



July 10, 2015

Via Electronic Mail and United States Mail

Steve Kinsey, Chair
Honorable Commissioners
California Coastal Commission
45 Fremont Street, Suite 2000
San Francisco, CA 91405

California Coastal Commission
c/o Sea-Level Rise Work Group
45 Fremont Street, Suite 2000
San Francisco, CA 94105

Re: Comments to the Revised Draft Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance Document

Dear Chair Kinsey and Honorable Members of the California Coastal Commission:

This comment letter is provided to you on behalf of the City of Newport Beach. First, we wish to express our appreciation to the California Coastal Commission staff for their responses to the City's February 13, 2014 comment letter and addressing many of the City's concerns regarding the October 13, 2013 Public Review Draft of Sea Level Rise Guidance Document. The City also appreciates the opportunity to comment on the May 15, 2015 Public Review Draft of Sea Level Rise Guidance Document.

The threat of sea-level rise is of major importance to Newport Beach. Although our land area is less than 24 square miles, we have over 45 miles of shoreline. Using the "best available science on sea-level rise," as ascribed by the Guidance Document, over 4,000 properties could be subject to flooding in Newport Beach on the Balboa Peninsula, Balboa Island, and West Newport. Our shoreline communities, visitor-serving industry, world-class small-craft harbor, and natural habitats could potentially sustain damages costing billions of dollars to repair.

For these reasons, the City has worked to prepare for sea-level rise. In 2010, after a three-year-long study on sea-level rise, the City concluded that Balboa Island and Little Balboa Island may need additional protection. The City's Tidelands Management

Committee is currently studying a long-term program for infrastructure protection should flooding result from storm surges and high tide conditions.

The City, as a trustee of granted public trust lands, has management authority over the development and uses of public trust lands that will be affected by sea-level rise. Pursuant to AB 691, the City will assess the impacts of sea-level rise on these public trust lands by January 1, 2019.

The City will continue to study and implement necessary policies and regulations to address long-term sea-level rise. However, the City is concerned that the Guidance Document may result in a delay to the certification of the City's Local Coastal Program (LCP) Implementation Plan.

The City has had a certified land use plan since 1982, and it was most recently updated in 2009, following a comprehensive update of the City's General Plan in 2006. Our Zoning Code was updated in 2010, so certification of LCP Implementation Plan is a major goal of the City.

In February 2015, the City distributed the Notice of Intent for the LCP Implementation Plan. The City just completed a series of community workshops and study sessions on the LCP Implementation Plan and is nearing the end of a productive collaboration effort with the Coastal Commission's South Coast District staff. Public hearings on the LCP Implementation are slated to begin in September and submittal to the Coastal Commission is expected by the end of the year. Applying the Guidance Document's ascribed procedures for addressing the sea-level rise would require an immediate halt to the City's certification effort. Data collection, technical analyses, risk assessment, and policy reassessments will take years. This would be unfair and inappropriate to the City's certification effort which is so far advanced.

Full certification of the City's LCP will transfer coastal development permit authority to the City, which will have the beneficial effect of significantly reducing the Coastal Commission staff's workload. Currently, Coastal Commission staff processes approximately 70 to 100 Newport Beach coastal development permit applications each year. Delaying this benefit for years would not be in the best interest of the City or the Coastal Commission.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Guidance Document, and we look forward to collaborating with the Coastal Commission in the future.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Kimberly Brandt.

Kimberly Brandt, AICP
Director