

Bay Area Climate Change Communications Workshop Summary Report

On June 26, 2013, the Bay Area Ecosystems Climate Change Consortium (BAECCC) convened a workshop that brought together communications officers, program directors, and other project leaders in the Bay Area natural resource management community who are actively engaged in climate-related communications campaigns to discuss how to improve their efforts to reach stakeholders and develop a more cohesive narrative. This report summarizes the discussions and feedback from the day, and identifies continuing climate change communications needs and potential next steps for BAECCC. The workshop agenda can be found at the end of this report.

Goals and objectives

The goal of this daylong workshop was to bring together communicators in the Bay Area natural resources management community to develop a more cohesive climate change action narrative. Objectives were to:

1. Share knowledge of current climate change communications efforts across sectors and geographies, and identify opportunities for collaboration
2. Learn about the priorities, values, and perceptions of different types of stakeholders in order to craft more relevant messages
3. Refine tactics and messaging for specific projects
4. Identify gaps in coordination or knowledge that BAECCC could address

Feedback and evaluations

- In general, people liked the flow of the day, where plenary sessions were broken up with interactive working groups. One person wrote “I was delighted that there WERE breakout sessions, instead of a full day of being talked TO.”
- The length and content of breakout sessions was an issue for some, who felt that the sessions were too short to get meaningful work done after necessary project introductions. Some also felt that the objectives of the session unclear.
- A few comments in evaluations indicate a desire for basic communications training.
- The legislative panel received the highest satisfaction rankings on the evaluation, and other comments from attendees indicated that this.
- Participants expressed the following needs for additional resources and information related to climate change communications:
 - A forum for continuing the conversation started during this day, in order to better align groups’ communications strategies
 - Peer-to-peer information exchange about projects and the messages, materials, and packaging that work and do not work
 - A map showing which organizations are involved with which projects
 - Shared library of visual communications materials (graphics, photos, charts, presentations, maps, etc)
 - Case studies and examples of more real-world communications efforts
 - A contact list of important players – environmental reporters, key members of CA legislature and Congress, project leaders
 - Clearinghouse of latest local climate science and policy to facilitate use of common materials

- Clearinghouse of communications tactics and strategies
- More research (and dissemination of findings) about “what to say and what not to say” – *i.e.*, effective messages, framing, and vocabulary.
- A list of ongoing climate change projects, the key contact person, general timeline, target audience, and message

Potential next steps for BAECCC

- Many evaluation survey respondents were interested in attending more sessions like this one, and felt that BAECCC could convene such forums. A typical response about the role that BAECCC could play is as “a convener of events like this for people to build relationships and learn about each others' efforts so we can communicate with others (other audiences, others outside this network, and others working on adaptation) about work underway. The result is a network of engaged and knowledgeable (“in-the-know”) people that can share the word about the good work happening.”
- Related to the above point, there appear to be three types of meetings that could follow on this one: training on how to communicate more effectively; more hands-on work to refine communications campaigns of specific projects; and facilitated discussions to align campaigns across projects.
- Many of the information and resource needs identified by participants could be developed through BAECCC. Undertaking this would require some careful thought about how to collect, maintain, and distribute information that changes frequently and which some partners consider sensitive.
- Consider gathering all of the above resources into a web-based “toolbox” to serve as a hub and a reference for climate change communications in the Bay Area.
- Investigate linking this effort with similar initiatives in New Jersey, New York, San Diego, and Southeast Florida in order to create a linked community of practice.

For More Information

For information about next steps, contact Andrew Gunther, BAECCC Executive Coordinator, at andrew@cemar.org. For information about the workshop or this report, contact Marina Psaros, Principal at Coravai LLC at marina@coravai.com. For additional information about individual projects listed on the following pages, contact the project leader listed at the bottom of the project description.

Summary of plenary sessions

The workshop included three plenary sessions to ground the group in the latest research and practice regarding communicating about climate change with stakeholders. Ellen Hanak, Co-Director of Research and Senior Fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California (<http://www.ppic.org>), gave a presentation about public perception and the challenges of climate change communication. Curtis Below, Vice President at FM3 (<http://fm3research.com>), presented about the strategic communications process and used voter support survey data for AB32 and the Restoration Authority as case studies. Both of these presentations are available online at BAECCC's website (<http://www.baecccc.org>).

