



# Meeting Summary for the April 16, 2020 Bay Adapt Public Forum

## Forum in Brief

Bay Adapt hosted its first Public Forum to introduce and solicit feedback on this strategic initiative aimed at crafting a regional approach to rising sea level for communities and the region.

The Forum consisted of an expert panel and breakout discussion groups. Panelists framed the challenges: the State has developed a strategic plan and guiding principles being usurped by Covid; the City of Alameda struggling to manage multiple agencies to keep the prime access point open during more frequent flooding, and Bay Area health departments identifying public health impacts and equity for engagement so communities and local residents can define solutions.

More than 200 participants broke into small group discussions to identify actions that might begin to address sea level rise. These actions are wide ranging and inclusive: developing sophisticated wastewater systems and green infrastructure, financing, collaborating regionally, engaging communities, and creating community-benefit projects.

Bay Adapt will convene a series of Working Groups to consider these actions and others to inform the final Joint Platform.

## Overview

Sea level rise and flooding pose an unprecedented threat to the Bay, its people, natural resources, communities and infrastructure. Much of the responsibility for adaptation lies at the local jurisdictional level, as no Bay-wide flood control authority exists. While many local governments and special districts recognize the inevitability of a major flooding disaster and inundation of their shorelines, jurisdictions lack the capacity to develop adaptation plans. At the same time, sea level rise threatens vulnerable frontline communities who have the fewest resources to respond, as well as the near-term loss of wetlands. Evolving climate projections, complex regional governance, and competition from other pressing regional issues, such as housing and wildfires, complicate the policy landscape around regional adaptation.

To address these cross jurisdictional, Bay-wide concerns, a collaborative of regional and local agencies and a wide array of stakeholders are embarking on the development of *Bay Adapt: Regional Strategy for a Rising Bay*. Building on the strong foundation of science, research and planning that exists in the Bay Area, the strategy strives to stitch together local and sub-

regional efforts, create coordinated regional action and priorities, and seek resources and support to accelerate adaptation action.

Through a six-month, collaborative action-setting process, this initiative will provide a set of guiding principles for Bay Area adaptation and lay out a “Joint Platform” comprised of 10 to 15 priority actions that the region must take around planning, funding, permitting, and governance. At the end of this process, we will seek the commitment of Bay Area leaders to adopt and endorse the Joint Platform in their various roles and play a leadership role in its implementation.

The virtual Public Workshop held on April 16, 2020 was the first of several opportunities for interested stakeholders and members of the public to participate in, and provide meaningful input into, this strategy. At the workshop, over 200 participants learned about this new initiative and contributed perspectives into how to set it up for success.

Objectives for the workshop included:

- Understand diverse perspectives on the opportunities and challenges for coordinated regional sea level rise planning
- Introduce Bay Adapt and its Guiding Principles for adapting to rising sea level
- Discuss actions that workshop participants want to be considered as we address Sea Level Rise in the Bay

## Public Forum Agenda

Time	Item	Presenter/Facilitator
10:00	Welcome Introductions Review Agenda Technology Review	Zack Wasserman, BCDC Chair  Gina Bartlett, Consensus Building Institute Facilitator
10:15	Panel Discussion: Priorities, Challenges and Opportunities in Regional Sea Level Rise Action	Panelists: Melissa Jones, Executive Director at Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative (BARHII)  Liam Garland, Director of Public Works at City of Alameda  John Coleman, Chief Executive Officer at Bay Planning Coalition  Respondent: Dr. Mark Gold, Executive Director, Ocean Protection Council; Deputy

		Secretary for Ocean and Coastal Policy, California Natural Resources Agency  Facilitator: Nahal Ghoghaie, BCDC Environmental Justice Manager
10:45	Introduction to Bay Adapt and Guiding Principles  Actions to Address Sea Level Rise  Opportunity for Questions and Feedback	Jessica Fain, BCDC Planning Director  Dana Brechwald, BCDC Adapting to Rising Tides Program Manager
11:05	Breakout Discussions: What would you like us to consider as we develop actions for a rising bay?  Issue areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Equity + Communities</li> <li>● Natural Environment</li> <li>● Housing + Jobs</li> <li>● Infrastructure</li> </ul>	Nahal Ghoghaie, BCDC Environmental Justice Manager
11:45	Wrap Up and Next Steps	Nahal Ghoghaie
12:00	Adjourn	Nahal Ghoghaie

## Panel Discussion: Priorities, Challenges and Opportunities in Regional Sea Level Rise Action

Panelists were asked to help us set the stage for today’s workshop by providing a brief response to the question of why regional coordination is integral to successful sea-level rise adaptation.

