



San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

Strategic Plan Update

2017-2020

Strategies for an Evolving Bay

There may not be a decade in the history of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) that has required us to more fully examine our strategy and operations than this past decade. In the early 2000's, emerging science indicated that climate change would have a serious impact on coastal resources and development in and around San Francisco Bay. In response, the Commission published its first rising sea level inundation maps and developed climate change policies. Today, we know that the Bay is expanding more quickly than expected and that the pace of this expansion will increase in the coming years. We are beginning to understand how rising sea level will put both natural resources and shoreline development at risk, and we are pursuing and emphasizing collaborative adaptation planning to make the Bay's shoreline, and all the communities that depend on it, more resilient.

Established in 1965, BCDC was charged with stopping unrestricted fill from degrading the San Francisco Bay, the largest estuary on the West Coast. At that time, vast swaths of the shoreline were inaccessible to the public, making it almost impossible to enjoy the Bay from its shoreline. After several years of regulatory and planning success, BCDC emerged as a leader in coastal management. As a result, the Bay is larger and healthier, the Suisun Marsh is protected, fill has been minimized, hundreds of miles of public access have been opened, and responsible development in and around the Bay is flourishing.

Although the Great Recession in the late 2000s severely hampered our agency's operations and exacerbated human resources problems, today, the Bay Area is experiencing a significant economic boom that continues to attract people to the region. That growth, however, puts pressure on Bay resources and tests the historic flexibility of our regulatory framework and operational capacity. To meet these challenges, coupled with the implementation of regional Measure AA adopted in 2016 that funds habitat restoration, BCDC must adapt its operations to the Bay Area's changing circumstances and grow to meet them successfully.

Concurrently, concerns about the Bay Area's ability to govern itself regionally in light of these and other challenges, such as the need to develop affordable housing and improve our transportation infrastructure, reveal possible impediments to progress on all fronts.



Strategic Plan Update Process

In BCDC's 2013 Strategic Plan, we created a strategic approach to making policy decisions that anticipated these and other challenges. Commissioners, staff, and the public worked together through several months of introductions and problem solving to forge a new way for us to prioritize our work. The 2013 Plan succeeded on several fronts. Most important, it:

- Led to Commission approval of a wide variety of large and small development projects, both natural and man-made;
- Drove the implementation of the Adapting to Rising Tides Program with our regional partners and helped BCDC lead the Bay Area's response to rising sea level;
- Developed our first data-driven enforcement strategy and enabled BCDC to resolve several longstanding enforcement cases;
- Creatively encouraged the beneficial reuse of dredged sediment in conjunction with a wide variety of partners; and
- Supported advocacy for an increase in our base funding that has stimulated the hiring of many new, highly qualified staff.

This 2017-2020 BCDC Strategic Plan Update is based, in large part, on policy discussions among Commissioners, staff, and the public who have participated in working groups and workshops, and on discussions within the Commission, *per se*, as well as on the eight rising sea level policy recommendations approved by the Commission in October 2016 (Attachment A). It concentrates on what is new and what is difficult, while at the same time acknowledging what we are already doing well. The revised Strategic Plan focuses on three specific issues:

- Continually improving our strategic daily work;
- Leading the Bay Area's efforts to increase its resilience in the face of rising sea level; and
- Bettering our organizational health and expanding our staff to meet and conquer these challenges head on.

The 2017-2020 BCDC Strategic Plan Update differs from the prior plan in other ways as well. It is more detailed and will be implemented differently than the prior plan. In particular, it will be accompanied by a comprehensive work plan that will be referenced systematically throughout its life.

The Commission cannot fulfill its statutory responsibility to lead the Bay Area's response to rising sea level with our current level of resources and existing technologies. The success of this 2017-2020 BCDC Strategic Plan will depend on acquiring additional resources and expanded



staff capacity. This requirement is made clear through the adoption of the Plan’s third goal to improve our organizational health and performance. Without this third goal, the first two goals cannot be attained.