The third plenary session consisted of a panel discussion about working with elected officials. Adrienne Alvord, California and Western States Director, Union of Concerned Scientists (<http://www.ucsusa.org>), moderated. Panelists:

- Josh Huber, Senior District Representative for U.S. Congressman Eric Swalwell (CA-15)
- Mark Stone, State Assemblymember (CA-29A)
- Tom Roth, Environmental Consultant for State Senator Noreen Evans (CA-2)

Q: What is the best way to communicate with your three offices?

Huber:

- Bring as succinct argument as possible
- Properly weigh the costs and benefits of anything you propose
- State exactly what you need from the office
- Be able to articulate the counter argument and what is the crux of your argument
- Be upfront and honest of the limitations of what you are proposing

Roth:

- Bring 4-6 people that represent a diverse array of your community
- Remember that the goal of the initial meeting is to begin a dialogue/ conversation.

Stone:

- Let me know your agenda immediately.
- Know the background of the person you are talking to. Have an extensive idea of where he has been, his interests, what he supports, what he does not. Make sure you target those areas.
- Don't be repetitive or verbose.

Q: What is the best method to contact you and the best material to bring?

Huber:

- Email - Shorter is always better
- Note outline that includes goals, drawbacks/limitations, main points etc.
- Maps

Roth

- One page pact sheet

- Provide links (on notes or in email). If he has time and wants to know more he can easily find the website, survey etc.

Stone

- No paper, electronic only
- Make it an attention grabber - we all like “shiny things” that are attractive
- Find out what the **staff** likes in terms of materials

Q: Science isn't always “shiny”. How is it viewed in your world and how can we communicate about science with you?

Stone

- Everything is marketing! Learn to market your science effectively
- If it's not put in simple terms it's not effective (*i.e.* describing the ecological importance of the California Current as a “food conveyor belt” – simple, effective messaging).
- If we agree with the science/ it aligns with our agenda then we buy in and want to fund it. If not, it's often easy to disregard as “junk science”
- Never present any science that is easily refuted

Q: What happens when an official says that an issue you present them with is not in their field or they have no say in it?

- Don't waste their time or yours, instead do the research on who is best to target.
- It is possible to grow interest from the bottom up, but quicker to target the officials who already have an interest and a say in the matter.
- Make them care about your problems by explaining how it will affect them and their people/voters. Remember they always have their own campaign in mind.
- **JOBS!** If your solution creates jobs in any way you will get an ear! Make sure you include an honest consideration of the economic side of your issue.

Q: How important is social media?

Huber

- “My boss loves it,” values it greatly

Stone

- Important, but quality is more important than quantity.
- If you want to know a representative's official take on an issue, go to their **long term professional staff** because that person has the knowledge and is the recognized thought leader for the representative on that issue.
- “This will always be a people business”

Summary of breakout group projects

Our Coast, Our Future

Project description: OCOF is an online decision-support tool that Bay Area planners and managers can use to assess vulnerabilities to sea level rise and storms.

Project URL: www.prbo.org/ocof

Discussion notes and next steps

Take home ideas:

1. **Follow-up** – the tool tells people where there are problems/faults and is very “doom and gloom”. Create a positive twist by offering follow-up sessions with potential solutions to the problem.
2. **Start small-scale** – before going to the media and publicizing it do a trial run with a single county and develop close relationships with managers/planners. Perform a needs assessment. Get their feedback pros/cons and then adjust the tool/campaign to better suite the publics needs.
3. **Positive twist** – make sure there is some sort of positive draw to using the tool. Emphasize the potential – “what their development *could* look like if...” and then supply the resources to develop those solutions.

Of these three, number 1 was the most talked about. Lack of follow-up/solution strategies was identified as the greatest flaw for this organization and its tool. If it is to become the standard and do more than what is already available it needs to go a step further than the others. The best way to do this is to have the tool also provide options on how to solve the identified problems and then illustrate what the area “could” look like with the various solutions implemented.

