

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY HAZARDOUS MATERIALS COMMISSION



February 26, 2021

Supervisor Candace Andersen, District 2, Chair
Supervisor Diane Burgis, District 3, Vice Chair
Contra Costa Board of Supervisors
Transportation, Water and Infrastructure committee

Dear Chair Andersen and Vice Chair Burgis:

I am writing on behalf of the Hazardous Materials Commission to encourage you to continue the discussion begun at the December 14, 2020 Transportation, Water and Infrastructure committee (TWIC) meeting to address the potential impacts of Sea Level Rise on Contra Costa County. The Hazardous Materials Commission is very concerned about the potential public health and safety impacts of Sea Level Rise on the storage, use and transportation of hazardous materials in Contra Costa County.

Three recent studies, two Contra Costa Adapting to Rising Tides (ART) studies by the Bay Conservation and Development Commission completed in 2016 and 2019, and the Hazardous Materials Commodity Flow study completed for the Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Programs in 2019 by Tait Environmental Services, which was discussed at the December 2020 TWIC meeting, all detail potential local impacts on human health and the environment from potential sea level rise over the coming years, including those caused by the disruption to the storage, use and transportation of hazardous materials. All three studies also point to possible actions that could be taken at the local level to begin to address a range of impacts from Sea Level Rise, including hazardous materials issues.

The Hazardous Materials Program has begun to provide educational information to businesses handling hazardous materials about potential impacts from Sea Level Rise, with an initial informational letter sent in 2018. More can continue to be done to help prepare businesses for potential impacts. Another approach the Commission thinks would be beneficial to explore is the formation of a public-private partnership to develop solutions to the potential impacts from Sea Level Rise.

The 2019 Commodity Flow study revealed the critical role the railroads play in this issue, and so the Commission encourages you to engage the railroads in this effort, as well as other local jurisdictions, public agencies, local non-profit and community groups, public and private landholders along the shoreline, other businesses impacted directly or indirectly by Sea Level Rise, and the general public. The Commission especially encourages you to engage residents and community groups in Disadvantaged Communities, which are mostly located along the Contra Costa shoreline, and which will bear a disproportionately high burden from the impacts of Sea Level Rise.

Members: Fred Glueck, Chair, Rick Alcaraz, Jonathan Bash, Marielle Boortz, Don Bristol, Audrey Comeaux, Sara Gurdian, Mark Hughes, Steven Linsley, Jim Payne, Gabe Quinto, Mark Ross, George Smith,

597 Center Ave., Suite 200 Martinez, CA 94553 (925) 313-6712

In addition, the 2019 Commodity Flow Study identified critical “Pinch Points” throughout the county where risks from Sea Level Rise for a hazardous materials release would be high. Therefore, the Commission also encourages you to bring together staff from the County Public Works Department, Department of Conservation and Development and Health Services Department, along with other relevant local jurisdictions and private entities, to talk about how to plan for and fund changes to the built environment in these “Pinch Point” areas that would reduce these risks.

The Commission realizes that until the COVID-19 pandemic is over, significant County resources will continue to be directed towards addressing its impacts. But if nothing else, the tragedy of the pandemic has taught us that we need to prepare for foreseeable environmental crises, and to not do so will leave us scrambling once it is too late. The Commission encourages you to build on the momentum begun at the December 14, 2020 TWIC meeting to take the next steps towards addressing the potential impacts of Sea Level Rise.

Sincerely,



Fred Glueck, Hazardous Materials Commission Chairperson

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