



County of Santa Cruz

COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

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January 31, 2022

Subject: Recommended Support for Santa Cruz County Regional Resiliency and Climate Action and Adaptation Planning

Honorable Members of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors,

The Commission on the Environment (COE) and the Board of Supervisors place a high priority on climate action and adaptation. We are aware that budget decisions for FY23 are imminent. Therefore, the COE respectfully recommends that the County of Santa Cruz dedicate budget resources supporting success of the Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience (OR3) in these specific ways:

Enabling OR3 membership and participation in aligned advocacy and technical support organizations. This is especially critical for climate practitioners as it is a rapidly changing, innovative and uniquely collaborative discipline. Specifically:

1. Continued membership in the Central Coast Climate Collaborative's Monterey Bay arm, ensuring regional coordination on priority topics and funding. (\$1,000 annually).
2. New membership in the Urban Sustainability Directors Network that provides a nationwide professional network of other sustainability and climate professionals, and ready access to their plans and other documents. The cost for this annual membership is estimated at \$3,200 annually.
3. New membership in the Local Government Sustainable Energy Coalition that advocates for local government energy and climate change adaptation and mitigation related policy before the California Public Utilities Commission. (\$4,805 annually).
4. In addition, and in keeping with the equity focus of the County and COE, we request the Board consider membership in the Government Alliance for Racial Equity. (\$1,800 annually).

These organizations offer invaluable resources for staff, help streamline policy and planning development, provide expert consultation, facilitate access to a network of peer climate practitioners, represent local government resiliency interests before key policy bodies, and act as a conduit to grant opportunities.

The COE recommends establishing a formal, sustained budget of at least \$150,000 per year to support OR3’s needs for successful regional collaboration, including professional services, grant matches, and equitable engagement.

The County is a key partner in the established regional collaboration among the County of Santa Cruz, its cities, and other regional entities, that strategically cooperate to secure State and federal funding for climate action, adaptation, and resiliency projects.

Professional Services – Effective grant applications require technical and professional consulting services. A portion of this requested funding will enable this support.

Grant Matches – Most State and federal grants require some percentage of “local match.” By setting aside some portion of the \$150,000 for this purpose, OR3 will be better positioned to participate in collaborative regional grant opportunities.

The COE requests that you encourage the County’s cities to make similar financial commitments to ensure they are also accessing grant resources so that the region can achieve state and local climate and resiliency targets and goals while lifting-up those most under-served.

Equitable Engagement - The COE’s Environmental Justice ad hoc sub-committee has advanced a workplan to engage the County’s under-represented and under-served groups to share their experiences and expertise with the COE so that we, in turn, can make better informed recommendations to staff and the Board. To accomplish this, the COE respectfully requests a separate budget allocation of \$1,000 for FY23 to compensate these groups for their valuable time. As reflected in the report prepared for the Board by Santa Cruz Community Ventures, “A Santa Cruz Like Me,” Santa Cruz County’s government advisory bodies, including the COE, have great opportunity for growth to better reflect the population of the community as a whole. We hope in the future to align with the County’s developing policy on translation to make the COE meetings accessible to a more diverse group of residents.

The members of the COE Ad Hoc Climate Action and Adaptation Plan committee offer their support to the OR3 and the established Regional funding development collaboration by:

1. Cultivating public/private partnerships for the purposes of collaborating on projects and for providing local match funding for state or federal grant applications,
2. Assisting with coordination and collaboration among county entities where that would be helpful and,
3. Assisting with the grant application processes through the committee’s own expertise and connections.

Empowering the OR3 to participate in and financially contribute to the collaborative effort to secure State and Federal grants for climate resiliency projects across the County through strategic collaboration with others will bring more resources to the County, build capacity in and between County jurisdictions, and across the community. Resources sought and secured could help with specific, high-priority climate action, adaptation, and recovery projects like fuel

breaks, waste-to-energy projects and/or microgrids for green energy and cost-effective resilience of critical facilities. By embarking on these efforts with the conscious intention of inclusion and diversity, the COE aspires to achieve greater and more lasting environmental benefits to address climate change challenges.

The COE is eager to serve the County and to support OR3's vision and plan for a climate resilient future through collaboration and inclusion, and we respectfully ask for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Hunt', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

John Hunt
Chair
Commission on the Environment