

New Sea Level Rise Policies Fact Sheet

The San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) updated the *San Francisco Bay Plan* in October 2011 to deal with the expected impacts of climate change in San Francisco Bay. The new and revised Bay Plan policies are summarized below:

- **Risk Assessments:** Sea level rise risk assessments are required when planning shoreline areas or designing larger shoreline projects. If sea level rise and storms that are expected to occur during the life of the project would result in public safety risks, the project must be designed to cope with flood levels expected by mid-century. If it is likely that the project will remain in place longer than mid-century, the applicant must have a plan to address the flood risks expected at the end of the century.
 - Risk assessments are NOT required for repairs of existing facilities, interim projects, small projects that do not increase risks to public safety, and infill projects within existing urbanized areas.
 - Risk assessments are ONLY required within BCDC's jurisdiction.
 - Risk assessments for projects located only in the shoreline band, an area within 100 feet of the shoreline, need only address risks to public access.
- **Sea Level Rise Projections:** Risk assessments must be based on the best estimates of future sea level rise. The California Climate Action Team's sea level rise projections, ranging from 10-17 inches at mid-century and 31-69 inches at the end of the century, currently provide the best available sea level rise projections for the West Coast. However, scientific uncertainty remains regarding the pace and amount of future sea level rise, and project applicants may use other sea level rise projections if they provide an explanation.
- **Protecting Existing and Planned Development:** Fill may be placed in the Bay to protect existing and planned development from flooding as well as erosion. New projects on fill that are likely to be affected by future sea level rise and storm activity during the life of the project must:
 - Be set back far enough from the shoreline to avoid flooding;
 - Be elevated above expected flood levels;
 - Be designed to tolerate flooding; or
 - Employ other means of addressing flood risks.
- **Designing Shoreline Protection:** Shoreline protection projects, such as levees and seawalls, must be designed to withstand the effects of projected sea level rise and to be integrated with adjacent shoreline protection. Whenever feasible, projects must integrate hard shoreline protection structures with natural features that enhance the Bay ecosystem, e.g., by including marsh or upland vegetation in the design.
- **Preserving Public Access:** Public access must be designed and maintained to avoid flood damage due to sea level rise and storms. Any public access provided as a condition of development must either remain viable in the event of future sea level rise or flooding, or equivalent access consistent with the project must be provided nearby.
- **Ecosystem Protection and Restoration:** Where feasible, ecosystem restoration projects must be designed to provide space for marsh migration as sea level rises.
- **Encouraging Resilient Development:** The policies encourage projects if their regional benefits, such as reducing carbon emissions by locating jobs and housing near public transportation, outweigh the risk from flooding. Projects that do not negatively impact the Bay and do not increase risks to public safety, such as repairs, small and interim projects, and parks, are also encouraged.
- **Preserving Undeveloped Areas:** The policies encourage preservation and habitat enhancement in undeveloped areas that are vulnerable to future flooding and contain significant habitats or species, or are especially suitable for ecosystem enhancement.
- **Regional Strategy.** The policies call on the Commission, working with other agencies and the general public, to develop a regional strategy for
 - Protecting critical developed areas along the shoreline from flooding;
 - Enhancing the natural resources of the Bay by preserving existing habitat and identifying areas where tidal wetlands can migrate landward; and
 - Improving the ability of communities to adapt to sea level rise in ways that advance economic prosperity, social equity and environmental protection.

For the complete text of the sea level rise policies, please see the [amended San Francisco Bay Plan](#) .