

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
November 10, 2011

To: Coastal Conservancy Members

From: Sam Schuchat, Executive Officer
Nadine Hitchcock, Deputy Executive Officer

Cc: Legislative Representatives

Re: Consideration and Possible Adoption of a Revision to the *Coastal Conservancy Climate Change Policy* and to the *Project Selection Criteria* Related to Sea Level Rise and Extreme Events

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Consideration and possible adoption of a proposed revision to the *Coastal Conservancy Climate Change Policy* (“*Climate Change Policy*”), attached as [Exhibit 1 to this memorandum](#); and to the Conservancy’s *Project Selection Criteria*, attached as [Exhibit 2 to this memorandum](#).

A proposed resolution for adoption of the revised *Climate Change Policy* and *Project Selection Criteria* follows. Upon adoption, the revised *Climate Change Policy* and *Project Selection Criteria* will be made available on the Conservancy’s website and will be provided to applicants.

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Coastal Conservancy Climate Change Policy](#)
 - Exhibit 2: [Coastal Conservancy Project Selection Criteria](#)
 - Exhibit 3: [Co-CAT Interim Guidance Document](#)
 - Exhibit 4: [OPC SLR Resolution](#)
 - Exhibit 5: [June 4, 2009 Staff Recommendation](#)
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RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31000 et seq. of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby adopts the revised: 1) *Coastal Conservancy*

CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY AND PROJECT-SELECTION CRITERIA

Climate Change Policy, attached as Exhibit 1 to the accompanying memorandum; and 2) *Conservancy Project Selection Criteria*, attached as Exhibit 2 to the accompanying memorandum, to address vulnerability to flooding and erosion due to sea level rise, and extreme events such as storms and tsunamis.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff memorandum and its attached exhibits, the Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The revised *Coastal Conservancy Climate Change Policy* and *Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines* regarding vulnerability to sea-level rise and extreme events are consistent with and will support implementation of the Conservancy’s statutory responsibilities under Division 21 of the California Public Resources Code.
2. The revisions to the *Coastal Conservancy Climate Change Policy* and to the Conservancy’s *Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines* are intended to provide a policy reference and a strategy to address the impacts from sea-level rise and extreme events while conserving California’s coastal and ocean resources, ensuring public access to and along the coast, and providing a broad context for evaluating new opportunities and allocating resources.”

Background

The Conservancy *Climate Change Policy* and *Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines*, adopted on June 4, 2009, include a policy and required project selection criteria specific to addressing vulnerability to future sea-level rise. These were developed in part in response to the Governor’s Executive Order S-13-08 (2008) which required state agencies to assess and reduce the vulnerability of all projects to sea-level rise by considering a range of sea-level rise scenarios as part of project planning. The adopted policy and criteria incorporated the latest science available at that time, including sea-level rise projections funded by the CA Ocean Protection Council.

Three key state policy documents have subsequently been developed and incorporate the latest science and recommendations pertaining to how to incorporate sea-level rise into project planning and decision making:

1. 2009 California Climate Adaptation Strategy.
2. State of California Sea-Level Rise Interim Guidance Document (“CO-CAT Interim Guidance Document” – October 2010).
3. Sea-Level Rise Resolution adopted by the California Ocean Protection Council on March 11, 2011 (“OPC SLR Resolution” – March 2011).

The CO-CAT Interim Guidance Document was developed collaboratively by a state agency task force of the Coastal and Ocean Working Group of the California Climate

CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY AND PROJECT-SELECTION CRITERIA

Action Team, with science input from the California Ocean Protection Council's Science Advisory Team and the California Ocean Science Trust. It provides high and low projections of sea-level rise for multiple time periods and recommends using a risk-based approach for evaluating the impacts to a project from sea-level rise, extreme events and shoreline change.

The OPC SLR Resolution provides further guidance on assessing sea-level rise and extreme event impacts. The Resolution is applicable to state agencies and entities implementing projects funded by the state. The *Co-CAT Interim Guidance Document* and the *OPC SLR Resolution* are attached in their entirety as Exhibit 3 and 4, respectively.

Description of *Climate Change Policy* amendment and revised *Project Selection Criteria*

Existing Conservancy Sea-level Rise Climate Change Policy

The adopted *Climate Change Policy* describes the strategies and actions that the Conservancy will use to address climate change. The Sea-level Rise policy directs staff to consider vulnerabilities to sea-level rise, and other climate change impacts when evaluating potential projects to fund, and states that prior to the completion of the National Academies of Science report on sea-level rise, applicants should use the following sea level rise scenarios in assessing project vulnerability and, to the extent feasible, reducing expected risks and increasing resiliency to sea-level rise:

- a. 16 inches (40 cm) by 2050.
- b. 55 inches (140 cm) by 2100.

These specific estimates of sea-level rise were selected because they reflected findings from the most comprehensive state-wide analysis of sea-level rise at that time.

Proposed Sea-level Rise and Extreme Events Climate Change Policy

The latest science and state policy directives acknowledge that there is too much uncertainty about the rate and extent and variability of local conditions to specify coast-wide projections for sea-level rise. In addition, the most recent science predicts that the greatest impacts and damage to coastal resources will result from extreme events. The approach now recommended is to assess a project's vulnerability by looking at range of sea level rise scenarios which cover the time horizon for the expected life of a particular project.

The proposed revised Conservancy Sea-level Rise and Extreme Events *Climate Change Policy* incorporates the latest recommendations by requiring consideration of extreme events, eliminating specific sea-level rise estimates for years 2050 and 2100, and by requiring use of current scientific information.

CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY AND PROJECT-SELECTION CRITERIA

Sea-level Rise and Extreme Events. The Conservancy will consider flooding and erosion due to sea-level rise, and extreme events such as storms and tsunamis in assessing project vulnerability and, to the extent feasible, reduce expected risks and increase adaptive capacity using current scientific information and state guidance documents.

Project Selection Criteria

Staff recommends revising the adopted project selection criterion pertaining to sea level rise by eliminating the requirement that planning shall consider sea-level rise “for the years 2050 and 2100.” This will allow for consideration of impacts based on projections over different time periods depending on the expected life of a project, and on predictions included in newly completed science.

The recommended revised criterion on sea-level rise is as follows:

Sea level rise vulnerability: Consistent with Executive Order S-13-08, for new projects located in areas vulnerable to future sea- level rise, planning shall consider a range of sea level rise scenarios in order to assess project vulnerability and, to the extent feasible, reduce expected risks and increase resiliency to sea-level rise.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY ENABLING LEGISLATION

See the attached June 4, 2009 staff recommendation (Exhibit 5) for the finding of consistency with Conservancy Enabling Legislation.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S 2007 STRATEGIC PLAN

See the attached June 4, 2009 staff recommendation (Exhibit 5) for the finding of consistency with the Conservancy’s *2007 Strategic Plan*.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA

See the attached June 4, 2009 staff recommendation (Exhibit 5) for the finding of compliance with CEQA.