

Smart Coast California Recap

February 1, 2021

More than 115 coastal issues stakeholders were updated on the latest developments surrounding Smart Coast California's efforts to provide regulators and stakeholders with data-based information on how to deal with sea level rise during the REALTOR® Coastal Issues Group online meeting on February 1.

SCCa 2021 President Carla Farley kicked off the meeting by unveiling the organization's new mission statement: "Advocating for the collaborative stewardship of the coast, the special place where the land and the water meet; dedicated to community sustainability, property rights, and the environment."

Don Schmitz, SCCa's advocate, said advocacy efforts have gotten off to a good start. During 2020, for example, he said efforts included more than a dozen meetings with stakeholders and elected officials, technical assistance to nine local stakeholder organizations, and observing 20 public meetings around the state.

For 2021, he said SCCa is prioritizing local assistance efforts on where their jurisdictions are in their efforts to address sea level rise in their Local Coastal Plans – the point where he said "the rubber hits the road" on the issue. He added that the most urgent plans are those from Sonoma County, Pacifica, Half Moon Bay, Santa Cruz County, Morro Bay, Arcata, Carlsbad, and Arcata because action on their plans is expected during the first two quarters of the year.

He said messaging to the Coastal Commission, stakeholders, and the media is based on three adopted SCCa policies.

"Policy No. 1 is that managed retreat should not be applied to areas that can't accommodate relocation of development. Managed retreat makes sense in a lot of places along the coast, but not all," he said.

"Policy No. 2 is that we oppose any jurisdiction from defining existing development as that which existed on January 1, 1977, when the Coastal Act took effect. Existing development built after that is entitled to have shoreline protection devices.

"And Policy No. 3 is that owners have the right to compensation if they can't defend their property because of regulatory action, and funding mechanisms must be in place before the adoption of any regulation resulting in these takings."

He also warned that lawmakers have already introduced at least six bills so far this year related to sea level rise that C.A.R.'s Land Use and Environmental Committee will analyze and determine whether C.A.R. should take positions on them.

Organizationally, SCCa has four major goals for the first half of the year, noted 2021 Vice President Thomas Schultheis. The first two are to adopt a policy manual and fill the newly created secretary's position. 2020 President Matt Capritto is currently serving as both secretary and treasurer, but the board of directors believes the growing workload requires the position to be split.

Additionally, the Finance Committee plans to unveil a financial dashboard to provide transparent information, review all existing contracts, and identify additional funding sources. And finally, the Board will appoint additional committees, work groups, and task forces as needed.