Below are the main points from each panelist’s presentation:

- Liam Garland, Director of Public Works for the City of Alameda
  - City of Alameda updated their Climate Action Plan recently to include adaptation
  - Alameda has two major points of SLR vulnerability – Bay Farm Island and the northern shoreline, which includes both the Posey and Webster tubes

- Talking about SLR to constituents is easier when you relate it to current issues, like flooding today
- While cities can't wait for regional coordination to get started on SLR planning, they need it to get to the next level. Resources are constrained and the region needs to decide where to allocate limited resources
- Alameda has been willing to put local dollars towards SLR planning, but it will not be enough
- Local councilmembers are asking how they can be involved – what role will elected officials play in the regional SLR conversation?
- John Coleman, CEO for the Bay Planning Coalition
  - A few things will be needed to ensure the region is prepared for SLR – the state needs to provide support and incentives, we need to expedite permitting for shoreline projects and business, environment, and social justice interests need to work together
  - If we don't plan ahead not just to protect today's built environment and ecosystems but future housing and economic growth, it will lead to more costs down the line
  - SLR is our new reality – flooding is inevitable
  - Protecting individual interests won't work if people don't work together
- Melissa Jones, Executive Director of the Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative
  - Engaging communities – especially historically marginalized communities – is key for adaptation success. It can build political energy for adaptation using the people on the ground
  - There has been a lot of energy around addressing inequality in the last few years, especially connected towards health and climate, housing, and economic opportunities. This has created a mobilized community
  - People may not understand the technical aspects of SLR, but they understand that they will be impacted by climate change
  - There are four points for how to better include communities:
    - Budget early on to engage communities – pay for people's time
    - Work with CBOs to frame the conversation in a way that mobilizes action
    - Expand partnerships with CBOs that have access to large groups of people but aren't necessarily related to SLR (ie health, housing, economic opportunity)
    - Revisit the basics of community engagement while looking towards innovative practices
- Mark Gold, Executive Director of the Ocean Protection Council
  - California recently completed its strategic plan to protect the coast and ocean, including:
    - SLR targets to get everyone on the same page in adapting to SLR
    - Infrastructure resilience plans
    - Supporting local coastal cities and counties to have plans in place
    - Identifying toxic sites that will be exposed to SLR
    - Identifying nature-based solutions
  - Seventeen state agencies have also recently completed Guiding Principles, which align nicely with the Bay Adapt principles and emphasize local support and partnerships

- Covid has put the Resilience Bond and legislature like SB 1100 (Atkins) in question, but the ideas are ripe
- Questions from the Audience:
  - Liam: What is the scale (dollar amount) of your new stormwater fee?
  - How can regional adaptation be implemented from a perspective of organizational framework? That is, do Cities and Counties work together voluntarily and or does a joint powers agency take an adaptation authority and or is there a technical advisory committee?

## Introduction to Bay Adapt and Guiding Principles

Jessica Fain, Planning Director at BCDC and Dana Brechwald, Adapting to Rising Tides Program Manager, provided an introductory presentation about Bay Adapt, its goals and guiding principles.

### About Bay Adapt

*Bay Adapt: Regional Strategy for a Rising Bay* is an initiative to establish regional agreement on the actions necessary to protect our people and the natural and built environment from rising sea levels. Bay Adapt will build a new type of regional collaboration among a wide variety of agencies and stakeholders, based on a strong foundation of climate science and the proactive Bay Area adaptation efforts both already underway and proposed. Through this collaborative action-setting initiative, Bay Area regional, local and community leadership will identify, deliberate and commit to a set of shared actions that will allow the Bay Area to adapt better and adapt faster to a rising Bay.

