint Platform report. The staff looks forward to discussing a more specific work plan with the Commission at a future meeting. BCDC is actively seeking funding to increase its staffing levels to perform these functions.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend that the Commission adopt the following resolution:

1. The San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission adopts, supports, and champions the Bay Adapt Joint Platform, a regional strategy for a rising Bay, including the guiding principles, actions, and tasks contained within; and
2. The Commission will lead and support the implementation of Bay Adapt by serving as the “backbone” agency responsible for leading and managing the overall program, acting as the Lead or Co-Lead for key tasks, and participating in and advising numerous other tasks.