

STAFF REPORT

76

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J. Lucchesi

CONSIDER ADOPTING “MAKING CALIFORNIA’S COAST RESILIENT TO SEA LEVEL RISE: PRINCIPLES FOR ALIGNED STATE ACTION”

INTRODUCTION:

California is taking bold action to protect and adapt the coast in the face of sea-level rise and other coastal climate change impacts. Recently, the California Secretary for Natural Resources convened state entities with coastal, bay, and shoreline climate resilience responsibilities, including the Commission, to develop “Making California’s Coast Resilient to Sea Level Rise: Principles for Aligned State Action” (Exhibit A; Principles). These Principles will be implemented across agencies so that all the distinct management and regulatory activities of the state are guided by a common, clear, and fundamental vision. The Principles are necessary for consistent, efficient decision-making processes and actions coastwide—improving collaboration across state, local, tribal, and federal partners. By enhancing alignment and partnerships, California will be able to improve resiliency of our coast, bays, shorelines, and communities, particularly frontline communities most vulnerable to sea-level rise. The Principles describe unified, effective action toward sea-level rise resilience around best available science, partnerships, alignment, communications, local support, and coastal resilience projects.

SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES:

There are six key principles that will guide unified, effective action to build sea-level rise resilience California’s coastal communities, ecosystems, and economies.

- 1) Develop and Utilize Best Available Science
 - Apply best available science to planning, decision-making, project design, and implementation
 - Utilize a minimum of 3.5 feet of sea-level rise by 2050 for planning purposes as a precaution, and more protective targets for 2050/2100 for critical infrastructure
- 2) Build Coastal Resilience Partnerships
 - Work to connect all levels of government, the public, non-profits, businesses and other stakeholders

STAFF REPORT NO. 76 (CONT'D)

- Coordinate and collaborate on sea-level rise resilience issues, policies, planning, processes, mandates, permitting, information, funding, and projects
- 3) Improve Coastal Resilience Communications
 - Align sea-level rise messaging and implement a coordinated public awareness and education campaign
- 4) Support Local Leadership and Address Local Conditions
 - Support local planning and adaptation efforts
 - Prioritize early protection of and capacity building for under-resourced and frontline communities
- 5) Strengthen Alignment Around Coastal Resilience
 - Develop administration-wide sea-level rise assumptions, projections, targets, terms, and standards
- 6) Implement and Learn from Coastal Resilience Projects
 - Protect and enhance public trust natural and cultural resources and critical water-dependent infrastructure
 - Restoration and adaptation are critical to building coastal resilience and therefore it is necessary to prioritize nature-based adaptation measures and multi-benefit coastal resilience projects where appropriate and feasible
 - Streamline permitting for high need coastal restoration projects

The Principles were developed under the guidance of Secretary Crowfoot, California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), and Secretary Blumenfeld, CalEPA, with participation of the executive leadership from CNRA, CalEPA, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission, California Coastal Commission, California Energy Commission, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Caltrans, the Delta Stewardship Council, the Department of Water Resources, the Ocean Protection Council, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, the Office of Emergency Services, State Coastal Conservancy, this Commission, State Parks, State Water Resources Control Board, and the Strategic Growth Council. For the complete Principles, please see Exhibit A.

DISCUSSION:

These Principles for aligned state action are guideposts for the Commission as it works with other government agencies, lessees, trustees of granted lands, and the public to address sea-level rise. Many elements of the Principles are already familiar practices and closely adhere to the Commission's own Strategic Plan. For example, the Commission has long been committed to using the best available science to inform critical decisions related to leasing and evaluating impacts to Public Trust lands and resources. Staff regularly participate in learning sessions and trainings to understand the latest scientific research and how to use the best visualization and mapping tools of future sea level conditions. The

STAFF REPORT NO. 76 (CONT'D)

Commission and its staff also continue to build relationships with other state agencies and with trustees of legislatively granted state lands to prepare for sea-level rise and other coastal climate change impacts. Through membership on various state interagency teams such as the State Coastal Leadership Group on Sea-Level Rise and the Safeguarding California Climate Action Team, Commission staff play an integral part in developing and enacting policies for sea-level rise and climate change planning and adaptation. In these collaborative groups, Commission staff frequently highlights the needs and strengths of its local partners, including the state's ports, harbors, and working waterfronts that are so critical to the blue economy and the entire statewide economy.

