
SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER

Senator Henry Stern, Chair
2021 - 2022 Regular

Bill No:	SB 418	Hearing Date:	April 27, 2021
Author:	Laird		
Version:	March 17, 2021 Amended		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Katharine Moore		

Subject: Sea level rise planning: database

BACKGROUND AND EXISTING LAW

The state's recent Fourth Climate Change Assessment found that climate change impacts in the coastal zone already are "unprecedented," and will include the direct impacts of sea level rise, changes in ocean conditions, increased flooding (including from rising groundwater tables, but also high "king" tides), and other hazards. Sea level rise poses an immediate and real threat to coastal ecosystems, livelihoods and economies, public access to the coast, recreation, private property, public infrastructure, water supplies, and the well-being and safety of coastal communities, including vulnerable populations.

The sea level along the state's coastline is currently predicted to rise by as much as one-half foot by 2030 and up to 7 feet by 2100. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 12.3 million people were employed in coastal California in 2015, earning about \$883.5 billion, which corresponds to over \$2 trillion in annual gross domestic product. Just over 2/3s of the state's residents live in coastal counties. Sea level rise puts this at risk.

Recent projections of the impacts of sea level rise on the state include:

- Between \$8 billion to \$10 billion of existing property is likely to be underwater by 2050 with an additional \$6 billion to \$10 billion of property at risk during high tides.
- An increase of four feet or more in Bay levels would cause daily flooding for nearly 28,000 socially vulnerable residents in the San Francisco Bay Area.
- Up to 2/3s of Southern California beaches may become completely eroded by 2100.
- According to the US Geological Survey, the cost of building levees, sea walls and other measures to withstand 6.5 feet of sea level rise and a 100-year storm in San Francisco Bay by itself could cost as much as \$450 billion.
- Sea level rise could result in the loss of most of the state's salt marshes with a corresponding decrease in the populations of species that depend upon those for habitat. Coastal bluffs will also continue to erode.

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) in state government composed of the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency, the Secretary for Environmental

Protection, the Chair of the State Lands Commission and two members of the public appointed by the Governor.

- a) The OPC advances science, develops climate adaptation strategies, and provides grants for certain sea level rise-related planning and related efforts, among other things.
- 2) Establishes the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) which serves the Governor by providing long-range planning and research, and by acting as the state's comprehensive planning agency.
 - a) Programs within OPR coordinate the state's clearinghouse for climate adaptation information, and develop tools to inform state-led programs related to climate, among other things.
- 3) Requires the Natural Resources Agency, in collaboration with the Ocean Protection Council, to create, update biannually, and post on an internet website a Planning for Sea Level Rise Database (Database). (Public Resources Code (PRC) §§30961 *et seq*)
 - a) The Database describes steps being taken throughout the state to prepare for, and adapt to, sea level rise. Legislative intent states that the Database is intended to provide the public with an educational tool that will enable viewing of up-to-date information from a single source about actions taken to address sea level rise.
 - b) Among other requirements, certain public agencies and private entities are required to provide to the Natural Resources Agency sea level rise planning information, as defined, that is under the control or jurisdiction of the public agencies or private entities. The Natural Resources Agency is required to determine the information necessary for inclusion in the Database, as prescribed.
 - c) In addition, the California Coastal Commission is required to provide information related to its local coastal program for inclusion in the Database.
 - d) The Database sunsets on January 1, 2023.

PROPOSED LAW

This bill would extend the sunset of the Planning for Sea Level Rise Database until January 1, 2028.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT

According to the author, "SB 418 ensures the state prolongs the lifespan of the Planning for Sea Level Rise Database, which has become an effective educational tool benefitting local governments, communities, and the public. Unfortunately, the negative impacts of climate change have become commonplace in California. Communities and critical infrastructure across the state have been forced to grapple with worsening wildfires, droughts, and a host of other extreme weather events."

