

**Office of the County  
Executive**

**Climate and Sustainability  
Division**

# **Sea-level rise governance in Marin:**

**Results from the AECOM study  
and next steps**

July 14, 2026

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## Introduction & Background

# Overview of governance challenge and focusing questions





# The County faces a \$17B sea-level rise problem

## Key focusing questions:

- Given the OCE Climate Office's current SLR workplan and priorities, what guidance does this report offer for how we should approach this work over the next 1-3 years?
- How should the County lead collaborative, multijurisdictional initiatives and partnerships?
- What considerations should the Climate Office focus on as a funding strategy is developed?

## Office of the County Executive-led SLR items in FY 2026-28 Workplan

CR 1.1	Launch the County's updated climate team within the Office of the County Executive and develop processes and workflows for staffing, communication, and streamline mandated plans (i.e., Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), Climate Action Plan (CAP), Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan (RSAP))
CR 1.2	Establish a formal cross-departmental working group structure to guide the start of the County's SB 272 Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan (RSAP) for unincorporated areas, in coordination with city/town RSAP efforts underway
CR 1.11	Launch a countywide, cross-agency Climate Collaborative steering committee representing jurisdictions, partner agencies, businesses supported by a goal framework as defined in the AECOM study recommendations; done in collaboration with Marin Community Foundation's Climate initiative
CR 1.12	Develop and adopt a countywide branding framework that unifies sustainability and climate initiatives under a single recognizable identity, including a program name, visual standards, messaging toolkit, and partner adoption guide
CR 1.13	Coordinate with Transportation Authority of Marin to implement and make recommendations on multimodal transportation infrastructure improvements which incorporate climate resiliency and improvements for Marin commuters



# SUMMARY

**Where we started: In 2024, the Board approved \$519K contract with AECOM to study sea-level rise governance**

## Context

Marin County faces more than **\$17 billion in SLR adaptation needs**, requiring regional collaboration since no single jurisdiction or agency has the resources or authority to address the challenge alone.

**110**

miles of shoreline spanning San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Coast

**11**

incorporated cities and towns — 8 with direct shorefront exposure

**30+**

special districts managing utility and flood control infrastructure + federal, state, & regional agencies