How to Use this Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan will actively guide the work of the Commission and its staff. It will be used to educate new Commissioners and staff members as part of their on-boarding processes, drive the development and implementation of a detailed work plan, and serve as a guidepost by which to measure progress in achieving the Agency’s mission, goals, and objectives during regular Commission and staff meetings.

We shall monitor the implementation of the 2017-2020 BCDC Strategic Plan Update systematically by measuring our progress against a work plan replete with achievable actions, we shall provide regular updates to the Commission and BCDC staff on its implementation, and the Commissioners will convene a Commission Working Group to review our steps forward.

Overview of Vision, Mission, and Goals

VISION: Be the national model for coastal management.

MISSION: To protect and enhance the San Francisco Bay, and encourage the responsible and productive use of its resources for this and future generations.

GOAL 1: Enhance the Bay’s unique contributions to the Bay Area and enable all its communities to flourish.

GOAL 2: Increase the Bay’s natural and built communities’ resilience to rising sea level.

GOAL 3: Improve organizational health and performance.

The sections below describe these goals in greater detail. Each goal includes a suite of objectives that help achieve it, and under each objective is a list of proposed actions that form the basis for a detailed work plan.

GOAL 1: Enhance the Bay’s unique contributions to the Bay Area, and enable all its communities to flourish.

Objective 1.1 Encourage and implement Bay habitat restoration.

Proposed Actions:

- Encourage restoration programs and projects that align with the Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Science Update and the San Francisco Bay Subtidal Habitat Goals Report.¹
- Use the best available science to understand emerging trends in habitat connectivity among streams, watersheds, and Bay habitats.
- Analyze and determine whether and how a policy amendment, regulation change, or other approach may enable a more efficient permitting process for restoration projects.
- Support BCDC’s Wetland Habitat Assessment Team, in collaboration with other agencies, to develop consistent requirements for habitat projects.
- Better integrate data and information into lessons learned for future restoration projects.

Objective 1.2 Expand and promote diverse, high-quality public access.

Proposed Actions:

- Inventory existing public access, and improve BCDC’s public access tracking system.
- Evaluate the diversity of access and uses around the Bay, and identify opportunities to enhance public access and public amenities.
- Update the Public Access Design Guidelines to implement a consistent regulatory approach to designing public access that maximizes its appropriate use.
- Collaborate with other organizations to develop and disseminate a comprehensive public access guide to shoreline public access.

Objective 1.3 Update key statutes, policies, regulations, and practices.

Proposed Actions

- Analyze and determine whether and how to amend our statutes, policies, regulations, and guidelines with special attention to those identified in this Strategic Plan.

¹ See Appendix B for a list of statutes, plans, and technical reports referenced in this document.

- Prioritize amendments to statutes, policies, and regulations based on recommendations from Commissioners, staff, collaborating agencies, and the public.
- Update the Design Review Board and Engineering Criteria Review Board pamphlets.
- Evaluate the efficacy of current public engagement, and improve outreach to non-traditional audiences.

Objective 1.4 Implement a systematic approach to enforcement.

Proposed Actions:

- Adopt an enforcement strategy that enables staff to identify, prioritize, and resolve existing violations that have harmed Bay resources and public access.
- Develop and implement a permit compliance system.
- Consistently engage the Enforcement Committee to determine how to continually improve the enforcement program.

GOAL 2: Increase the Bay’s natural and built communities’ resilience to rising sea level.

Objective 2.1 Use the Adapting to Rising Tides (ART) Bay Area Program to lead the creation of a Regional Adaptation Plan (RAP) for rising sea level.

Proposed Actions:

- Complete the Adapting to Rising Tides county-level vulnerability analyses and proposed strategies to create a more resilient Bay shoreline.
- Form a RAP working group with public, private, and NGO organizations to understand regional vulnerabilities and recommend adaptation approaches.
- Host and facilitate public workshops to develop and refine the RAP recommendations.
- Identify through the RAP resilience and adaptation actions that can be implemented both locally and regionally.

