

Date of Hearing: August 19, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Lorena Gonzalez, Chair

SB 418 (Laird) – As Amended March 17, 2021

Policy Committee: Natural Resources

Vote: 11 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

**SUMMARY:**

This bill extends the sunset for the Planning for Sea Level Rise Database managed by the Natural Resources Agency (NRA) from January 1, 2023, to January 1, 2028.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

According to the Ocean Protection Council at the NRA, the costs of this bill are absorbable under existing programmatic priorities.

However, costs for both the bill establishing the database, AB 2516, (Gordon), Chapter 522, Statutes of 2014, and the bill subsequently extending its sunset, AB 184 (Irwin) Chapter 338, Statutes of 2017, were estimated to be \$65,000 annually (General Fund) for NRA or the Ocean Protection Council to update and maintain the database. Staff estimates that continuing the database after it otherwise would have sunset for five years would have similar state costs, and would result in total costs of \$325,000.

**COMMENTS:**

**Background and Purpose.** The state’s recent Fourth Climate Change Assessment found climate change impacts in the coastal zone already are “unprecedented,” and will continue to include the direct impacts of sea level rise, changes in ocean conditions, increased flooding (including from rising groundwater tables, but also high “king” tides) and other hazards. Sea level rise poses an immediate and real threat to coastal ecosystems, livelihoods and economies, public access to the coast, recreation, private property, public infrastructure, water supplies and the well-being and safety of coastal communities, including vulnerable populations.

In 2014, AB 2516 (Gordon), Chapter 522, Statutes of 2014, established the Planning for Sea Level Rise Database. The database is overseen by NRA in coordination with the Ocean Protection Council (OPC). The database provides sea level rise planning information, which includes studies, modeling, mapping, cost-benefit analysis, vulnerability assessments, adaptation projects as well as statuses and updates of Local Coastal Programs. The database is an educational tool that is beneficial to the state, local governments and the public by showing actions taken to address sea level rise, enabling a more effective and coordinated response.

Since the database was established in 2014, the state’s efforts to collect and make climate adaptation and resilience information available to the public have expanded, as have coordinated

efforts between state entities related to climate adaptation and resilience. The Adaptation Clearinghouse website (“resilientCA.org”) came into use in 2018. The information collected for the database is now hosted there. (The last database update on the Ocean Protection Council’s website is dated August 2018.)

According to the author:

SB 418 will prolong the lifespan of the Planning for Sea Level Rise Database, which has become an effective educational tool benefitting local governments, communities, and the public. Unfortunately, the negative impacts of climate change have become commonplace in California. Communities across the state have been forced to grapple with worsening wildfires, droughts, and a host of other extreme weather events, sometimes impacting critical infrastructure.

Sea level rise is an often-overlooked aspect of climate change, but it has the potential to be one of the most damaging of threats. A 2019 team of U.S Geological Survey scientists found that even a small increase in sea level rise could be an overwhelming force when a storm hits. This database includes information on a variety of project details from a host of different public and private projects; these insights have become a useful tool for stakeholders to stay informed on the actions taken by relevant entities in their policies to combat sea-level rise. Extending this sunset provision is necessary to ensure this invaluable educational tool can be used to assess our most vulnerable infrastructure, and communities.

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