Contact: Kelley Higgason, OCOF Project Coordinator

Silicon Valley 2.0

Project description: Silicon Valley 2.0 is a regional effort, managed by the Santa Clara County Office of Sustainability and funded by the Strategic Growth Council, to minimize the anticipated impacts of climate change and reduce the generation of local greenhouse gas emissions. The project will use a risk management framework to A) evaluate the exposure of community assets (*i.e.*, infrastructure, populations, and landscapes) to likely climate impacts, B) examine the potential consequences to the economy, society, and environment of this exposure, and C) develop preemptive adaptation strategies that improve community resilience. The project will also develop a decision-support tool that will allow jurisdictions and other organizations to evaluate potential climate change impacts and strategies within their communities.

Discussion notes and next steps

Session notes are not available at this time.

Project URL: <http://www.sccgov.org/sites/osp/SV2/Pages/SV2.aspx>

Contact: Demetra J. McBride, County of Santa Clara, Office of Sustainability and Climate Action

Oakland International Airport / Bay Farm Island Shoreline Resilience Planning

Project description: The Oakland International Airport / Bay Farm Island Focus Area Shoreline Resilience Planning project is a collaborative effort that will consider vulnerabilities, risks and mitigation opportunities for multiple hazards that could affect the people, facilities, infrastructure, and services (“assets”) of the Bay Farm Island community and the Oakland International airport. This area (“focus area”) has significant infrastructure and community assets at risk due to its location on the shoreline, low-lying topography, underlying bay fill, and other loose soils that are susceptible to liquefaction.

The Shoreline Resilience Planning project will consider risks and mitigation opportunities for multiple hazards – earthquakes, sea level rise, and flooding – in an integrated planning process. This approach will help identify efficiencies, for example where data and information necessary to understand one hazard can be used to inform understanding of another, and will simplify and streamline the planning process for stakeholders by seeking their participation in a single project that addresses multiple hazards. It will also provide important insights into how risk mitigation strategies for one hazard may be modified to address another, and may uncover where action to mitigate one hazard could exacerbate the risk from a different hazard.

The project will also examine the relationships among assets within the focus area, as well as the relationship of assets within the focus area to those outside the focus area, in order to identify dependencies and interdependencies. This analysis will take the project a step further than traditional hazard mitigation planning by considering secondary vulnerabilities caused by dependencies and interdependencies among assets, and by evaluating the regional consequences of disruptions to local infrastructure and community assets.

Project URL: http://quake.abag.ca.gov/airport_resilience/ and www.adaptingtorisingtides.org

Discussion notes and next steps

Discussion focused upon the challenges of shared vocabulary among decision makers, planners and the public when co-planning for climate adaptation and hazard mitigation together. Words mean something different to different groups and the dilemma is how to plan a multi-level message to your designated audience that means the same thing to everyone. The words *adaptation* and *mitigation* pose a dichotomy that can confuse a message. Mitigation should encapsulate the 3 R’s: Reduce (green house gasses), Restore (carbon to the environment) and Resilience in the environment. Hazard Risk Reduction is a phrase that is overused/ easily confused and should be avoided. *Global warming* and *climate change* are also loaded terms that can push people away. Rather than using these terms, talk about the

specific effects that relate to your cause. Readiness is a useful word, bearing notions of notions of minimizing future loss, recovery, and making things better that they were before.

Contact: Wendy Goodfriend, Sr. Planner BCDC

California Landscape Conservation Cooperative (CA LCC)

Project description: The CA LCC is a science-management partnership providing science to resource managers to help address the impacts of climate change and other stressors.

Project URL: <http://californialcc.org/>

Discussion notes and next steps

Use the tools that managers already use to inform decisions, rather than developing new tools. How do managers access information and how can you get to that same place? Also, people still want face-to-face meetings; this is still the most effective way of communications science to people.

Contact: Rebecca Fris, Science Coordinator, CA LCC

Bay Area Climate & Energy Resilience Project — Leaders Campaign

Project description: A campaign using one-on-one and small group meetings to increase support for adaptation planning NOW among elected officials and other Bay Area leaders.