Objective 2.2 Support local efforts to become more resilient to rising sea level, and pay special attention to environmental justice issues across the region.²

Proposed Actions:

- Collaborate with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including those from environmental justice communities, during the development of the RAP through ART Bay Area.
- Continue to actively engage environmental justice communities in Commission planning and permitting processes.
- Inventory local climate resilience and assessment projects to help connect projects between and among sponsoring organizations.
- Continue training agency staff on environmental justice issues.

Objective 2.3 Better coordinate and integrate rising sea level planning and regulatory functions.

Proposed Actions:

- Develop intra- and inter-agency processes through which planning and regulatory information, requirements, and decisions are shared.

² “Environmental justice” is the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

- Assign planning staff to each major project and regulatory staff to each plan, policy, or regulation amendment.
- Make rising sea level data products and practices available to all staff and the public.
- Work with the California Natural Resources Agency to integrate the Update on Sea-Level Rise Science into planning and permitting decisions specific to the Bay.

Objective 2.4 Increase beneficial reuse of sediment as a resource to help the Bay Area prepare for rising sea level.

Proposed Actions:

- Analyze and determine whether and how a policy amendment, regulation change, or other approach may increase beneficial reuse of sediment in the region.
- Encourage regulatory agencies, including the Army Corps of Engineers, and others in the dredging and restoration communities to maximize the beneficial reuse of sediment in restoration and shoreline adaptation projects.
- Continue to develop and then implement a Bay-wide Regional Sediment Management Plan.

Objective 2.5 Promote adaptive management approaches to address scientific, economic, and social uncertainties inherent in analyzing responses to rising sea level.

Proposed Actions:

- Develop a permitting toolkit (with guidance, templates, etc.) to clarify how adaptive management plans should be incorporated in proposed projects, including compliance monitoring and enforcement.
- Analyze and determine whether and how a policy amendment, regulation change, or other approach may enable the use of adaptive management in appropriate projects.
- Determine how to integrate adaptive management compliance into BCDC's regulatory program.
- Continue to lead the Financing the Future Working Group to recommend how best to finance local adaptation projects and regionwide efforts.

Objective 2.6 Encourage the development of living shorelines where appropriate in the Bay.³

Proposed Actions:

- Support the creation of a planning and regulatory “help desk” function to connect living shorelines proponents, the Commission, and the public with technical experts.
- Analyze and determine whether and how a policy amendment, regulation change, or other approach may be necessary to address regulatory limitations on living shorelines, and include strategies such as monitoring and triggers to ensure the long-term viability of these projects.
- Support the development of guidance for local governments and applicants regarding how best to design and implement living shorelines.

Objective 2.7 Develop an education campaign to increase the public's understanding of rising sea level vulnerabilities and resilience strategies.

Proposed Actions:

- Develop and implement, with partners, a public information program to inform the public about rising sea level vulnerabilities and resilience strategies.
- Use a broad set of communication tools, such as social media, to inform difficult-to-reach communities.
- Disseminate the best available rising sea level data and information through a web-based portal for the public.

³ "Living shorelines" is a broad term used by a wide variety of scientific and policy organizations that encompasses a range of shoreline stabilization techniques along estuarine coasts, bays, sheltered coastlines, and tributaries. A living shoreline has a footprint that is made up mostly of native material. It incorporates vegetation or other living, natural “soft” elements alone or in combination with some type of harder shoreline structure (e.g., oyster reefs or rock sills) for added stability. Living shorelines maintain continuity of the natural land–water interface and transition areas, while reducing erosion, providing habitat value, and enhancing coastal resilience.

GOAL 3: Improve organizational health and performance.

Objective 3.1 Expand staff in light of BCDC's increasing responsibilities.

Proposed Actions:

- Advocate before the California Natural Resources Agency and the California Department of Finance for sufficient permanent staff to accomplish statutory requirements and this plan's goals and objectives.
- Use traditional and non-traditional channels to attract a more diverse applicant pool than historically seeks employment at BCDC.
- Continue to pursue grants and contracts from public agencies and private foundations for special projects.
- Move to the Regional Headquarters Building at 375 Beale to efficiently accommodate existing and additional staff, and facilitate interagency collaboration.

