

30 attendees representing about 15 member agencies

Roundtable Discussion on Adapting to Sea Level Rise, Extreme Precipitation, and Flooding

Member agency staff representatives and consultants convened over Zoom to hold a roundtable discussion on the topic of planning for sea level rise and associated climate change-induced flood impacts.

BACWA's Regulatory Program Manager started the meeting with a presentation summarizing the results of the 2021 climate change survey performed by the Regional Water Board NPDES Division; regulatory expectations around sea level rise planning; and related resources. The slides are available [here](#). The meeting discussion was focused around survey questions that were shared using Mentimeter software. All of the responses are shown in the anonymous [Mentimeter results](#). Notable points from the discussion included:

- Most agencies understand the risk of sea level rise, but the timing of impacts may be several decades away. In such cases, there are no adaptation projects needed in the near future. Other agencies are already constructing adaptation projects (for example, raising electrical equipment and re-locating or hardening coastal infrastructure).
- The choice of which sea level rise projection to use is not strictly a scientific question, and previously used projections cannot be discarded -- they may live on in capital projects that have already been planned, designed, or constructed. Also, it is strategic to align sea level rise projections with neighboring agencies in order to facilitate regional planning, strengthen interagency ties, and make adaptation projects eligible for funding.
- Some agencies are already struggling with the decision of managed retreat vs. asset hardening, which is politically complex and outside the traditional comfort zone of wastewater agencies.
- Agencies were interested in exploring the idea of adaptive planning and the use of "triggers" to initiate some climate change adaptation projects.
- O&M strategies are a critical component of dealing with increased flood risk.
- A wide variety of regional planning approaches are being used. In some areas around the region, the County is taking a lead role on convening large stakeholder groups. In other areas, county flood control agencies are not involved, and ad-hoc groups have formed to take on shoreline planning tasks.
- Guidance for increased precipitation intensity is not as formalized as the state's guidance on for sea level rise. Attendees reported using best professional judgement to estimate future precipitation intensity (i.e., a 20% increase in storm intensity) or engaging with scientists to obtain site-specific projections for storm intensity, frequency, and duration.
- San Francisco has prepared detailed [sea level planning guidance](#), which is now a local requirement for capital planning. Some attendees are following a similar formal path and adding other elements like green stormwater infrastructure as a planning consideration, while smaller agencies reported using a more informal approach.
- In addition to the [OPC 2018](#) guidance, some agencies mentioned referring to other flood protection tools including Adapting to Rising Tides' [Shoreline Flood Explorer](#) and [Cal-Adapt](#).

Attendees encouraged BACWA to serve as a liaison to regulatory bodies in the region (BCDC, Regional Water Board, etc.) on this topic, and to facilitate information-sharing among members. Sharing climate and sea level rise adaptation plans with one another would be useful.