Project URL: <http://www.abag.ca.gov/jointpolicy/projects.html>

Discussion notes and next steps

The group discussed how to make the language of the campaign draft more compelling. The organization will be employing language experts to make the draft more personal, specific and powerful.

Contact: Bruce Riordan, Bay Area Joint Policy Committee

San Francisco Bay Tidal Marshes Climate-Smart Planning Tool

Project description:

Point Blue's Future San Francisco Bay Tidal Marshes planning tool assists managers in making decisions about adaptation planning, restoration potential and priority, and land acquisition, given a broad range of plausible sea-level rise and suspended sediment availability scenarios.

Projecting the responses of species and ecosystems to future climate will always involve uncertainty. It is reasonable to assume that some land managers and other decision makers

may choose to ignore future forecasts that have high levels of uncertainty. We sought to find an optimal prioritization of San Francisco Bay tidal marshes based on their capacity to retain ecosystem function under four different future scenarios that together probably bracket a reasonable range of possibilities. Our results demonstrate that simply using current conditions as guidance (the “head in the sand” approach) can lead to an inefficient use of resources and to reduced biodiversity protection. This is because the future distributions and characteristics of marshes are projected to differ significantly from current conditions. If indeed one of the future scenarios we evaluated is realized, we show that prioritizing using an “I feel lucky” strategy would still be better than prioritizing based on current conditions alone, but the best method for selecting restoration projects is a “combined” strategy, using projections from all future scenarios with a discounting of areas with high levels of variability among future scenarios. This demonstrates that uncertainty about future conditions can be successfully incorporated in conservation activities.

Project URL: <http://data.prbo.org/apps/sfbslr/>

Discussion notes and next steps

Communications related to this project should focus on project managers – this can help project managers design their current restoration projects and develop effective climate change adaptation strategies – can help inform aspects of a restoration design and the link with wildlife – for example – can help a specific manager determine what the future condition will look like for Clapper Rails at a site, in the future. If the site is projected to be good for rails the tool can inform decisions about how to design the project now to help Clapper Rails in the future.

Take-aways from discussion:

- Communicate that this is a prioritization tool within projects not across projects in the Bay
- Focus on project managers. Need to reach project managers and test implantation of the resource – identify how it can inform existing project managers in the planning of their marsh restoration projects
- Communicate the connection to Our Coast Our Future – clarify the relationship now and in the future.

Contact: Sam Veloz, Grant Ballard, Point Blue Conservation Science

Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Update for Climate Change

Project description: The Bayland Goals Update is a two-year multi-stakeholder process to consider the effects of climate change on the wetland habitats of the San Francisco Bay. It seeks to create a scientific consensus about likely effects and provide a template for action for managing the region’s baylands in a context of accelerating climate change.

Project URL: No project site at moment. General description and link to original report at: <http://scc.ca.gov/2011/01/27/trio-of-habitat-goals-completed-for-9-county-bay-area/>

Discussion notes and next steps

Discussed the early stages of their communication by identifying their audience and tailoring their messaging. Also focused on higher-level messages that go beyond the science that focuses on the urgency of the issue because reaching habitat goals will take decades. Recognized the importance of also focusing on the short-term effects so people can see the tangible benefits of restoration. One way of doing this is to try to link wetlands to the urban environment and make wetland restoration an issue for people who live in the bay.

Contact: Matt Gerhart, State Coastal Conservancy

North Bay Climate Adaptation Initiative (NBCAI)

Project description: The North Bay Climate Adaptation Initiative (NBCAI) is a collaborative group of nonprofit organizations and individuals formed in 2009 to identify the impacts of climate change in the North Bay and to develop local strategies to reduce those impacts on both natural and human communities.

Project URL: www.northbayclimate.org

Discussion notes and next steps

Take home ideas:

1. Need a media campaign to spread the word further: radio station, editorial board, relationships with reporters, and public hearings.
2. Think outside the box to include all sectors: who do you hear from regularly, but may not necessarily be focused on your central issue. How can you get them involved?
3. The amount of information being brought in by your initiative puts you in a great position to diversify your message further and include a broader range of sectors. Quality relationships with those sectors are crucial as well as providing them with the necessary information. And the best way to communicate is to empower them to speak in their own compelling way about climate change effects and adaptation. Make sure they are telling their story and not just what NBCAI has said.

