



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: COUNTY MANAGER: OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

File #: 19-1178

Board Meeting Date: 12/10/2019

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Jim Eggemeyer, Director, Office of Sustainability
Subject: Resolution Adopting the Sea Level Rise Policy for County-Owned Assets

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution approving the County of San Mateo Sea Level Rise Policy for County-Owned Assets.

BACKGROUND:

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the leading international scientific body on climate change, states that global greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced to net zero by 2050 to protect the earth from severe impacts, including substantial sea level rise. Sea level rise impacts include flooding, stronger waves, rising groundwater tables and saltwater intrusion, and increased erosion of the shoreline, all of which are exacerbated by coastal storms. In addition, high water levels can prevent water from draining to the bay or ocean, which can cause flooding, further inland far from the shore.

To address this challenge, the County has already implemented a Green Building Policy, which aims to achieve net zero emissions at new facilities and a Climate Emergency Declaration requiring the County to develop and enact resiliency policies and plans to ensure continuous operation of County services and facilities. The Board of Supervisors and the Office of Sustainability also launched the "Sea Change SMC" initiative, finalized a Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment in 2018, and launched Climate Ready SMC to share best practices for climate change preparedness.

DISCUSSION:

Creating a more resilient infrastructure to sea level rise and flooding is an important, and complementary next step in the County's efforts to address climate change. A Sea Level Rise Policy for County-Owned Assets is expected to increase the useful life of County facilities; protect residents and staff today and assure County operations will be continuous; reduce the current and future risks from sea level rise and flooding; reduce liability; and reduce insurance premiums and impacts to property value.

The policy requires all County-owned and operated assets, design and construction projects, leases, and property acquisitions and dispositions to consider sea level rise risks. The policy applies to new design and construction projects, Capital Improvement Projects, property acquisitions and dispositions, major renovations, and leased property greater than or equal to 7,500 square feet or \$500,000 in value.

Implementation of this policy will provide critical information on near term risks occurring before 3.3 feet of sea level rise and allow for planning and adaptation strategies over the life of the property, by requiring the development of a baseline assessment of sea level rise risks for County-owned assets. The policy requires the consideration of regional sea level rise adaptation and flood mitigation projects. The goal of this approach is to ensure actions are taken when needed and will encourage fiscally responsible decisions.

The policy establishes the Climate Change Preparedness Working Group, led by the Office of Sustainability and including representatives from County departments that participated in the policy working group. The working group will oversee the implementation and tracking of the policy.

The Office of Sustainability recommends the Board of Supervisors adopt the Sea Level Rise Policy for County-Owned Assets. By adopting this policy, the County will lead by example and be environmentally and economically sustainable through sea level rise preparedness, showcasing innovative and sustainable preparedness strategies.

County Counsel has reviewed and approved the resolution as to form.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no net County cost associated with adoption of the proposed policy. However, there will be substantial future costs associated with the implementation of climate adaptation plans.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Sea Level Rise Policy for County-Owned Assets
- B. Implementation Plan