Objective 3.2 Retain top talent to increase organizational strength.

Proposed Actions:

- Determine what job classifications best reflect necessary positions, reclassify positions as appropriate, and support opportunities for career advancement.
- Advocate with other state agencies, unions, and policy partners that CalHR modernize statutes, regulations, and policies to enable incoming personnel to negotiate higher salaries and receive location-based compensation packages that could include transit subsidies and housing assistance.
- Shift limited-term staff to permanent status, and fill vacancies with permanent positions.
- Support flexible work options as much as possible.
- Ensure all employees receive a timely annual performance review, including the opportunity to assess their supervisors' management.
- Initiate an employee wellness program to promote a healthier work environment.
- Conduct periodic employee surveys.

Objective 3.3 Integrate recent proven technology to improve workflow efficiency.

Proposed Actions:

- Modernize the BCDC website to improve access to BCDC services and information.

- Integrate the agency's document management system, regulatory tracking, application processing, and GIS tools.
- Increase effectiveness of internal GIS tools and data management by improving the types and quality of information collected about each permit.
- Administer an agency-wide electronic document delivery system to reduce paper correspondence.
- Implement online processes for timesheets and other internal administrative forms.
- Continue ongoing document digitization and data management programs.
- Standardize the use of best available technologies.

Objective 3.4 Improve information sharing and communication among divisions.

Proposed Actions:

- Standardize as many practices and procedures as possible through consistent onboarding and training processes.
- Improve project management by prioritizing and tracking significant projects within and across divisions.
- Share resources within and across divisions to facilitate collaboration.

Objective 3.5 Continue to build our human resources program.

Proposed Actions:

- Develop and implement a new and comprehensive employee orientation program.
- Ensure each employee has an up-to-date professional development plan that includes short-term and long-term goals and incorporates professional development opportunities.
- Encourage and fund continuing education and training for staff at all levels to develop and refresh technical and interpersonal skills.



Conclusion

This 2017-2020 BCDC Strategic Plan Update reflects the combined efforts of Commissioners, staff, and contributing members of the public. It aims to list the most pressing objectives and actions we need to accomplish within the next few years. Each of the proposed actions listed under the above Goals and Objective holds a specific value and weight in terms of urgency, especially those that pertain to rising sea level challenges in the San Francisco Bay.

While BCDC is the nation's oldest coastal zone management agency (celebrating our 52nd anniversary), our actions and work processes must adapt to the Bay Area's changing circumstances if we are to fulfill our mission in this rapidly evolving region. Adopting this Strategic Plan is a major step toward that end.

If you have any questions or inquiries pertaining to this Strategic Plan, you may contact BCDC staff at (415) 352-3600 or info@bcdca.gov.

Appendix A – Rising Sea Level Policy Recommendations – Approved 10/6/16

In 2016 the Commission initiated a workshop series to increase its efforts to address rising sea levels in the San Francisco Bay region. The workshop series provided the Commission, stakeholders, and other members of the public with an opportunity to reflect upon past and current efforts to address rising sea levels and to determine the best approaches for BCDC to undertake going forward. The Commission on October 6, 2016 adopted the following recommendations. The preamble was added on December 1, 2016.

Commission Recommendations Preamble

When implementing the following recommendations, the Commission and its staff will adhere to the following principles:

- Regional and local economic vitality relies on a strong and functioning network of regional assets.
 - All community members need safe and healthy housing, access within their communities to jobs and reliable goods and services. The region should pay particular attention to these issues in disadvantaged communities.
 - Healthy and vibrant ecological systems are necessary to maintain the quality of life for natural and human communities. Therefore, the preservation and restoration of these systems must be a priority.
 - Understanding and addressing current governance challenges is critical to improve the region's climate resilience and strengthen other aspects of sustainability including economy, equity and the environment.
 - The path to climate protection includes reducing emissions and transitioning to alternative forms of transport and energy.
- 1. *Create a regional sea level rise adaptation plan that serves as a framework for implementing future actions, while allowing for immediate early actions to be developed in advance of the plan.***

Possible actions:

- Create a collaborative and inclusive Regional Adaptation Plan (RAP), modeled on the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) process, which would prioritize adaptation actions and projects in an iterative and integrated manner that reflects local, regional, state, and federal priorities; the RAP would be led by BCDC and supported by a regional working group/steering committee; consider seeking state legislation to place the RAP in statute after developing a working RTP. This work would also consider SB 379 and the role that local hazard mitigation plans could play in the RAP

and how to integrate the work that will be done by local jurisdictions to comply with SB 379.