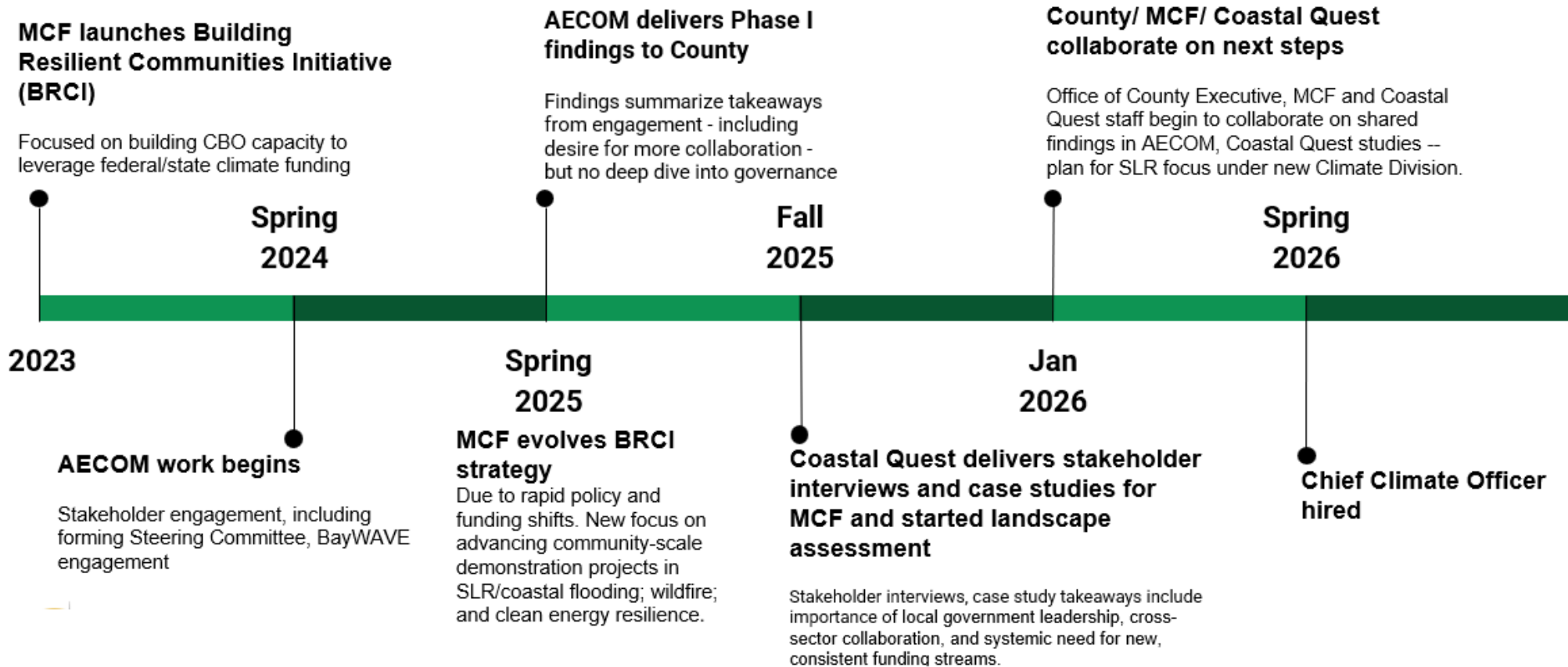
## Goals

- 1** What does the county (the County and local agencies) want to achieve collectively?
- 2** How could agencies on Marin's bayside shoreline work together? Where and how does unincorporated West Marin fit in?
- 3** What are the roles and responsibilities of partner agencies?
- 4** What are the resourcing needs and sources to be successful?



# SUMMARY

- **Marin Community Foundation** launched its *Building Resilient Communities Initiative* in 2023
  - Engaged **Coastal Quest** in 2025 to test its hypothesis that a countywide, coordinated approach would benefit Marin’s climate needs.
  - Conducted interviews with Marin stakeholders and in-depth case study research of other multi-hazard regional collaboratives.



## Countywide SLR Planning Landscape

# Summary of past and current planning efforts





**2016-2018:** Collaborative Sea Level Rise Marin Adaptation Response Team (C-SMART) in West Marin



**2016-present:** BayWAVE (Bay Waterfront Adaptation Vulnerability Evaluation) along the bay shoreline, a monthly multijurisdictional group that continues to convene to share updates



**2017-2019:** Resilient by Design Bay Area Challenge, exploring innovative, multi-benefit resilience concepts



**2024:** Transportation Authority of Marin's Countywide Transportation Plan 2050, included a countywide assessment of SLR transportation infrastructure vulnerabilities and adaptation needs

# Past County sea-level rise planning efforts

# Planning updates

- Marin jurisdictions are currently undertaking or preparing for Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plans (pursuant to SB 272) due by 2034.
- The County is actively leading a multi-jurisdictional SB 1 Regional Shoreline Adaptation Planning (RSAP) proposal for bayside communities **and** submitting a separate application for the **unincorporated coastal side.**

<b>Belvedere*</b>	Completed coastal flood barrier planning (2022).
<b>Corte Madera*</b>	Completed Climate Adaptation Assessment (2021).
<b>Larkspur*</b>	Completed BayWAVE vulnerability assessment (2017).
<b>Mill Valley</b>	Received SB1 funding for Richardson Bay adaptation planning (completes 2027).
<b>Novato*</b>	Completed climate vulnerability assessment (2025).
<b>San Rafael*</b>	Completed Sea Level Rise Feasibility Study (2025).
<b>Sausalito</b>	Received SB1 funding for facility vulnerability assessment (completes 2026).
<b>Tiburon</b>	Received SB1 funding for adaptation planning and vulnerability assessment (completes 2028).
<b>West Marin</b>	County leading SB1 application (Sep 2026) for Outer Coast

*\*Joining County's SB 1 multi-jurisdictional bayside RSAP application (Sep 2026)*



**AECOM & Coastal Quest Assessments**

# Methodology and key takeaways



# AECOM Methodology

The study drew on:

- Literature reviews
- 12 case studies of comparable regional entities,
- Extensive stakeholder engagement including one-on-one interviews, focus groups,
- Engagement at 10 BayWAVE meetings.
- Feedback from a **Steering Committee**