The biggest take home message from this session was to involve as many different sectors as possible even if they are not directly involved or centrally focused on the issue. In addition, have the sectors tell their own stories and what NBCAI/climate adaptation means to them. Don't script them. Their stories will provide a face for NBCAI and connect you further with the general public and local communities.

Contact: James Bernard, Coordinator, NBCAI

Terrestrial Biodiversity and Climate Change Collaborative (TBC3)

Project description: TBC3 is developing a suite of tools to be used by land managing organizations and agencies to most strategically adapt to the effects of climate change.

Project URL: www.tbc3.org

Discussion notes and next steps

Discussed the tools coming out this fall that help land managers plan for the future of climate change. Tools need good shepherds in order to be in the meetings and reinforce the conversations and their value and help people apply them on their specific cases. Decision making tools can shift the dynamics of power from an anecdotal intuition to data, which informs the communication we put together.

Contact: Annie Burke, Bay Area Open Space Council

Climate-Smart Stream Restoration – Point Blue STRAW Project

Project description: Climate-Smart Stream Restoration refers to designing restoration projects with an eye towards future conditions so that the planting formula is one that will fulfill habitat needs for birds under various climate scenarios.

Project URL: n/a – online tool under development as part of pointblue.org

Discussion notes and next steps

The traditional view of ecological restoration is taking an area and trying to make it the way it used to at some point in the past. However, climate change complicates this and can make traditional ecological restoration either impossible or not the best option. Point Blue's STRAW project has undertaken a re-vegetation project along a stream to develop a planning tool that facilitates restoration designs that prepare restored sites to be successful under a range of future climatic conditions. To accomplish this, STRAW partnered with local schools to bring hundreds of school kids and parents to help with the project and learn about restoration. The plan includes three years of monitoring to study the mid-term effects of the project and to inform and improve their method.

Take Away:

A continuing goal for this project is to develop a Climate-smart guidebook or guide-sheet to help a variety of parties with restoration projects of their own. Examples of important audiences for this guide would be Land Managers, RCDs, consulting firms and plant nurseries among others.

Contact: Melissa Pitkin, Point Blue Conservation Science (formerly PRBO)

California King Tides Initiative

Project description: The California King Tides Initiative encourages members of the public to document their flooded coastline during the highest high tides of the year, also known as king tides. Photos taken during king tide events document impacts to private property, public infrastructure, and wildlife habitat across the state, and can help managers and planners visualize future threats and current impacts of rising waters.

Project URL: www.californiakingtides.org

The goal of the breakout session was to identify areas where photo monitoring of king tides could be useful for coastal managers and decision-makers for the development of outreach materials and planning documents. Workshop participants offered the following location suggestions, which were added to the CKTI Google map:

- San Jose Wastewater Treatment Plant (Pollution Control Plant)
- West side of Dumbarton Bridge
- Corporate Campuses – Google bridge designed for sea level rise
- SFO & Oakland Airport (both low lying and at risk but hard to photograph)
- 6th & Gillman
- Dike/ Levees in South Bay – Participants added that some of these areas do not require a king tide to see dramatically different water levels on either side of the levee, and that it would be best to photograph this difference in places where potentially impacted infrastructure is visibly at risk.

The map will serve as a reference for volunteers when deciding where to photograph king tides (with appropriate specificity) and allow potential users of the photographs to see what areas are being covered by CKTI volunteers and suggest areas that are not currently listed that would be useful to them.

Participants also discussed the possibility of including inland areas prone to flooding. These are often underserved communities that may not have much exposure and awareness to climate change impacts, so outreach in these areas could broaden the scope and audience of the Initiative. One difficulty inherent with inland flooding is that it is often difficult to attribute flooding impacts to king tides, when they often occur during heavy rains from storm activity. However, this does offer insight into the expected increase in the frequency and severity of hazardous storm events and how they become exacerbated as sea level rise increases the mean daily tidal height to match that of the highest tides that we currently experience.