"Sea level rise is an often-overlooked aspect of climate change, but it has the potential to be one of the most damaging of threats. A 2019 team of U.S. Geological Survey

scientists found that even a small increase in sea level rise could be an overwhelming force when a storm hits. This database includes information on a variety of project details from a host of different public and private projects; these insights have become a useful tool for stakeholders to stay informed on the actions taken by relevant entities in their policies to combat sea level rise. Extending this sunset provision is necessary to ensure this invaluable educational tool can be used to assess our most vulnerable infrastructure, and communities.”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

None received

COMMENTS

Climate adaptation and resilience. Since the bill that created the Database (AB 2516 (Gordon, Chapter 522, Statutes of 2014) became law, the state’s efforts to collect and make climate adaptation and resilience information available to the public have expanded, as have coordinated efforts between state entities related to climate adaptation and resilience. Of relevance here, was the creation of the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resilience Program (ICARP) and the Adaptation Clearinghouse at OPR (SB 246 (Wieckowski, Chapter 606, Statutes of 2015)). The Adaptation Clearinghouse website (“resilientCA.org”) came into use in 2018. The information collected for the Database is now hosted there. (The last Database update on OPC’s website is dated August 2018.) While there is no statutory requirement that the Database be posted on OPC’s website, this example serves to highlight that one of the goals of a sunset extension is to review whether any changes would improve the extended program’s performance. The Adaptation Clearinghouse is intended to be a comprehensive resource, sea level rise planning documents are generally not updated every six months, and the Coastal Commission’s local coastal program information is posted on the Coastal Commission’s own website.

As the bill moves forward, the author may wish to consider reviewing the Database’s statutory requirements to improve its implementation and ensure that its goals continue to be met within the state framework for climate adaptation and resilience. Should any ensuing changes be substantive, the Committee may wish to re-hear the bill.

Also at the Adaptation Clearinghouse. The Adaptation Clearinghouse hosts Cal-Adapt which includes data related to climate adaptation and resilience generated by the research and scientific community that can be used to explore local level impacts. Cal-Adapt’s visualization tools help to illustrate how climate impacts – such as rising sea levels, or increasing temperatures – will impact different communities in the state in the future. Links to the “Our Coast, Our Future” project are also hosted at the Adaptation Clearinghouse. This project uses the US Geological Survey’s Coastal Storm Modeling System (CoSMoS) to provide detailed predictions of coastal flooding related to sea level rise and storms. Interactive maps showing local impacts are available.

Vulnerable public trust lands and related assets. AB 691 (Muratsuchi, Chapter 592, Statutes of 2013) required certain trustees of granted public trust lands to provide sea level rise assessment information to the State Lands Commission. In 2021, the State Lands Commission anticipates posting two-page summary documents of the information provided online. The summaries will highlight the best practices in

performing the assessments, the most vulnerable priority public trust assets, and recommendations for future sea level rise planning efforts.

Dusk. The Database's sunset is 20 months in the future (January 1, 2023).

Recent related legislation

SB 576 (Umberg, Chapter 374, Statutes of 2019) requires entities to share certain information on the Adaptation Clearinghouse related to climate adaptation, among other things.

AB 65 (Petrie-Norris, Chapter 347, Statutes of 2019) requires the State Coastal Conservancy to prioritize projects that provide natural infrastructure and multiple public benefits when allocating certain state monies.

AB 184 (Berman, Chapter 338, Statutes of 2017) extended the sunset on the planning for sea level rise database for 5 years, until January 1, 2023.

SB 246 (Wieckowski, Chapter 606, Statutes of 2015) created the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program designed to develop a cohesive and coordinated response to the impacts of climate change across state, local, and regional levels, including the State Climate Adaptation Clearinghouse at OPR, among other things.

AB 2516 (Gordon, Chapter 522, Statutes of 2014) created the planning for sea level rise database by the Natural Resources Agency, in collaboration with the Ocean Protection Council, with a sunset date of January 1, 2018.

AB 691 (Muratsuchi, Chapter 592, Statutes of 2013) required certain trustees of granted public trust lands to provide sea level rise assessment information to the State Lands Commission.

SUPPORT

California State Association of Counties
Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association

OPPOSITION

None received

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