### Anticipated Outcomes

1. Develop Guiding Principles on adapting to rising sea level
2. Develop a Joint Platform of priority actions
3. Adopt the Joint Platform with a commitment to act and to act together

### Why a Regional Strategy?

Rising sea levels will dramatically affect our way of life in the Bay Area. Our daily commutes, the goods and services we depend on, the places we live and work, and the natural spaces that make the Bay Area a beautiful place to live will all be impacted. Highways will be affected with as little as one foot of flooding, impacting the commutes of hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors daily. With two feet of flooding, communities will start feeling serious impacts to their homes and jobs. Sea level rise will fundamentally change our relationship with the Bay and will threaten our public access to the shoreline and our enjoyment of shoreline recreation and habitats. For more on the risks we face, read the [Adapting to Rising Tides \(ART\) Bay Area](#) report.

Much of the responsibility to adapt to rising sea levels lies at the local city or county level. However, local initiatives alone will not be able to solve the problem and could result in:

- Disproportionate impacts to disadvantaged communities
- Unintended flood impacts to neighbors in a closed Bay system
- Delay due to other, more pressing concerns like housing and transportation

- Near-term loss of wetlands -- the ecosystems most at risk of flooding
- Impacts to jobs and businesses
- Lack of incentives to work across jurisdictions to solve common problems
- Lack of incentives to create multi-benefit, nature-based solutions
- No way to measure collective progress

Regional action to reduce impacts due to climate change requires collective will, regionwide implementation, and broad leadership – no one agency, jurisdiction or community can or should do it alone. Bay Adapt will build a new type of regional collaboration among agencies and stakeholders based on a strong foundation of climate science, creative planning and local and regional needs.

## **How Will it Work?**

The Joint Platform will be shaped by, and vetted against, a set of Guiding Principles developed by the Leadership Advisory Group. Several Working Groups, comprised of Leadership Advisory Group members and others, will identify, prioritize, and refine action ideas. The Working Groups, supported by BCDC staff and others, will identify and analyze possible actions to determine their feasibility and potential tradeoffs. Elected officials from cities and counties will help shape and provide feedback on the Joint Platform, and members of the public will have the opportunity to provide input through Public Workshops and other venues. Once finalized, approximately 10-15 priority actions will be compiled into a single document – the Joint Platform – that the Leadership Advisory Group, BCDC and other entities throughout the Region involved in adapting to rising sea levels will consider adopting and implementing.

## **Guiding Principles**

Participants were presented the Guiding Principles (they also received them in a handout when they registered and asked to contribute words that they liked about the Guiding Principles as well as what they thought was missing. They contributed to two “word clouds” with the most common responses emerging as the largest words in the word clouds.

*Word Cloud: What words do you like in the current Guiding Principles?*





Ten breakout groups discussed these questions for 40 minutes. The main takeaways from each group are found in the next section. During the breakout session, note-takers created a virtual “white board” using the IdeaFlip app to visually display the results of the conversation in real-time.

## **Breakout Group #1**

What does a Bay Area that is resilient to rising sea level look like?

- Educating the public is an important component of this work, as SLR is not on the forefront of most people’s minds, and the public may not recognize the public benefits of ecosystem services provided by wetlands, shallow-water habitats, etc.
- Prioritize nature-based solutions and limiting development in certain areas: A resilient Bay Area in the future will not be full of hardened shorelines, which can cause adverse impacts.
- Climate change mitigation should be more fully integrated into the conversation on climate change adaptation. Prioritize solutions that serve both intentions.

What are specific steps or actions that the region can take to get there?

- Identify financing and funding for longer term adaptation and restoration work now. Don’t rely on state funding; seek innovative solutions (e.g. private funding); use an equity lens to prioritize financial solutions that benefit multiple groups/jurisdictions and build upon each other to serve the region as a whole; replicate permit streamlining programs like the BRRIT. (Funding dominated the conversation on Question 2.)
- Coordinate public outreach and education, including educating local agencies and planning departments. Important for the public to recognize that change will happen and impact communities, get the public involved and focused on how we can mitigate impacts. Get local decision-makers to recognize that they have regional impacts, get them on board with regional plans.
- Utilize existing scientific data and research on integrating strategic development with conservation and restoration goals (e.g. SFEI’s Adaptation Atlas). Prioritize multi-benefit solutions that address mitigation and adaptation simultaneously (e.g. wetland restoration)

## **Breakout Group #2**

What does a Bay Area that is resilient to rising sea level look like?

