

## Adapting to Rising Seas: Updating California's Sea-level Rise Guidance

As sea levels rise on California's coast, communities are already facing damage to development, ecosystems, water supplies, and infrastructure. We must plan for and adapt to higher sea levels.

### A need to update statewide policy

The *State of California Sea-Level Rise Guidance Document*,<sup>1</sup> initially adopted in 2010 and updated in 2013, provides guidance to state agencies for incorporating sea-level rise projections into planning, permitting, investment and other decisions.

Now, the California Ocean Protection Council and the California Natural Resources Agency, in collaboration with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research and the California Ocean Science Trust, are updating this statewide guidance to reflect recent advances in ice loss science and projections of sea-level rise. The updated guidance will focus on the needs of state agencies *and* local governments. It will help cities and counties as they comply with a new law that requires them to incorporate climate change into their planning efforts.<sup>2</sup> The updated guidance document will also assist state agencies prepare for, and adapt to climate change, as directed by Governor Brown's recent Executive Order.<sup>3</sup>

A synthesis of the state of the science on sea-level rise will be presented at the April 26, 2017 California Ocean Protection Council meeting in Sacramento, and will provide the scientific foundation for the update to the guidance document. Because effective planning for sea-level rise involves collaboration among local planners, state agencies, climate researchers, business owners and other stakeholders, a robust public engagement process is planned throughout 2017. Public input will be integrated into the final guidance document update, which is scheduled for adoption by the California Ocean Protection Council in January 2018.

#### Timeline & Opportunities for Engagement:

**Now-April 2017:** State agency, local government and stakeholder engagement: interviews and five listening sessions

**April 26<sup>th</sup> 2017: OPC Meeting, 1-4pm (Sacramento and webcast):** Science summary presented to the OPC

**May-June 2017:** Series of public workshops to solicit feedback on a draft framework for the *State Sea-level Rise Guidance Document*

**September-October 2017:** 30-day public comment period on a draft update to the *State Sea-level Rise Guidance Document*

**January 2018: OPC Meeting (Sacramento and webcast):** Scheduled adoption by the OPC of the *State Sea-level Rise Guidance Document*

<sup>1</sup> State of California Sea-Level Rise Document, March 2013 update. Available here:

[http://www.opc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/docs/2013\\_SLR\\_Guidance\\_Update\\_FINAL1.pdf](http://www.opc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/docs/2013_SLR_Guidance_Update_FINAL1.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> SB 379 (Jackson), Land use: general plan: safety element. Available here:

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201520160SB379](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160SB379)

<sup>3</sup> Executive Order B-30-15 (2015). Available here: <https://www.gov.ca.gov/news.php?id=18938>



## Updating the science

The California Ocean Protection Council is partnering with the California Ocean Science Trust, which has been charged with leading the scientific component of the update and convening an *OPC Science Advisory Team Working Group*. The Working Group will compile and review the latest climate research, including considering the implications of recent scientific advances on ice loss dynamics for updating sea-level rise projections. The Working Group includes subject-matter experts in coastal processes, risk assessment, climatic change, ice loss and ice sheet behavior, and statistical modeling. The Working Group will integrate the latest findings from the peer-reviewed scientific literature into a science summary that will inform the guidance document update. This science summary will be presented to the California Ocean Protection Council at its April 2017 meeting.

The Working Group members are: Gary Griggs, University of California Santa Cruz, OPC-SAT (Working Group Chair); Dan Cayan, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, OPC-SAT; Bob Kopp, Rutgers University; Claudia Tebaldi, National Center for Atmospheric Research; Helen Fricker, Scripps Institution of Oceanography; Joe Arvai, University of Michigan; and Rob DeConto, University of Massachusetts.

## Developing science-based, user-informed policy guidance

Input from users of the guidance document will be solicited at multiple points throughout the update process. In February, March and April 2017, an *Engagement Team* led by Susanne Moser Research & Consulting and Climate Access, a not-for-profit organization, will conduct interviews and five listening sessions to better understand the needs of those who will use the guidance document. This input will help ensure that the updated guidance is understandable and useful for planning and decision-making.

In summer 2017, the California Ocean Protection Council and California Ocean Science Trust, with support from the Engagement Team, will convene a series of public workshops with state, regional, and local stakeholders to share the science findings and to solicit feedback on how stakeholders will utilize the guidance document. Public input on the guidance framework will help shape the updated draft policy guidance document. The *Policy Advisory Committee*, comprised of the California Ocean Protection Council and California Natural Resources Agency, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research and the California Energy Commission, will prepare the updated draft guidance. This draft will then be circulated for formal public comment in the fall of 2017, with final adoption by the California Ocean Protection Council scheduled for January 2018.

## Contact Us

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## Stay Updated\*

For additional details, continual updates on the guidance document process, and opportunities for stakeholder input (e.g., dates of listening sessions and workshops or the public comment period):

- Subscribe to OPC's public listserv, "CNRA OCEANS PUBLIC" at [opc.ca.gov](http://opc.ca.gov)
- Visit <http://www.opc.ca.gov/climate-change/updating-californias-sea-level-rise-guidance/>
- Visit <http://www.oceansciencetrust.org/projects/updating-californias-sea-level-rise-guidance>