The AB 691 project is another example of how the Commission works effectively with partners at the local level. AB 691 (Muratsuchi, 2013) required certain local jurisdictions with granted management authority of state lands to assess sea-level rise vulnerability and propose adaptation strategies for the protection and adaptation of Public Trust lands, resources, assets, and values. Commission staff is now reviewing and synthesizing the assessments for the purpose of making recommendations to the state to strategically and effectively support the implementation of local adaptation plans. The Principles reinforce ongoing efforts like these, while providing a path forward to achieve much more together in the future than any single agency or entity could on its own.

The state of California is at a critical juncture for planning and adapting to sea-level rise and other impacts to the coast. The stronger our coordination and collaboration, the greater success we will have in safeguarding our coastal Public Trust lands, resources, assets, and values. Threaded throughout the Principles for aligned state action are themes of communication, equity, public engagement, and informed decision-making rooted in sound science and infused with precaution. These are essential components to ensure success is widespread and not limited to the powerful and the wealthy. Through implementation of these Principles, the state embraces planning, preparation, and thoughtful adaptation as central processes for building coastal resiliency and avoiding catastrophic loss. Staff recommends that the Commission adopt the Principles for the benefit of all state lands, resources, values, and assets, as well as the public.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

1. Adopting the Principles is consistent with Strategy 1.1 of the Commission's [Strategic Plan](#) to deliver the highest levels of public health and safety in the protection, preservation, and responsible economic use of the lands and resources under the Commission's jurisdiction; Strategy 1.4, to incorporate strategies to address climate change, adapt to sea-level rise, incentivize water conservation, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the generation of litter and marine debris into all the

STAFF REPORT NO. 76 (CONT'D)

Commission's planning processes, project analyses and decisions; Strategy 1.4.1, to provide applicants and grantees with the best available science on the impacts of climate change, sea-level rise, and adaptation strategies; Strategy 1.4.2, to coordinate with lessees, grantees and agency partners to implement actions, and where appropriate require lessees, to address impacts of climate change, adapt to sea-level rise, promote and incentivize water conservation, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce generation of marine debris and litter; and Strategy 1.4.3, to adopt flexible, adaptive approaches to address sea-level rise that protect vulnerable populations and give priority to natural infrastructure solutions consistent with the public's trust needs and the State's climate change adaptation strategy "Safeguarding California" and Executive Order B-30-15 on climate adaptation.

2. Adopting the Principles is consistent with Goal 10 of the Commission's [Environmental Justice Policy](#) to advance climate equity and Goal 11 to increase public participation.
3. Adopting the Principles is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act because it is an administrative action that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

Authority: Public Resources Code section 21065 and California Code of Regulations, title 14, sections 15378, subdivision (b)(5).

EXHIBIT:

- A. "Making California's Coast Resilient to Sea Level Rise: Principles for Aligned State Action"

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

It is recommended that the Commission:

AUTHORIZATION:

Adopt "Making California's Coast Resilient to Sea Level Rise: Principles for Aligned State Action" in substantially the form attached as Exhibit A.

Making California's Coast Resilient to Sea Level Rise: Principles for Aligned State Action

Background

- California's coast, bays, estuaries, and ocean are critical to the state's environmental and economic security, integral to our quality of life, and an iconic part of the state's legacy. Each generation of Californians has an obligation to be strong stewards of the coast and ocean for future generations.
- However, Californians' safety, local and state economies, critical infrastructure, and natural resources face increasing threats from SLR. Every scientific assessment since California's 2009 Climate Adaptation Strategy has revealed that coastal impacts from climate change-caused sea level rise (SLR) will occur more quickly and be more severe than previously projected. **California's coast faces a significant risk of experiencing SLR of up to 1.0 feet by 2030 and 7.6 feet by 2100.**
- Warming temperatures and a higher frequency of extreme weather, in conjunction with high tide events, have already resulted in SLR impacts at Imperial Beach, Seal Beach, Del Mar, Pacifica, Arcata, areas along San Francisco Bay, and elsewhere.
- Projections of future SLR point to **significant impacts to California communities**, with considerable environmental justice implications, upwards of hundreds of billions of dollars in impacts to property and development, impacts to statewide and regional water supplies, as well as significant damage to and loss of many miles of beaches, tidepools, coastal rivers, estuaries, and wetlands.
- To improve effectiveness in addressing this immediate challenge, state and regional agencies co-developed and endorsed the following Principles for Aligned State Action.

