



Media Release

Climate Report Prompts Proposed Policy Changes to Protect San Francisco Bay and Outlying Areas

More Natural Solutions are Recommended

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SAN FRANCISCO— In an effort to aggressively combat the impacts of climate change on low-lying areas of the Bay Area, the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board today proposed changes to the region’s Water Quality Control Plan to better protect shorelines from sea level rise, storm surges and flooding.

The recommended revisions to the document – which is known as the Basin Plan and serves as the master policy document for water quality regulation in the region – incorporate the most advanced science and reflect findings in “[The Wetland Climate Change Update Project Report](#),” a comprehensive analysis by regional staff that was released in October.

Presented today to the Bay Area Regional Collaborative, a local coalition of city council members, county supervisors, environmental planning representatives and others who play a critical role in decisions that impact the area’s watersheds and shorelines, the measures emphasize greener, more natural solutions and include the following:

- Strategic placement of sediment to replenish and maintain marshes.
- Changing the location and configuration of levees to allow marshes to migrate to higher elevations.
- Positioning gravel – rather than rocks and concrete – in areas that restore and enhance beaches, effectively protecting the shoreline without harming the ecosystem.

“Protecting vulnerable communities and critical habitat is a priority for us, and we need to move quickly,” said Michael Montgomery, Executive Officer of the San Francisco Water Board. “The proposed changes we shared today are critical to adapting and safeguarding our vulnerable shorelines and imperiled watersheds.”

The bay’s tidal marshes and mudflats, which are critical to water quality because they filter pollution, protect against flooding and provide habitat for native species particularly at risk. The sea level rise could drown most of the marshes, convert vast areas of mudflats to open water, and make it more challenging, if not impossible, to fulfill habitat



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restoration goals. In addition, the changes threaten to permanently impact preservation of rare and endangered species, fish migration and spawning, recreation and commercial fishing.

The state's nine regional water boards are required to develop, adopt and amend their basin plans at regular intervals. The findings in staff's October climate change report form the basis for a future amendment. A public comment period is anticipated later this year.

These recommendations are closely aligned with the new [Adaptation Atlas](#) that was developed by SFEI with financial support from the Water Board. Additional information on the regional board's response to [climate change](#) is available on our [website](#).

The [San Francisco Water Board](#) is a state agency responsible for protecting and improving the quality of Bay Area wetlands and waters. One of nine regional boards, its jurisdiction covers 4,600 square miles, including 110 miles of scenic coastline and the San Francisco Bay, the centerpiece of the largest estuary on the West Coast, and supports abundant natural resources such as fish and migratory birds.