

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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TO: Commissioners and Alternates
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SUBJECT: Briefing on the Adapting to Rising Tides Project
(For Commission information only)

Staff Summary

The Adapting to Rising Tides project is a multi-year climate adaptation project being led by BCDC, supported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coastal Services Center (NOAA CSC), in close partnership with agencies and organizations in Alameda County. The project is assessing vulnerability and risk to a number of assets (including Oakland International Airport, ground transportation, park and recreation facilities) from sea level rise and storm events within a subregion of the Bay Area from Emeryville to Union City, and will use the vulnerability assessment to develop adaptation strategies that will increase the resilience in the project area.

Staff Report

The Adapting to Rising Tides (ART) project is a collaborative effort being led by BCDC in partnership with NOAA CSC to work closely with local jurisdictions to assist in identifying potential vulnerabilities to sea level rise and storms, and developing adaptation strategies to respond to those vulnerabilities. The project has received funding and support from NOAA CSC, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) and has built a partnership with the cities and agencies within the project area, including Alameda County Flood Control, the East Bay Regional Park District, the Port of Oakland, the Hayward Area Recreation District and Caltrans. The project was initiated as a pilot in October 2010 with the goal to increase the preparedness and resilience of Bay Area communities to sea level rise and other climate change impacts while protecting ecosystem services. The project area, which extends from Emeryville to Union City in Alameda County, was selected based on local interest in participating, the presence of a diversity of land uses and the presence of significant transportation infrastructure.

The ART project is designed as a partnership between the project management team, which includes BCDC and NOAA, and representatives of the local jurisdictions, agencies and organizations within the project area. While much of the work is conducted by BCDC staff, the working group and subcommittees determine the direction of the project and provide data, judgment and feedback during the key steps of the project. Interaction between the project management team and the ART working group and subcommittee members occurs in a variety of



Making San Francisco Bay Better

ways from telephone conversations, interviews, surveys, small meetings, working group meetings, subcommittee meetings and review of documents, graphics and maps. In collaborating with the ART working group members, BCDC staff has gained an understanding of the perspectives, expertise, available data and concerns of the agencies and organizations within the project area and it has strengthened both the project and the relationships.

The ART project was conceived, in part, as a pilot project to evaluate the appropriate geographic scale at which to conduct the different phases of the adaptation planning process. While working on the ART project, project staff are considering the question of geographic scale and posing this question to the working group members. The project team, with assistance and input from the working group, has been identifying the benefits and constraints of working at different scales (neighborhood, City-wide, County-wide, etc.) at the different steps of the project. This information can be used to inform the Regional Adaptation Strategy, which the Joint Policy Committee agreed to take a leadership role in developing at its September 21, 2012 meeting.

In previous Commission briefings, staff provided the Commission with an overview of the process being used to assess vulnerability and risk. As a reminder, the process is adapted from the adaptation planning model developed by ICLEI. The first phase of the project—scoping and organizing—included convening a working group of local jurisdictions and agency staff, convening a technical subcommittee and a communications subcommittee, defining the climate impacts to be evaluated, identifying the sectors to be included in the analysis and developing new sea level rise and storm event maps for the project area. During this phase, BCDC, working in partnership with MTC and Caltrans developed a vulnerability assessment for the transportation sector.

The next phase of the project—assessing vulnerability and risk—included the completion of an Existing Conditions Report, a white paper on equity issues related to climate impacts, a desktop analysis and a survey administered to agency staff to assess vulnerability and risk of 12 sectors, and a Vulnerability and Risk Assessment Report. The project is currently moving into the last step of the assessment phase, which is prioritizing the planning issues identified by the assessment of vulnerability and risk. This prioritization will begin at the October 10th working group meeting and will provide the direction for phase three of the project—planning adaptation strategies for the prioritized planning issues.

At the last Commission briefing in April 2012, staff reported that the project team was completing a draft of the vulnerability and risk assessment for the asset categories within the project area and would be holding the next working group meeting in June to present the findings from the assessment and propose an approach to the adaptation phase of the project that will begin in September 2012. The vulnerability and risk assessment has been completed and with the help of the ART working group and communications subcommittee, staff has identified an approach to moving into the adaptation phase of the project. Since the April meeting, staff has completed the following tasks:

- Held several working group and subcommittee meetings to determine next steps on planning issue prioritization and approaches to adaptation and to begin to discuss governance issues;
- Administered a survey to ART working group members and other agency staff and the equity community to obtain the best professional judgment on vulnerability and risk, including sensitivity and adaptive capacity;
- Worked with new NOAA Coastal Fellow to develop a work plan focusing on adaptation strategies for park and recreation assets;
- Completed a report entitled *Addressing Social Vulnerability and Equity in Climate Change Adaptation Planning*;
- Completed a Draft *Vulnerability and Risk Assessment Report* for all asset categories within the project area;

- Reviewed, revised and finalized a report by the Pacific Institute on social vulnerability and demographics entitled *Adapting to Rising Tides: Vulnerability to Sea Level Rise in Selected Communities in the San Francisco Bay Region*; and
- Reviewed and finalized a tool developed by ERG Consulting to conduct an economic analysis of park and recreation assets within the project area.

Over the next four to six months, ART project staff will convene several working group meetings to develop adaptation strategies based on the planning priorities identified at the October 10, 2012 meeting. For more information about the project, please visit the ART project website at <http://www.adaptingtorisingtides.org>. The website, which was recently updated, contains future meeting dates, fact sheets, completed materials and other project information.