- Regional body that is coordinating funding, capacity building, and coordination of projects.
- Adaptation that builds equity into the prioritization of projects, funding, and capacity building.
- Adaptation that focuses initially on increasing wetland habitat and migration space.

What are specific steps or actions that the region can take to get there?

- Develop regional funding pipeline for adaptation, coordination, and capacity building.
- Focus on public outreach to educate and engage all sectors/communities
- Develop regulatory mechanisms/incentives to limit development in vulnerable areas

## **Breakout Group #3**



What does a Bay Area that is resilient to rising sea level look like?

- Infrastructure - which elements are the most essential; how to make sure infrastructure and thus risk are well-distributed; and thinking about how future infrastructure needs may be different (e.g. more ferries rather than rebuilding roads)
- More resilient communities (particularly the most vulnerable) characterized by collaborative, multi-community funding and governance structures.
- More active role of the private sector
- Resolving competing priorities

What are specific steps or actions that the region can take to get there?

- Importance of including community priorities, engaging communities in planning process, and ensuring that communities are protected
- Need for a leader/regional body to manage and oversee a coordinated process
- Overcoming funding obstacles/establishing regional funding mechanisms
- Determination of clear priorities, process, and success metrics

### **Breakout Group #4**

What does a Bay Area that is resilient to rising sea level look like?

- Ability to maintain life generally as we know it, despite impacts of climate change
- Integrated response across silos/jurisdictions, with incentives and processes to get there.
- The Bay will be transformed. Need to be able to say what takes priority and how do we make those discussions across the region?

What are specific steps or actions that the region can take to get there?

- Formal cost-sharing agreements
- Best practices for nature-based projects
- Identify and prioritize actions of greatest regional benefit, based on multi-factor criteria
- Mandate to work across jurisdictions
- Full buy-in from regulatory agencies, not more regulation
- Educate jurisdiction about why regionalization is necessary
- Use of place-based impact investing
- Budget early for community organizations and jurisdictions to engage

### **Breakout Group #5**

What does a Bay Area that is resilient to rising sea level look like?

- Mutual success needs strong partnerships with those inland and Delta. It is a coastal issue, but it is also for the water system inland.
- Expertise exchange with the Central Valley. Inland areas have expertise that could be used and helpful in the Bay Area and vice versa. More recognition to CV.
- Housing for everyone. Designating areas for relocating housing lost to managed retreat.

What are specific steps or actions that the region can take to get there?

- Holistic strategies (coordinating entire region, multidisciplinary, multi-solving)
- Economics (regional revenue sharing, de-fiscalization of land use)

- Invest in wetlands NOW before it's too late – double or triple reach of Restoration Authority
- Multidisciplinary teams across divisions to stop siloing decisions
- Re-imagine a bold vision for the future, then back-cast steps that help us get there rather than making incremental change

## **Breakout Group #6**

What does a Bay Area that is resilient to climate change look like?

- Transportation needs to be addressed in short order—infrastructure, jobs, vulnerable communities. Essential workers really need public transportation. All transit systems in the Bay Area are near the coast near the 2050 flood zone for more extreme impacts. Service disruption will negatively impact access in an inequitable way.
- 90% of climate related actions are land use planning, and 90% of that is at local level. Local governments desperately need the capacity for multiagency collaboration. Essential that we don't lose the next two years—local governments will have impacts on their budgets while investing in social services and infrastructure.
- Adaptation/mitigation. Something the virus has shown us, one aspect of success can look like cleaner air and bluer skies. Humans were able to act very quickly to make changes that affected GHG emissions.

What are specific steps or actions that the region can take to get there?