- Form and lead a regional working group/steering committee.
- Lead a comprehensive discussion about, and help promote, new viable, innovative financing options for different types of projects, perhaps through implementing a new Commissioner Working Group on innovative financing called “Financing the Future,” which would consist of Commissioners, Alternates and external stakeholders.
- Create a real-time measurement dashboard that includes visual depictions of the progress toward regional resilience based on a portfolio of projects.

2. ***Complete multi-sector, county-scale sea level rise vulnerability assessments for all nine counties using the Adapting to Rising Tides Program.***

Possible actions:

- Use existing vulnerability analyses as base information for assessments.
- Combine this action with Action #1 to build the information necessary for the success of the RAP, including adaptation actions.
- Develop a financing plan to complete ART for all nine Bay Area counties in an integrated manner within three years.

3. ***Explore new institutional arrangements to address the impacts of climate change in a way that promotes a shared regional perspective and increases collaboration.***

Possible actions:

- Encourage regional perspectives and planning by supporting and promoting local and regional cooperation, coordination, collaboration and partnerships that build the Regional Adaptation Plan described in (1) above.
- Use the 2017 Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), and other efforts where appropriate, to further a Bay Area-wide policy discussion on adaptation.
- Include rising sea levels in the scenario development and scenario selection for the 2021 SCS.
- Identify existing arrangements that can be reproduced, improved and expanded.
- Although not a current recommendation, consider whether new regional authority is needed and determine whether it would be a new organization, housed within an

existing organization, or be formed among existing organizations, following efforts to implement bullets (1) and (2) above.

4. Identify regionally significant natural and built assets and vulnerable communities and develop approaches to minimize and mitigate damage from flooding in ways that adapt to changing natural circumstances such as rising sea levels.

Possible actions:

- Identify the types of projects that are likely to be successful and scalable based on case studies (e.g., ART Hayward Resilience Study, ART Transportation Study, ART Oakland/Alameda Resilience Study) and/or ongoing pilot projects to help communicate and visualize adaptation options.
- Identify or develop tools to assist local, regional, state and federal decision-makers in utilizing full life-cycle accounting for evaluating and comparing infrastructure investments and alternatives, including both natural and built infrastructure, as well as for use in BCDC planning and regional investments.
- Help build a Bay Area-wide consensus to beneficially reuse a majority of dredged materials to increase the viability of nature-based adaptation projects, and carry this forward to the state and federal levels.
- Establish an Adaptation Review Board, to provide technical expertise and non-binding guidance for project applications along the shoreline.
- Support the State Coastal Conservancy by initiating a Green Shoreline Infrastructure help desk to connect project proponents, local jurisdictions, BCDC, and other agency staff with technical experts to help design, build, maintain and adapt green infrastructure projects and help implement the Baylands Ecosystem Goals Habitat Update around the shoreline.

5. Change existing laws, policies and regulations so that they more fully consider the local and regional impacts of rising sea levels in permitting and decision-making processes as needed.

Possible actions:

- Complete the *Policies for a Rising Bay* project, which analyzes fill policies in light of rising sea levels.
- Modify BCDC's permit application to require information on the potential impacts of a project on adjoining properties in a manner that can inform local and regional resilience efforts.