Establishing possible partnerships with other organizations was also a goal for this breakout group. One idea that arose was the possibility of partnering with middle/ high school photography clubs who could adopt specific locations to provide continuous, repeated monitoring. This would not only increase participation for the initiative, but also broaden the audience.

The editor of Bay Nature magazine was a workshop participant and followed up with CKTI organizers after the workshop to write a story about the Initiative.

Contact: Sara Hutto, GFNMS and Hayley Zemel

Save the Bay's For the Bay Campaign

Project description: Build on the positive sentiment that the vast majority of Bay Area residents hold about the Bay as a place. Utilizing issues that polling has shown are most likely to engage residents and voters, we will develop a narrative that shows For The Bay as an opportunity to express individual pride in the Bay (and Bay Area), and that together we can protect and preserve the Bay for the next generation.

Project URL: <http://www.savesfbay.org/>

Discussion & Notes: Patrick led an overview of the state of wetlands in San Francisco Bay, and work to develop new sources of local funding for restoration, public access, and related projects. We reviewed the creation and work to date of the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority, and the plans by the Authority for a November 2014 regional, nine-county ballot measure to raise these needed funds.

The group conducted a roundtable Q&A about activities planned by Save The Bay and other stakeholders, including the Coastal Conservancy, San Francisco Estuary Partnership, as well as leaders from government, business, labor, and environmental communities. Discussion areas included polling, the lack of precedent for a regional measure of this size and scope, potential funding levels and mechanisms, as well as current public perceptions of restoration needs, flooding and sea level rise, and other messages. Although there were no formal next steps identified, participants and interested parties were encouraged to reach out to learn more about the work of Save The Bay in this effort.

Contact: Patrick Band, Save the Bay

Bay Area Climate Change Communication Strategies Workshop

June 26, 2013 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
2150 Allston Way (David Brower Center), Berkeley

- 8:30 Refreshments and registration
- 9:00 **Welcome**
Andrew Gunther, Executive Coordinator, Bay Area Ecosystems
Climate Change Consortium

Marina Psaros, Principal and CEO, Coravai, LLC
- 9:15 **Public Perception and the Challenges of Climate Change
Communication**
Ellen Hanak, Co-Director of Research and Senior Fellow,
Public Policy Institute of California
- 9:45 **Orientation and Move Into Working Sessions**
Marina Psaros
- 10:00 **Communications Working Session 1**
- 1A - Our Coast, Our Future (OCOF)
 - 1B - Silicon Valley 2.0
 - 1C - Oakland Airport Shoreline Resilience Planning
 - 1D - California Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC)
- 10:45 **Working With Elected Officials**
Moderator: Adrienne Alvord, California and Western States Director,
Union of Concerned Scientists
- Panelists:
- Josh Huber, Senior District Representative for U.S. Congressman
Eric Swalwell (CA-15)
 - State Assemblyman Mark Stone, California District 29A
 - Tom Roth, Environmental Consultant for State Senator Noreen
Evans
- 11:45 **Communications Working Session 2**
- 2A - Climate and Energy Resiliency Project's *Leaders* campaign
 - 2B - Point Blue's Climate-Smart Stream Restoration

- 2C - Bay Ecosystems Habitat Goals Update
- 2D - North Bay Climate Adaptation Initiative (NBCAI)

12:30 Lunch

1:15 Strategic Communications Planning and Garnering Public Support for Action

- *Voter Support for AB32 and Restoration Authority*, Curtis Below, Vice President, FM3

1:45 Communications Working Session 3

- 3A - Terrestrial Biodiversity and Climate Change Collaborative (TBC3)
- 3B - Point Blue's Tidal Marshes Climate-Smart Planning Tool
- 3C - Save the Bay's *For the Bay* campaign
- 3D - California King Tides Citizen Science to Support Ongoing Projects

2:30 Wrap Up
Lightning Report Out
Final Reflections
Next Steps

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Workshop Steering Committee

Marina Psaros, Coravai LLC
Andy Gunther, BAECCC
Caroline Warner, San Francisco Bay Joint Venture
Matt Gerhart, State Coastal Conservancy
Sara Hutto, Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary
Annie Burke, Bay Area Open Space Council