

Dear all,

I'm writing to express my "thanks" for the thoughtful presentations that were made at this morning's Rising Sea Levels Working Group. I haven't included Chair Wasserman, and Commissioners Eisen, Eckerle, Gioia, and Nelson, as I'm not sure if it is appropriate to under BCDC regulations and policies, but would appreciate it if you could convey my thanks for their thoughtful comments.

I apologize for my rambling during the 3 minutes, I'm not good organizing my thoughts off-the-cuff.

First, I am grateful to have been included in the initial round of discussions. Second, I want to echo the comments made at this morning's Working Group meeting by Arthur, Gita Dev and Jennifer Hetterly. Third, I was happy to hear Chair Wasserman mention the Nature article that has recently been making the rounds in the press, though it doesn't specifically address the West Coast of the U.S. it does point to the urgency of the issue of sea level rise. I think the RSAP was a great (though flawed through limitations imposed on the process) step towards addressing the issue of sea level rise in a holistic manner and at a regional level.

One thing that has troubled me as I listen to discussions about the issue of sea level rise adaptation, is that the focus has been (and rightly so) on "projects" green, hybrid or grey that provide sea level rise adaptation for existing infrastructure. BUT there is another element, that I inadequately tried to identify, and that is rarely addressed, and it's an element that doesn't necessarily require the expenditure of millions of dollars to implement (though others might argue it would result in lost revenue) and that is how and where, at the local government level, we plan for future development. The RSAP includes this strategy in its tool kit of adaptations, but it is rarely highlighted. It is an issue Arthur mentioned, and I tried to express, and it is an urgent issue. We are losing lightly developed and undeveloped lands that could provide resilience for the Bay and our communities right now - places where natural and nature-based adaptations could be implemented for the benefit of the region.

Some local governments continue to locate new development in areas that will more than likely require future flood protection and do so with the mindset that sea level rise is an issue that is bigger than their jurisdiction can address - that a magical regional fix and monies for that fix will somehow be available. It's a double loss for the region - communities will suffer the consequences of these poor planning decisions in the future and at the same time real opportunities for climate adaptation and resilience are being squandered - i.e. lost opportunities for restoration of Bay habitats and all the benefits that accrue - carbon sequestration, flood storage, reduction of impacts of wave erosion, etc. [The attached Baykeeper photo is an example of such a location.]

It's an issue that is difficult to address as some of these areas being impacted by poor planning decisions are not within BCDC's jurisdiction, nor is there any other state or federal regulatory authority, but they are within the landscape of the RSAP, because they are in areas that will be vulnerable to future sea level rise. To my mind this touches on the issue of BCDC's jurisdiction, and the fact that some legislation will be necessary if we want to achieve meaningful, regional, sea level rise resilience that benefits our communities and the Bay (because Bay habitats are part of the resilience solution). That's why the suggestion Gita Dev made regarding sea level rise overlays is of interest, as is the model of the Suisun Marsh Preservation Act.

I know staff has been doing what they can with communications and their efforts at outreach are admirable, however, I urge that planning decisions of local governments be included with more emphasis in outreach efforts. We shouldn't be locating more development and people in harm's way, and constructing new development atop elevated buildings pads shouldn't be considered a panacea - as Arthur said - from an ecological and resilience perspective, that is the same as grey infrastructure.

I appreciated the permitting case study presentation - it's a creative way to approach the moving target of sea level rise impacts and BCDC's regulatory authority, while still holding someone accountable for implementation of resilience and adaptation actions if needed. However, it would only work with a willing applicant, and as mentioned above, it is only pertinent within BCDC's existing jurisdiction (i.e. where BCDC actually has a permit to act upon).

One of the approaches mentioned throughout the presentation was "streamlining" of the permit process. No one wants to see good natural and nature-based adaptation projects held up in a regulatory centrifuge, but I urge that whatever is proposed by BCDC ensures that the opportunity for meaningful review and comment by the public is not sacrificed. Even good NNBS projects may have areas of ecological or societal trade-offs and public input into that discourse should not be circumvented.

I do think that legislation is necessary, but as Chair Wasserman stated that takes time - I'm wondering if stop-gap measures other than the case study example are being considered? Interim actions utilizing existing regulations and policies (both within BCDC and in coordination with other agency regulations/policies/planning efforts) that could help ensure the goals of holistic, regional sea level rise adaptation that prioritizes NNBS is achieved?

Again, thank you for the discussion held this morning. I appreciate the time and energy of staff and the RSL Working Group Commissioner.

Respectfully,
Carin High
Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge