



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: COUNTY MANAGER

File #: 21-817

Board Meeting Date: 10/19/2021

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Michael P. Callagy, County Manager
Subject: Board of Supervisors' Response to the 2020-2021 Civil Grand Jury Report "San Mateo County: California's Ground Zero for Sea Level Rise"

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the Board of Supervisors' response to the 2020-2021 Civil Grand Jury Report, "San Mateo County: California's Ground Zero for Sea Level Rise."

BACKGROUND:

On August 11, 2021, the 2020-2021 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury issued a report titled "San Mateo County: California's Ground Zero for Sea Level Rise." The Board of Supervisors is required to submit comments on the findings and recommendations pertaining to the matters over which it has some decision-making authority within 90 days. The Board's response to the report is due to the Honorable Judge Amarra A. Lee of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo, no later than November 11, 2021.

DISCUSSION:

The Grand Jury made 13 findings and four recommendations in its report. Staff has collaborated with cities and OneShoreline, where applicable, on the County's response to the Grand Jury Report. The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors (Board) responses follow each finding and the four recommendations that the Grand Jury requested that the Board respond to within 90 days.

FINDINGS

Finding 1:

Sea level rise will seriously damage critical San Mateo County infrastructure and assets unless the County and its cities and towns prepare now.

Response: The County of San Mateo **agrees** with this finding.

Finding 2:

Sea level rise infrastructure projects can take more than a decade to plan, fund and build.

Response: The County of San Mateo **agrees** with this finding.

Finding 3:

Complex federal and state regulations and procedures delay and increase the costs of already expensive sea level rise mitigation projects. They need to be revised.

Response: The County of San Mateo **partially agrees** with this finding. Federal and state regulations and procedures can be very complex as they relate to sea level mitigation projects due to the sheer number of factors that must be considered in projects of this scale and impact. These may or may not cause delays and increase the costs of already expensive sea level rise mitigation projects. Many regulations and procedures are designed to safeguard the environment and protect human safety and not all federal and state regulations and procedures will require revision though opportunities for revision likely exist.

Finding 4:

Delaying sea level rise projects will increase costs.

Response: The County of San Mateo **agrees** with this finding.

Finding 5:

To remain effective, OneShoreline needs steady, long-term, operational funding.

Response: The County of San Mateo **agrees** with this finding.

Finding 6:

Coordination between neighboring jurisdictions is important to reduce costs and improve the effectiveness of a SLR project.

Response: The County of San Mateo **agrees** with this finding.

Finding 7:

Competing budget priorities among the entities in a sea level rise project make the projects difficult to fund and manage, leading to risk of delays and missed deadlines.

Response: The County of San Mateo **partially disagrees** with this finding. The County agrees that the magnitude of costs associated with countering sea level rise poses difficulties in obtaining adequate funding for projects. If funding can be secured, there may be challenges for multiple entities working together, but in general properly scoped and managed projects can be successfully delivered on time and on budget.

Finding 8:

Numerous hazardous material sites in the County must be protected from sea level rise flooding.

Response: The County of San Mateo **agrees** with this finding.

Finding 9:

Storm surge and sea level rise threaten the County's wastewater treatment plants affecting everyone

in the County - even inland County residents.

Response: The County of San Mateo **partially agrees** with this finding. The County of San Mateo's Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment evaluated wastewater treatment plants and found that many of the plants are threatened by storm surge and sea level rise, but not all of the plants.

Finding 10:

OneShoreline is uniquely positioned to augment San Mateo County's ability to combat sea level rise by its planning, funding, permitting expertise, and guidance.

Response: The County of San Mateo **agrees** with this finding.

Finding 11:

Destruction of low-cost housing on the Bay and coast by flooding and erosion due to sea level rise will further increase inequities in communities such as Belle Haven (Menlo Park), East Palo Alto, Redwood City, and Pacifica.

Response: The County of San Mateo **agrees** with this finding. Based on the analysis completed in the County's 2018 Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment, additional areas in San Mateo, Burlingame, and San Bruno also have socially vulnerable communities at risk from flooding due to sea level rise.

Finding 12:

OneShoreline effectively collaborates with the Office of Sustainability and others on public engagement campaigns to educate individuals on how sea level rise will affect San Mateo County.

Response: The County of San Mateo **agrees** with this finding.

Finding 13:

A loan program to provide cities and towns funds for the required preliminary engineering necessary to obtain partial state or federal funding for SLR projects would be beneficial.

Response: This finding refers to cities and towns. As such, the County does not have a basis for a response.

RECOMMENDATIONS REQUESTING COUNTY RESPONSE

Recommendation 1:

At a public meeting, each city and town council, or board of supervisors should take at least one concrete action toward establishing a continuing funding source for OneShoreline, identify that action in response to this report, and potentially adopt a resolution expressing support for a parcel tax or property tax by June 30, 2022.

Response: ***This recommendation is being explored.*** OOS and County staff will continue to support OneShoreline in identifying long-term funding sources.

Recommendation 2:

A coordinated lobbying strategy with participation by the County, by San Mateo County cities and towns, by OneShoreline, and by other interested Bay Area cities and counties for federal and state

regulatory simplification by January 31, 2022.

Response: Elements of this recommendation are already implemented. In the County's 2021 Board of Supervisors adopted legislative platform, the County has stated that it will work closely with OneShoreline to "advocate for State and federal legislation and agency actions that bring new funding and modify policies and regulations that enable the District to achieve its climate resilience objectives throughout San Mateo County."

Recommendation 4:

The County Board of Supervisors, and each city and town council, should ensure that their general plans regarding SLR protection include transportation and utility infrastructure, schools, public safety facilities, and hazardous material sites by March 31, 2022.

Response: *This recommendation is in the process of being implemented and will not be completed by March 31, 2022.* The County is planning on initiating the effort to update the County's safety element of the general plan for the San Mateo County unincorporated areas and sea level rise will be one of the considerations in this update. This effort will include the evaluation of transportation and utility infrastructure, schools, public safety facilities, and hazardous material sites. The draft of the 2021 Multijurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJLMHP) includes two mitigation actions for the County of San Mateo related to this Recommendation:

- **Action SMC-16**-Complete the San Mateo County Climate Action Plan and the San Mateo County Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment. When complete, coordinate the implementation with the Local Climate Adaptation Policy Guide for Local Governments (Cal OES) to reduce risks exacerbated by climate change and sea level rise impacts and to adapt to those impacts. Integrate climate adaptation actions across regional and local General Plans (including Safety and Housing elements), Local Coastal Programs, Housing Plans, mitigation planning efforts, and infrastructure planning and development. Hazards Mitigated: Sea Level Rise/Climate Change
- **Action SMC-11**-Integrate the hazard mitigation plan into other plans, ordinances, and programs that dictate land use decisions in the community, including the County's General Plan, the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, the Green Infrastructure Plan, and the upcoming Climate Resilience Strategy, and develop appropriate implementation procedures following plan adoption. Hazards Mitigated: Sea Level Rise/Climate Change, Landslide/Mass Movements, Earthquake, Dam Failure, Flood, Severe Weather, Wildfire, Drought, Tsunami

FISCAL IMPACT:

This report has no fiscal impact. All programs described in this report are already funded through existing sources.