

# 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](mailto:info@bcdc.ca.gov) | [www.bcdc.ca.gov](http://www.bcdc.ca.gov)

June 12, 2024

**TO:** Engineering Criteria Review Board Members

**FROM:** Lawrence Goldzband, Executive Director (415/352-3653; [larry.goldzband@bcdc.ca.gov](mailto:larry.goldzband@bcdc.ca.gov))  
Jenn Hyman, Senior Engineer (415/352-3670; [jennifer.hyman@bcdc.ca.gov](mailto:jennifer.hyman@bcdc.ca.gov))

**SUBJECT: Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan Draft Guidelines**  
(For Engineering Criteria Review Board consideration June 26, 2024)

## Project Summary

### Project Representatives

Dana Brechwald, Assistant Planning Director for Climate Adaptation, Jaclyn Perrin-Martinez, Senior Climate Adaptation Planner.

### Project 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 the Americas, a key part of the Pacific Flyway for migrating waterfowl, and a critical economic driver of the State's economy.

With the assistance and leadership 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.

BCDC created and continues to lead Bay Adapt — a collaborative regional planning program to develop a consensus-driven strategy to protect people and the built and natural environments from a rising Bay. The Bay Adapt Joint Platform lays out guiding principles, priority actions, and tasks whose implementation will enable the region to adapt faster, better, and more equitably to a rising Bay.

The Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan (RSAP) is one of the initiatives coming out of Bay Adapt with the aim of implementing multiple tasks in the Joint Platform. The RSAP consists of a) a One Bay Vision for what successful shoreline adaptation will include to ensure long-term equity, protection, and prosperity, informing specific priorities, guidelines, and standards, b) Strategic Regional Priorities that identify key adaptation opportunity areas and projects throughout the Bay Area using the One Bay Vision to guide priority criteria and direct jurisdictions to consider regional priorities within their



Subregional Shoreline Resiliency Plans, c) guidelines that lay out consistent regional standards and practices for Subregional Shoreline Resiliency Plans and projects (guidelines), and d) an Online Mapping Platform that will provide data, guidance, and region-wide analysis to help support local jurisdictions in creating Subregional Resiliency Plans (Mapping Platform).

The RSAP describes the vision, goals and local guidelines for how the 46 cities and nine counties surrounding San Francisco Bay can collectively plan for this unprecedented challenge. The guidelines will be used by local jurisdictions for developing Subregional Shoreline Resiliency Plans that effectively address local and regional sea level rise-related flood risks.

### **Senate Bill (SB) 272: Sea level Rise Planning and Adaptation**

Senate Bill (SB) 272 (Laird 2023): Sea level Rise Planning and Adaptation now requires all local governments in the State's coastal zone to address sea level rise (SLR) through Local Coastal Programs or San Francisco Bay Shoreline Resiliency Plans by January 1, 2034. Jurisdictions that complete this requirement will be prioritized for state funding. Vulnerability assessments and adaptation plans will be based on best available science, cover specified priorities, and will get updated on a timeline agreed upon by the local governments and the Coastal Commission or BCDC. The measure also requires the Commission and BCDC to collaborate with the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) and the Sea Level Rise State and Regional Support Collaborative on the establishment of guidelines to assist local governments in this work by December 31, 2024.

Implementing SB 272 in the San Francisco Bay will require a new era of regional and local collaboration to protect and enhance San Francisco Bay for this and future generations from rising sea level. To ensure that people, infrastructure, and habitat are protected, Bay-wide and local plans must work in coordination with one another to provide large-scale regional protection and avoid conflict among jurisdictions. Local plans must embed social equity and environmental justice, prioritize and protect the natural environment, be developed with both local and regional priorities, be action-oriented and implementable, and meet State policy and standards.

The RSAP is BCDC's answer to fulfill the requirements of SB 272. Staff is on track to complete the guidelines and seek Commission approval by the end of 2024. Since the Subregional Shoreline Resiliency Plans are new and have never been developed by local governments, BCDC staff anticipates that staff will need to work closely with local governments to ensure that the guidelines are applied consistently and that local governments have the capacity, data, and resources they need to interpret the guidelines. Staff also anticipate learning from local governments how effective the guidelines are, which can inform how the guidelines are updated in the future.

### **Review by the Board**

Last July, the Design and Engineering Criteria Review Boards received a briefing on Bay Adapt, the Joint Platform, and an early discussion of the RSAP. The Boards were generally supportive of reimagining the role of BCDC in the region, and commending the ambition in step up and take a leadership role. The Boards expressed favor for continuing to engage in regular meetings to provide input and guidance.

Staff have been drafting the One Bay Vision and initial guidelines guided by input from Commissioner and local elected working groups, community groups, and public engagement. The RSAP is now in the process of developing the guidance for writing and implementing the Subregional Shoreline Resiliency Plans.

With this review, staff are seeking feedback from the ECRB primarily on the Minimum Standards and Recommendations section of the internal draft guidelines, which starts on page 42 and ends on page 65. This section contains minimum technical requirements for the sea level rise vulnerability assessment and development of adaptation alternatives. Subsections in this section include “Coastal and Flood Hazard Standards”, “Time Horizons and Hazard Scenario Standards”, and “Vulnerability Assessment Standards”. The ECRB will have another opportunity to review an updated version of the guidelines, at a workshop in July. The guidelines will be made available as a final draft for public review and comment in September 2024.

### Board Questions

Staff requests the Board frame its remarks on the proposed planning guidance with regard to professional practice in implementing the proposed requirements and recommendations, the Board’s experience in preparing technical documents for local cities and counties, and in consideration of the areas of practice of the Board, including coastal engineering, geotechnical engineering, structural engineering, and engineering geology.

Staff has the following specific questions for the Board’s consideration:

1. Are the technical standards for assessing SLR impacts and adaptations appropriate?
2. Are there any components of the guidelines that are missing or that are too burdensome?
3. Are we asking cities and counties to consider the right questions when identifying adaptation strategies?
4. How should cities and counties evaluate strategies to come up with preferred alternatives?
5. How detailed should adaptation strategies be in this plan, and what are the key pieces of information municipalities need to identify to get to implementation?