- Develop guidance for hybrid designs of green and grey infrastructure.
- Ensure adjacent communities are collaborating on project planning to mitigate unintended impacts, with an emphasis on most vulnerable/ underrepresented communities.
- Understanding local financing tools and developing guidelines for funding prioritization

## **Breakout Group #7**

What does a Bay Area that is resilient to rising sea level look like?

- Thriving economy
- Affordable housing
- Economic Strength
- Strong community networks
- Resilience is more than responding to events, it's the ability to maintain continuity and functionality as major changes to our environment keep coming.
- Social support network strength is key to success.
- Figure out what is the appropriate response at what level of government/agency/community for sea level rise response. Knowing this ahead of time is a key to success for dealing with changes.
- Thinking about the trade-offs in the decisions. Find the best solutions given all of the topics under consideration. How do we measure the trade-offs?

What are specific steps or actions that the region can take to get there?

- Considerations should include impacts or benefits to vulnerable or underserved populations, especially disproportionate impacts due to existing inequalities, as well as general impacts to community members and the social services they rely on.
- Considerations should include impacts or benefits to environmental values such as species biodiversity, ecosystem functions, agriculture, or recreation.
- Considerations should include impacts or benefits to job and housing creation, preservation, or enhancement. This could include impacts to job functions, economic productivity, and housing affordability and creation.
- Considerations should include impacts or benefits to infrastructure systems that underlie the region, including energy, water and wastewater, transportation, and communications. Considerations to infrastructure should also include cascading impacts, such as loss of function of wastewater treatment facilities if energy facilities are impacted.

## **Breakout Group #8**

What does a Bay Area that is resilient to rising sea level look like?

- Built on nature-based solutions
- Shared vision – i.e. protecting what is in place, maintaining functions and equity over time, etc.
- Consensus across the Bay Area as to how the money will be spent

What are specific steps or actions that the region can take to get there?

- Figuring out how to combine funding sources
- Aligning with state and federal agencies and resources
- Figure out how to work across jurisdictional boundaries
- Coordinate outer coast and Bay strategies
- Think about equity in a new way – cost sharing
- Connect people to what they care about – housing prices

## **Breakout Group #9**

What does a Bay Area that is resilient to rising sea level look like?

- Connecting actions/strategies across sectors: connecting jobs and job training programs for communities to adaptation projects (funding local adaptation work), linking equity and the environment (creating public works from a natural infrastructure approach)
- Governance structure: Mechanisms to incorporate equity, tracks progress, holds people accountable, and supports consistent action so people can see results, is also realistic
- Equitable tax structure
- Creating a shared vision and sense of action

What are specific steps or actions that the region can take?

- Linking actions across sectors: 1. Environment to Equity: Long term stewardship built into adaptation project, maintenance funding, bonds for capital projects; 2) Jobs to

Adaptation: Infrastructure funding to create green collar jobs, bonds that support green jobs

- Funding multi-benefit projects: Measure AA, Prop 1, Prop 68, need more
- Larger governance framework: Creating common vision, balancing regional and local needs, incentive programs, interagency collaboration, Plan Bay Area needs to be at center of resilience!

## Breakout Group #10

What does a Bay Area that is resilient to rising sea level look like?

- Encourage favorable impact where individual issues intersect
- Remember that managed retreat is an option
- Explore integrating youth and homeless into climate change work
- Infrastructure projects must learn to live with water
- Affordable housing
- More robust ferry system

What are specific steps or actions that the region can take?

- Share data and common standards throughout the region
- SLR should be included in CEQA and NEPA
- Restrict development in areas vulnerable to SLR
- Regional adaptation action coordinator, e.g., shoreline protection that spans cities

## Next Steps

- Check out the newly launched website at [www.bayadapt.org](http://www.bayadapt.org)
- Sign up to be on the mailing list to receive updates
- Apply to join a Working Group – email [Dana.Brechwald@bcdcc.ca.gov](mailto:Dana.Brechwald@bcdcc.ca.gov) if you'd like to join
- The next Public Forum is anticipated to be in late summer 2020
- Have ideas or other thoughts about the workshop? Contact [Nahal.Ghoghaie@bcdcc.ca.gov](mailto:Nahal.Ghoghaie@bcdcc.ca.gov)