APPENDIX A - Rising Sea Level Policy Recommendations

- Develop a comprehensive multi-agency permit application and approval process (based on the success of the Long Term Management Strategy and Dredged Materials Management Office (DMMO)) for projects that place fill in the Bay to accelerate the region's resilience, starting with nature-based adaptation solutions.
 - Discuss possible amendments to the McAteer-Petris Act and BCDC regulations regarding the definition and use of "fill".
- 6. *Work with others to develop a regional educational campaign to increase awareness of rising sea level and how the Bay Area can adapt successfully to its challenges.***
- Use existing classic education models (e.g., recycling expansion and anti-smoking) and collaborate with existing partners (e.g., Exploratorium) and new ones (e.g., LEAP, Alliance for Climate Education) to target school-age children and young adults.
 - Expand existing educational efforts to create an education and outreach program for public officials and the general public about rising sea level, the Bay Area's regional assets at risk, and successful examples of adaptation.
- 7. *Assist efforts to define, identify, and fund one or more regional data repositories to collect and share data in ways that best inform rising sea levels strategies and actions.***
- 8. *Develop a new Commissioner Working Group on innovative financing called Financing the Future, which would consist of Commissioners, Alternates, and external stakeholders.***

Appendix B – Additional Resources

For more information, please visit the BCDC Library page of our website at:

<http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/publications/>

Guides, technical reports, and case studies regarding our Adapting to Rising Tides (ART) program are available on the ART Supplies page of the ART website at:

<http://www.adaptingtorisingtides.org/howto/art-supplies/>

General Background

- Adapting to Rising Tides Program: <http://www.adaptingtorisingtides.org/>
- BCDC's 2013 Strategic Plan: http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/reports/strategic_status_rpt.pdf

Statutes

- McAteer-Petris Act of 1965: http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/plans/mcateer_petris.html
- Suisun Marsh Preservation Act of 1977:
http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/plans/suisun_marsh_preservation_act.html

Regulations

- Title 14. Natural Resources, Division 5. San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission:
[https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Browse/Home/California/CaliforniaCodeofRegulations?guid=E70675C0D48611DEBC02831C6D6C108E&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=Default&contextData=\(sc.Default\)](https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Browse/Home/California/CaliforniaCodeofRegulations?guid=E70675C0D48611DEBC02831C6D6C108E&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=Default&contextData=(sc.Default))

Policies/Plans

- Benicia Waterfront Special Area Plan:
http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/plans/benicia_waterfront.htmlSan Francisco Bay Area Seaport Plan:
<http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/seaport/seaport.pdf>
- LTMS Management Plan 2001 (Dredging and Disposal Strategy):
http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/LTMS/ltms_mgemnt.html
- Richardson Bay Special Area Plan: <http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/rbsap/rbsap.pdf>
- San Francisco Bay Plan: <http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/pdf/bayplan/bayplan.pdf>
- San Francisco Waterfront Special Area Plan:
http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/sfwsap/SFWSAP_Final_2012.pdfSuisun Marsh Protection Plan:
http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/plans/suisun_marsh.pdf
- South Richmond Shoreline Special Area Plan:
<http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/publications/SouthRichmondShorelineSAP.pdf>
- White Slough Special Area Plan:
http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/planning/reports/WhiteSloughSpecificAreaPlan_Jan1996.pdf

Goal 1

- Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Science Update: <http://baylandsgoals.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Baylands-Complete-Report-2016.pdf>



APPENDIX B – Additional Resources

- Design Review Board Pamphlet: http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/drb/drb_pamphlet.pdf
- Engineering Criteria Review Board Pamphlet: http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/ecrb/ecrb_pamphlet.pdf
- Public Access Design Guidelines: http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/planning/reports/ShorelineSpacesPublicAccessDesignGuidelinesForSFBay_Apr2005.pdf
- San Francisco Bay Subtidal Habitat Goals Report: <http://www.sfbaysubtidal.org/report.html>

Goal 2

- Financing the Future Working Group: <http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/fwg/meetings.html>
- Rising Seas in California: An Update on Sea-Level Rise Science: <http://www.opc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/docs/rising-seas-in-california-an-update-on-sea-level-rise-science.pdf>

Goal 3

- California Natural Resources Agency: <http://resources.ca.gov/>
- State of California Department of Finance: <http://www.dof.ca.gov/>