



STAFF REPORT – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Emily Sinkhorn, Director of Environmental Services

PREPARER: Morguine Sefcik, Environmental Programs Manager

DATE: September 3, 2025

TITLE: **Approve a Grant Application to the Ocean Protection Council Senate Bill 1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning Grant Program to Develop an Adaptation Pathways Approach Focused on Arcata’s Local Coastal Element Zone 1.**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council approve a grant application to the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) Senate Bill (SB) 1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning Grant Program to develop an Adaptation Pathways Approach Focused on Arcata’s Local Coastal Element Zone 1.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

Senate Bill 1 was signed into state law in 2021 and directs the state to provide funding to local and regional governments to develop sea level rise (SLR) adaptation plans and implementation projects. OPC is supporting the implementation of SB 1, and as of June 2025, \$14.14 million is available to fund SB 1 projects. The goal of the SB 1 SLR Adaptation Planning Grant Program is to provide funding for coastal communities to develop consistent SLR adaptation plans and projects to build resilience to SLR along the entire coast of California. The SB 1 Grant Program Track 1, for planning and data collection projects, considers grant applications on a rolling, quarterly basis with the next proposal deadline of Friday, September 12.

DISCUSSION:

City staff were approached this summer by a technical assistance provider supporting OPC in encouraging grant applications from local communities. The City has recently completed an updated SLR vulnerability and risk assessment and concept strategy for adaptation of City capital infrastructure and is now well positioned to focus efforts on developing an in-depth neighborhood scale adaptation plan. Environmental Services and Community Development staff are collaborating in drafting a potential grant proposal to the OPC SB 1 Grant Program.

Local and global climate models have indicated that the shoreline and lower elevation neighborhoods of Arcata are susceptible to increased inundation and flooding from sea level rise and storm events. For the Humboldt Bay region, one of the most significant factors is vertical land motion, and the rate of vertical motion is not uniform around the bay and varies by location. Arcata is located on the northern shore of Humboldt Bay, which is currently experiencing one of the highest

rates of subsidence in California - upwards of 0.3 inches per year, exacerbating the rate of sea level rise along the Arcata shoreline (Patton, et al., 2023).

Staff propose to utilize a pathways approach to develop an Adaptation Plan in line with the City's draft Local Coastal Element and informed by the recently completed Arcata Sea Level Rise Vulnerability and Risk Assessment. While this recent assessment also helped to create a high-level concept strategy for adaptation of City capital infrastructure, the City needs support to collect additional targeted data and advance clear, feasible implementation steps informed by community engagement and with identified triggers for potential adaptations at locations throughout the vulnerable Arcata shoreline. The Adaptation Plan would also help to advance concept adaptation designs for 1-2 priority locations. While the City of Arcata has greatly advanced coastal resiliency planning over the last decade, as a small, rural disadvantaged community Arcata has limited access to funding to implement adaptation projects at the needed scale. Developing an adaptation pathways approach for Zone 1, identified in the draft Local Coastal Element, would benefit multiple sectors of Arcata – low lying affordable neighborhoods, a growing business district, and City infrastructure – and advance opportunities to be competitive for implementation funding.

The grant would propose robust community engagement focused on determining community priorities for adaptation pathways. The proposal work plan includes targeted field investigations, development of adaptation pathways, identification of key trigger thresholds, a monitoring strategy to monitor for identified triggers, implementation steps to realize adaptation projects on the ground and a financing strategy for implementation.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

The City Council has Priority Project in FY 2025-26 focused on Climate Change and Climate Adaptation including to continue sea level rise adaptation planning and implementations strategies.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA):

This grant proposal is for a planning-level study only and exempt from CEQA, as it does not meet the definition of a project.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT:

No budgetary impact from this action. A potential awarded grant would cover all project costs.

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:

Motion to approve a grant application to the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) Senate Bill (SB) 1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning Grant Program to develop an Adaptation Pathways Approach Focused on Arcata's Local Coastal Element Zone 1.

Consent Calendar vote.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Proposed Project Area Map (PDF)