

State agency to draw up plan for sea level rise in Bay Area

John King, San Francisco Chronicle, 10-9-16

The state agency that keeps watch over San Francisco Bay intends to draw up a plan for how the region can prepare itself for the likelihood of sea level rise.

The plan would be done within three years and focus on two things — coming up with “vulnerability assessments” for each section of the shoreline and spelling out how to adapt to the changes that might lie ahead.

“We need to take stock of what’s vulnerable, and prepare a response that makes ourselves more resilient and prosperous,” Larry Goldzband, executive director of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, said Friday. The commission was created by the state in the 1960s to review any developments within 100 feet of the bay.

The unanimous vote by the agency’s commissioners Thursday also recommends that local governments “explore new institutional arrangements to address the impacts of climate change.” This could open the door to calls for a regional authority in charge of a regional response to sea level rise, although the commissioners for now emphasize the importance of “collaboration and partnerships” rather than anything stronger.

The vote comes more than four months after the 27-member commission agreed in principle to the same set of recommendations. Despite the delay, the only change beyond grammatical ones is a preamble emphasizing “this is a diverse Bay Area with a productive bay, both environmentally and economically,” Goldzband said.

The Thursday meeting showed another way that a regional response is emerging. The commissioners agreed to begin working with Caltrans and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission to assess the dangers to major roadways and rail corridors as well as “communities with characteristics that make them more vulnerable to sea level rise.”

Daily tides by 2100 could climb anywhere from 17 to 66 inches beyond today’s level, according to a study done in 2012 by the National Research Council. Those numbers have since been adopted by San Francisco and other local governments when reviewing future development proposals.