Photo: Embarcadero, San Francisco, "King Tides," Mike Filippoff



Goal

- As California has repeatedly demonstrated, **a bold, statewide climate agenda benefits our natural resources, health and safety, economy, critical infrastructure, and communities.** Our state has led global efforts on climate change mitigation and is poised to do so on climate change adaptation.
- These Principles will enable California to scale up its coastal resiliency efforts through aligned strategies that create consistent, efficient decision-making processes and actions coastwide and improve collaboration across state, local, tribal, and federal partners.
- **Action now saves up to six times the cost of action later,** allows time for the state and communities to test and leverage needed solutions, and prevents untold impacts.
- **By enhancing alignment and partnerships now, we will significantly improve the climate resiliency of our coast, bays, shorelines, and communities,** particularly frontline communities most vulnerable to the impacts of SLR.

California state agencies with coastal, bay, and shoreline climate resilience responsibilities, including for coastal infrastructure and Californians' safety, endorse the following Principles around **Best Available Science, Partnerships, Alignment, Communications, Local Support, and Coastal Resilience Projects.** These Principles will guide unified, effective action toward SLR resilience for California's coastal communities, ecosystems, and economies.



Photo: Coastal Commission King Tides Project 2019

Principles

1. Develop and Utilize Best Available Science

- Apply best available science to planning, decision-making, project design, and implementation. Prioritize frequent engagement with stakeholders to ensure the science is actionable.
- Utilize SLR targets based on the best available science and a minimum of 3.5 feet of SLR by 2050. Develop and utilize more protective baseline 2050 and 2100 targets for road, rail, port, power plants, water and waste systems, and other critical infrastructure.

2. Build Coastal Resilience Partnerships

- Partner and coordinate regularly on SLR resilience issues, policies, planning, processes, mandates, permitting, information, funding, and projects, including with federal and local government bodies and tribes, and across issue areas and mandates.
- Regularly and collaboratively collect, share, and publicize the latest information on SLR and how agencies are using SLR projections to reduce risks to safety, property, infrastructure, natural ecosystems, and native species.
- Build strong relationships with all partners at all levels of government, and with the public, nonprofits, businesses, and other stakeholders.
- Consult, learn from, and coordinate and partner with tribes to ensure inclusive and multicultural stewardship of lands and waters subject to SLR.



Photo: Coyote Creek Flood, San Jose, Santa Clara Valley Water District

3. Improve Coastal Resilience Communications

- Enhance SLR and coastal resilience communications and engagement, including alignment on SLR messaging and implementation of a coordinated public awareness and education campaign.
- Increase transparency, efficiency, and alignment of state and local coastal resilience processes, policymaking, and decision-making.

4. Support Local Leadership and Address Local Conditions

- Support local planning and adaptation policies and projects that address local and regional conditions, meet baseline standards for climate impacts, and consider acute increases in SLR caused by storm surges, El Niños, and other events.
- Evaluate and learn from local conditions, including community priorities, health and safety, critical infrastructure, housing, culture, economies, patterns of development, local environment, and other characteristics, to inform risk tolerance and adaptation.
- Particularly in light of the fact that the environmental burdens of development and industry are often borne by under-resourced communities, prioritize early protection of and capacity building for the most under-resourced and vulnerable frontline communities in developing and implementing adaptation plans, projects, and strategies, toward greater social equity and environmental justice.

Photo: Rockaway Beach, Pacifica, "King Tides," Alan Grinberg



5. Strengthen Alignment around Coastal Resilience

- Develop and apply baseline, Administration-wide SLR assumptions, projections, targets, terms, and standards into coastal projects, retrofits, planning, funding, regulatory, and permitting initiatives. Consider statewide decision-making guidelines to help identify the strongest solutions, establish priorities, and ensure baseline success. Prioritize avoidance of initiatives that shift hazards and impacts elsewhere along the coast or shoreline.
- Ensure that up-to-date SLR resilience planning is in place coastwide and includes alignment on: consistent, minimum baseline targets; vulnerability assessments for communities (particularly frontline communities), infrastructure, property, and natural ecosystems and native species; SLR economic impact assessments, including the cost of resiliency projects and the potential cost of no action; and identification of multi-benefit SLR resiliency strategies.
- Plan for SLR impacts to regional and statewide water supplies and water management.
- Collaboratively work to pursue and develop specific funding sources for state, regional, and local coastal resilience planning, projects, and public outreach.
- Where possible, avoid creating unnecessary duplication of existing state agency authority.

