

Historical Background

Early Efforts

In December 2013, Congresswoman Jackie Speier, Assemblymember Rich Gordon, and County Supervisor Dave Pine convened a conference titled “Meeting the Challenge of Sea Level Rise in San Mateo County” that initiated the County’s efforts to plan for sea level rise, including launching in 2015 its “Sea Change SMC” initiative and commencing a countywide sea level rise vulnerability assessment.

At the May 2015 C/CAG Board meeting, Supervisor Pine and County staff presented proposed plans for the County to begin addressing multi-jurisdictional flooding and sea level rise. To ensure all its member agencies were included in decisions on how best to address these challenging issues, C/CAG convened an ad-hoc group to evaluate options and make recommendations to the C/CAG Board.

C/CAG Ad-hoc Water Committee

In December 2015 C/CAG convened an ad-hoc Water Committee to discuss opportunities for better countywide coordination, communication, and collaboration on integrated water issues to improve efficiency and maximize funding opportunities, including for state and federal grants. The ad-hoc Water Committee met throughout 2016 and, after exploring various options for a more comprehensive approach to water management, including presentations by numerous agencies that are already doing integrated water management outside of San Mateo County, ultimately recommended C/CAG establish a standing committee as a first step toward greater levels of countywide collaboration and decision making. It also recommended the committee primarily focus on the “orphan” issues of stormwater, flooding, and sea level rise rather than water management issues related to groundwater, water supply, or wastewater since those are already being worked on by others, such as through the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency, water purveyors, and sanitary agencies/special districts.

C/CAG Countywide Water Coordination Committee

The Countywide Water Coordination Committee (Committee) convened in May of 2017 with four city elected officials representing geographic areas in the county and one member of the Board of Supervisors. After establishing its focus on funding advocacy, information and education, and inter-agency collaboration, the Committee quickly began planning the March 30, 2018 water summit, “Floods, Droughts, Rising Seas, Oh My!” This summit, attended by over 300 people, closed with a video address by Congresswoman Speier urging San Mateo County and the 20 cities and towns to create a joint flood control agency to better compete for federal funds to address sea level rise. In response to this call to action, the Committee, over the subsequent months, began investigating options for taking more formal action to address integrated water management in the county, including creation of a new or modified agency to coordinate efforts on sea level rise, coastal erosion, flooding, and regional stormwater management. To support this effort, the C/CAG Board added three additional members to the Committee, including the C/CAG Chair, Vice-Chair and immediate past Chair.

The Committee decided to develop a proposal for a water management agency that could be

considered by the C/CAG Board of Directors and County Board of Supervisors. To achieve this goal, the Committee convened a Staff Advisory Team (SAT) comprised of 18 representatives (staff level) from C/CAG, the County, cities, and other water-related agencies and interests to help develop the draft proposal.

The SAT Process

The SAT convened in July 2018 (Roster – Attachment 2)) and met eight times, with numerous additional Executive Team calls to help shepherd the process. The SAT's focus has been evaluating options for a new entity, including reviewing different governance structures and the potential scope of the new entity, getting feedback from the cities on their needs related to a countywide integrated water agency, and regularly informing and receiving feedback from the Countywide Water Coordination Committee. The SAT, in coordination with the Committee, developed an overall Roadmap for the process that included developing a final proposal by the end of 2018, the C/CAG Board and the County Board of Supervisors considering its endorsement in January 2019, followed by outreach to all 20 city and town councils in early 2019.

The SAT hosted a series of initial information gathering meetings with all 20 cities and towns in August and September 2018, the results of which informed the draft agency proposal. Two additional city meetings were hosted in November and December to present the draft agency proposal. At its December 13 meeting, the SAT endorsed a final version of the agency proposal (Proposal) for Committee consideration on December 20. At that meeting, the Committee recommended the C/CAG Board endorse the Proposal. The C/CAG Board unanimously endorsed the Proposal at its January 10, 2019 meeting. The County Board of Supervisors endorsed the Proposal at its January 29, 2019 meeting.