Office of Senate Floor Analyses
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THIRD READING

Bill No: SB 418
Author: Laird (D)
Amended: 3/17/21
Vote: 21

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 9-0, 4/27/21
AYES: Laird, Jones, Allen, Eggman, Grove, Hertzberg, Hueso, Limón, Stern

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 5/20/21
AYES: Portantino, Bates, Bradford, Jones, Kamlager, Laird, Wieckowski

SUBJECT: Sea level rise planning: database

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill extends the sunset of the Planning for Sea Level Rise Database from January 1, 2023, until January 1, 2028.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

1) Establishes the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) in state government composed of the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), 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 CNRA, in collaboration with the OPC, 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 CNRA sea level rise planning information, as defined, that is under the control or jurisdiction of the public agencies or private entities. The CNRA 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.

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

Background

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 two-thirds 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 billon 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 two-thirds 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.

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.) 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.

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 to provide detailed predictions of coastal flooding related to sea level rise and storms. Interactive maps showing local impacts are available.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, ongoing costs of approximately $65,000 annually (General Fund) for CNRA to continue to maintain and update the database. CNRA was not able to provide a fiscal estimate at the time of this analysis. This estimate is based on fiscal information for the establishing legislation and subsequent sunset extension bills.

SUPPORT: (Verified 5/21/21)

California State Association of Counties
League of California Cities
Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association

OPPOSITION: (Verified 5/21/21)

None received

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."

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