6. Implement and Learn from Coastal Resilience Projects

- Protect and enhance public trust natural and cultural resources, such as beaches, wetlands, other habitats, biodiversity, and culturally important areas.
- Protect critical public water-dependent infrastructure, ports, harbor districts, and other evolving public trust needs and uses, given the unique characteristics, significance, constraints, and values of these public trust uses.
- Prioritize the use of nature-based adaptation measures where appropriate.
- Build coastal resilience by increasing the number of restoration and adaptation projects, such as wetland restoration; ensure that adaptation projects do not shift hazards and impacts elsewhere along the coast or shoreline.
- Streamline permitting for high-need coastal restoration projects.
- Realize multiple benefits from coastal resilience projects where feasible.
- Take action to prevent impacts from SLR to public access as feasible, toward the continued protection and enhancement of public coastal access for all.



Photo: Dune Restoration, Cardiff State Beach, NOAA

Endorsing and Participating Entities

In early 2020 Secretary Crowfoot, CNRA and Secretary Blumenfeld, CalEPA convened two high-level meetings of 17 state agencies (listed below under Participating Entities) to develop and approve Sea Level Rise Principles for use in planning, policy setting, project development, and decision making. The Principles have been endorsed by both CNRA and CalEPA secretaries and all departments within these agencies. The Principles are a living document, and formal endorsement of the Principles from other agencies will be added as received.

Endorsing Entities

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), and CNRA Agencies
Jared Blumenfeld, Secretary, California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), and CalEPA Agencies
Betty Yee, State Controller

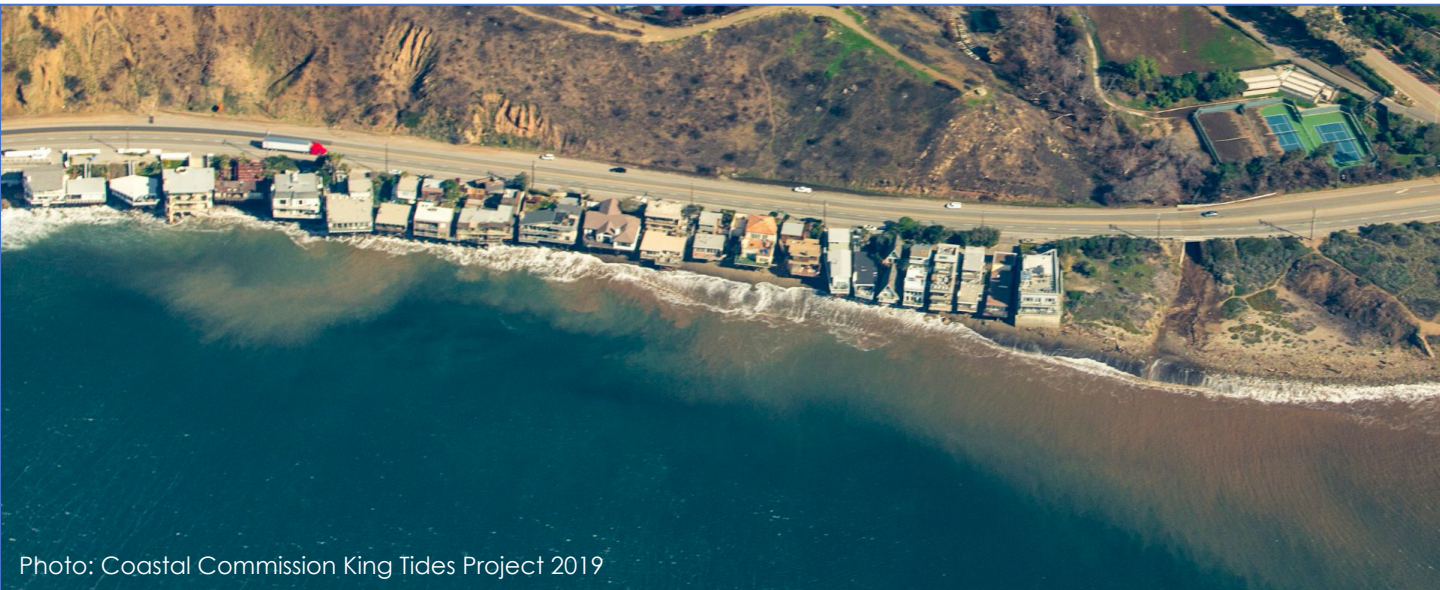


Photo: Coastal Commission King Tides Project 2019

Participating Entities

CNRA
CalEPA
SF Bay Conservation & Development Commission
California Coastal Commission
California Energy Commission
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Caltrans
Delta Stewardship Council

Department of Water Resources
Ocean Protection Council
Governor's Office of Planning and Research
Office of Emergency Services
State Coastal Conservancy
State Lands Commission
State Parks
State Water Resources Control Board
Strategic Growth Council