# Coastal Quest Methodology

Interviewed:

- 37 key stakeholders across nonprofits, County and city staff, elected officials, and academia,
- Conducted in-depth case study research on climate collaboratives at differing scales.
- While SLR was a central concern, **the assessment also examined wildfire, extreme heat, and clean energy.**



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

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### Need for Coordination

- Marin's climate resilience efforts are driven by jurisdictions acting in isolation, creating uneven progress and missed opportunities for economies of scale

### Barriers to Action

- Limited staff capacity as a persistent barrier to effective action
- Shared technical assistance and coordinated grant strategy as the highest near-term value a backbone organization can deliver

### Funding and Financing

- Governance and financing must be designed together
- Focus on project delivery

### Prioritize voluntary collaborations

- Neither study recommends moving immediately to a formal governance authority
- Focus on delivering visible early wins, establishing trust across jurisdictions, and demonstrating the value of working together

**The AECOM study and the Coastal Quest assessment arrive at consistent conclusions.**



# SHARED RECOMMENDATIONS

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## **Position the Climate Office as the countywide backbone**

Both memos identify the County as the unifying convener Marin currently lacks to coordinate agencies, track grants & develop a funding strategy, and lead SB 272/RSAP compliance.



## **Move deliberately, in phases — not straight to formal governance**

Both recommend building trust and momentum through early, visible project wins first.



## **Stand up an advisory body ahead of formal structure**

AECOM's Technical Advisory Committee and Coastal Quest's initial advisory body both call for a cross-sector group to guide collaboration design before formalizing.



## **Deepen the partnership with Marin Community Foundation**

Both point to MCF as a key funding partner to resource pilot projects and pre-development activity.



## **Deliver targeted technical assistance to smaller jurisdictions**

Both prioritize hands-on support (e.g., grant navigation, proposal development etc.) for agencies or jurisdictions that lack adequate staff capacity.



## **Priorities for the New Climate Office**

**Backbone role, leading regional RSAP efforts, and funding/financing strategy development**



# Priorities for the Climate Office

01

**Establish** itself as the countywide backbone organization for sea level rise adaptation and climate resilience coordination, serving as the connective tissue across Marin's jurisdictions

02

**Lead** the multijurisdictional bayside RSAP and the Outer Coast planning effort to ensure compliance with SB 272 **and** as an exercise through which regional collaboration can be practiced

03

**Develop** a coordinated funding and financing strategy that matches available grants and emerging opportunities to competitive, well-scoped projects across Marin's jurisdictions.

# Projects in Partnership with CQ and MCF

### *From January 2026 to June 2026*

- **Led Climate Bond Prop 4 Funding Webinar** for Marin agencies (April 2026)
- **Offered 1:1 Climate Bond Coaching**
  - Held 19, 1:1 coaching sessions to Marin cities, towns, County and nonprofits for Prop 4-eligible projects
- **Administered in-depth Technical Assistance Program** for 3 Marin projects to prepare completed Prop 4 applications
- **Marin Community Foundation-funded SLR small grants pilot program:**
  - Selected 5 projects to receive \$125-250K to advance to shovel-ready status

### *June 2026 and beyond*

- **Additional Technical Assistance** for Prop 4 Climate Bond applications
- **CAFWD & Resilient Cities Catalyst Climate Resilience District Incubator**
  - Partnership with City of San Rafael
  - Learning curriculum to assess local funding strategies and governance for SLR projects
- **Directory of Marin climate-related efforts**
  - First-of-its-kind resource to list climate organizations, collaborative efforts, adaptation plans in a public directory.
- **Insurance for Good incubator**
  - Brings together local leaders, insurance experts, and community stakeholders to workshop innovative insurance solutions



## Recommendations & Board Discussion

# Staff recommendations and key questions for Board direction



# Staff recommendation

**Receive update on County's Sea Level Rise initiatives and accept final report from AECOM on Countywide Sea Level Rise Adaptation Organizational Structure and Decision-making Process and related materials**



1. Given the OCE Climate Office's current SLR workplan and priorities, what does this report suggest we should approach the work over the next 1-3 years?
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