

ADVANCING REGIONAL CLIMATE ADAPTATION

Introduction

The San Diego region has a long history of being a leader in climate action and is working to advance regional and collaborative climate resilience efforts. Over the last decade, the region has been working to expand its holistic understanding of vulnerabilities to climate change impacts, including: Sea Level Rise, Wildfire, Water, and Equity. Adaptation planning is critical for communities to address the assessed climate vulnerabilities and to implement resilience strategies to prepare for future conditions and impacts before they happen. Several efforts have already been completed to further regional adaptation planning and implementation; some examples are highlighted below:



Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP) (SANDAG, 2004) – EMP, a component of *TransNet*, mitigates regional transportation projects through habitat acquisition, management, and monitoring. A number of EMP projects focus on watershed restoration, allowing native plants to flourish, providing stormwater and flood abatement, promoting groundwater recharge, and increasing wildlife habitat.



North Coast Corridor Project (SANDAG, Caltrans, and North County Transit District, 2017) – The San Diego Region Coastal Sea Level Rise Analysis Report was prepared as part of the North Coast Corridor Project. The Report described future scenarios for sea level rise, offered design water level guidance for local projects, and included an adaptive management strategy.



Regional Economic Vulnerability to Sea Level Rise in San Diego County (San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative, 2018) – A component of the Resilient Coastlines Project, the Regional Economic Vulnerability study investigated the potential effects from climate change, projected sea level rise, and coastal storms on the economy of San Diego County.



Regional Transportation Infrastructure Sea Level Rise Assessment and Adaptation Guidance (SANDAG, 2020) – The Adaptation Guidance analyzes potential sea level rise impacts to transportation facilities that cross jurisdictional lines and includes a compilation of adaptation policies, projects, and funding opportunities that are relevant to the San Diego region.



Wildland Fires Resilience Review Report (County of San Diego, 2019) – The Wildland Fires Resilience Review Report, which outlines strategic initiatives to best prepare, respond to, and recover from wildland fires. This Report is part of the County's broader County Resilience Program to build healthy, safe, and thriving communities.



Climate Equity Index Report (City of San Diego, 2019) – The Climate Equity Index Report was developed in conjunction with community-based organizations and is directly linked to the City's Climate Action Plan. Thirty-five indicators were selected to measure environmental justice and social equity across the City.



Wildfire Mitigation Plan (San Diego Gas & Electric, 2020) – This Wildfire Mitigation Plan outlines a safe and fire-hardened electrical system that is rigorously inspected and maintained. It also utilizes the latest science and technology to create situational awareness tools that enables the utility to anticipate, prepare for, react to, and recover from extreme conditions.

The San Diego region is poised to move from adaptation planning to implementation and has the research, collaborative networks, and support to do so.



SUSTAINING REGIONAL CLIMATE ADAPTATION

Regional Adaptation Needs Assessment

In 2018, the [San Diego Association of Governments \(SANDAG\)](#) was awarded Senate Bill (SB) 1 funding via Caltrans to complete the Regional Adaptation Needs Assessment (NA), with partners including the [San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative](#), the [Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve](#), and [The San Diego Foundation](#). The NA looks beyond climate impacts and vulnerabilities and provides an overview of other challenges that jurisdictions face in advancing their adaptation planning efforts, either ongoing or those on the horizon. The NA was designed to be multi-disciplinary and to assess diverse projects and multiple climate impacts. Specifically, the NA identifies cross-sector needs and future opportunities for collaboration for the San Diego region.

Key Needs



Adaptation Efforts are Largely Reactive



State Policies and Resources are Difficult to Access and/or Understand



Regional Collaboration, Communication, and Engagement Strategies Need to Be Elevated

Key Opportunities

Regional Leaders Champion Adaptation Projects



Prioritize Multi-Beneficial Projects



Connect Local Research to Local Action



Enhance Collaborative Networks and Resource Sharing



Moving Forward

Regional collaboration will be crucial to the success of holistically advancing adaptation planning. In 2019, SANDAG was awarded an additional SB 1 grant, the Holistic Implementation of Adaptation and Transportation Resilience Strategies project, to leverage the findings from the NA. The goal of this project is to comprehensively assess equity, economic, and environmental considerations in existing climate mitigation and transportation planning policies, programs, and projects in the region that intersect with adaptation strategies and to identify efficiencies and opportunities among them.