



Poster Title: California Coastal Commission Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance

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Poster Abstract:

Sea level rise has long been a concern for the Coastal Commission because its potential impacts fall directly within the Coastal Commission's planning and regulatory responsibilities under the Coastal Act. Sea level rise increases the risk of flooding, coastal erosion, wave attack, and saltwater intrusion into freshwater supplies, which have the potential to threaten many of the resources that are integral to the California coast, including coastal development, coastal access and recreation, habitats (e.g., wetlands, coastal bluffs, dunes, and beaches), coastal agricultural lands, water quality and supply, cultural resources, community character, and scenic quality. Different responses to the effects of sea level rise can also have significant effects on coastal resources. For example, seawalls can have significant adverse effects on beaches, near shore habitat, and scenic values.

As part of its ongoing work to address these issues, the California Coastal Commission's Strategic Plan for 2013-2018 identified several actions for the Commission staff and partner organizations to take to address sea level rise and climate change. The Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance, unanimously adopted by the Coastal Commission in August 2015, is a key accomplishment in implementing the Commission's Strategic Plan items on climate change. The document is a critical piece of the overall state effort to address sea level rise and climate change. For example, it reflects the broad concepts and strategies in Safeguarding California — particularly the Coast and Oceans chapter — and complements it by providing information more specific to the Coastal Act, including Local Coastal Programs and Coastal Development Permits.

The basic contents of the Policy Guidance include: guiding principles for addressing sea level rise in California's coastal zone; a discussion of the best available science on sea level rise and its possible impacts; step-by-step guidance for addressing sea level rise in Local Coastal Programs and the Coastal Development Permit process; descriptions of a variety of possible adaptation strategies; a discussion of the legal context of sea level rise adaptation planning; and detailed appendices with technical information and additional resources. The poster highlights some of the key elements of the Guidance including the guiding principles, suggested SLR scenarios for use in planning and project design, steps for addressing sea level rise in Local Coastal Programs and Coastal Development Permits, as well as some examples of how the Commission is working with local governments and applicants to implement the guidance since its adoption.