



County of Santa Cruz

COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

701 OCEAN STREET, SUITE 400, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4073

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COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT 2017 and 2018 BIENNIAL REPORT

1. Role of the Commission on the Environment

The Commission on the Environment acts as an advisory body to, and resource for, the County Board of Supervisors. The Commission is charged with recommending policies and action programs designed to improve and protect the environment. In accordance with its purpose as presented in Chapter 2.54.050 of the County Code, the Commission shall:

- A. Advise the Board of Supervisors and make recommendations on ways to improve and protect the environment to ensure the long term environmental sustainability of the County;
- B. Advise the Board of Supervisors and work with other commissions in reviewing and updating County policies to provide a comprehensive course of action to support these goals in both the public and private spheres;
- C. Serve as an information clearing house to the Board of Supervisors and other county commission about proposed and pending legislation, both state and federal, which may impact the environment;
- D. Advise the Board of Supervisors on potential areas of cooperation with other public and private agencies and organizations to plan and implement effective environmental policies in Santa Cruz County; and
- E. Exercise any other responsibilities that may be set forth in the commission's bylaws, or may be directed by the Board of Supervisors.

2. Meeting Dates, Time and Location

The Commission met in 2017 on January 25, March 22, May 24, July 26, September 27, and November 29 at 701 Ocean Street. The Commission met in 2018 on January 24, March 28, May 23, July 25, and September 26. The meeting scheduled for November 28 was canceled due to lack of a quorum. The Commission met on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 5:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors Chambers located at 701 Ocean Street, Fifth Floor, Santa Cruz, CA. As directed by the Board of Supervisors, the Commission now meets six times a year, with the schedule set each December for the following calendar year.

3. Commission Structure

The Commission is composed of ten members who are residents of the County. Each member of the Board of Supervisors appoints two commissioners.

The Commission is presented in the following tables:

2017	Commissioner	Term Expires
District 1	Greg Pepping	April 1, 2021
	Jane Orbuch	April 1, 2021
District 2	Tiffany Wise-West(Vice-Chair)	April 1, 2021
	John Hunt (Chair),	April 1, 2021
District 3	Zoe Elizabeth	April 1, 2019
	Ross Clark	April 1, 2019
District 4	Brian Lockwood	April 1, 2019
	Robert Culbertson	April 1, 2019
District 5	Virginia Johnson	April 1, 2021
	Margaret Bruce	April 1, 2021

2018	Commissioner	Term Expires
District 1	Greg Pepping	April 1, 2021
	Jane Orbuch	April 1, 2021
District 2	Tiffany Wise-West(Vice-Chair)	April 1, 2021
	John Hunt (Chair),	April 1, 2021
District 3	Zoe Elizabeth	April 1, 2019
	Ross Clark	April 1, 2019
District 4	Brian Lockwood	April 1, 2019
	Robert Culbertson	April 1, 2019
District 5	Virginia Johnson	April 1, 2021
	Margaret Bruce	April 1, 2021

4. Commission Staff

The Commission is staffed by the Planning Department.

5. Attendance

Commissioner attendance for 2017 and 2018 is summarized in the following tables:

2017	Commissioner	Jan.	Mar.	May	July	Sept.	Nov.
District 1	Greg Pepping	A	X	X	A	X	A
	Jane Orbuch	X	X	X	X	X	A
District 2	Tiffany Wise-West	X	X	X	X	X	X
	John Hunt	X	X	X	X	X	X
District 3	Zoe Elizabeth	X	X	A	A	X	X
	Ross Clark	X	X	X	X	X	X
District 4	Brian Lockwood	X	A	X	X	X	A
	Robert Culbertson	X	X	X	X	X	X

District 5	Gine Johnson	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Margaret Bruce	X	A	A	X	X	X
X Present at the meeting A Excused absence from the meeting a Unexcused absence from the meeting r Resigned v Seat vacant							

2018	Commissioner	Jan.	Mar.	May	July	Sept.	Nov.
District 1	Greg Pepping	X	X	X	X	X	A
	Jane Orbuch	X	X	X	X	X	X
District 2	Tiffany Wise-West	X	X	X	X	X	X
	John Hunt	X	X	X	X	X	X
District 3	Zoe Elizabeth	X	A	X	A	X	r
	Ross Clark	X	X	X	A	X	X
District 4	Brian Lockwood	X	A	X	X	X	A
	Robert Culbertson	X	X	X	X	X	a
District 5	Gine Johnson	X	A	X	X	X	a
	Margaret Bruce	A	X	X	X	X	A
X Present at the meeting A Excused absence from the meeting a Unexcused absence from the meeting r Resigned v Seat vacant							

6. Annual Goals and Accomplishments

In 2017 and 18 the Commission continued to focus on issues pertaining to climate change within the County and the Monterey Bay Region by supporting municipal planning and regional program development. This participation served to educate, promote a collaborative dialogue and encourage the development of cooperative projects among local government staff, businesses, academic institutions and non-profit organizations involved with climate change policies and programs within the Monterey Bay Region.

Regular Commission meetings throughout the year provided informational opportunities on topics relevant to building awareness and context for the adoption of appropriate local policies and programs to address climate change. Presentations to the Commission also identified existing resources as well as opportunities for State and Federal funding and local cooperation.

Milestones are listed below. Commission minutes available to the public on the Commission webpage reflect actions taken by the Commission.

- The Commission developed work priorities for the 2017-18 biennial reporting period and adopted a Work Plan that includes a process for updating the Work Plan.
- Received regular updates from Commissioners on topics in their focus areas.
- Received presentations from County staff regarding the County Climate Action Strategy annual report and adaptation policies development.

- Reaffirmed support for the Climate Action Strategy (CAS) program and staff support for it in a letter to the Board of Supervisors
- Commission discussed attributes to evaluate work plan items for printing on the agenda
- Appointed an ad hoc committee to review and comment on the Draft EIR on cannabis cultivation and manufacturing regulations concerning environmental protection and energy conservation
- Held a joint meeting with the Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission and the Water Advisory Commission to better communicate and coordinate with other County commissions to improve services to the Board of Supervisors and reduce confusion regarding roles of each commission.
- Received public comment from members of the public spoke on the topics of social justice and vulnerability to climate change, mitigating climate change, water supply, Personal Rapid Transit (PRT), emergency evacuation planning, and climate change skepticism
- Received a presentation from Dr. Gary Griggs, Distinguished Professor of Earth Sciences, UCSC on climate issues affecting Santa Cruz County
- Received a presentation from Commissioner Ross Clark on Sea level rise impacts in Santa Cruz County
- Received a presentation from Sierra Ryan, Resource Planner on water supply modeling and climate change
- Received a presentation from Kristen Kittleson, Resource Planner on Coho recovery overview
- Commissioners from the three commissions discussed coordination on climate change adaptation in terms of the jurisdictions of the three commissions, identifying overlaps and gaps in commission foci, and identifying steps toward coordinated advice on County Climate Action Strategy and other approaches to address climate change adaptation
- Topics of discussion by commissioners included:
 - Severe weather this past winter is a sign of current challenge and things to come
 - Land use planning is important to prepare for climate change
 - Need to implement a flood control project on the Pajaro River
 - Prioritize addressing the biggest risk affecting the largest number of people – Santa Cruz wastewater treatment plant
 - Collaboration and coordinating our efforts can increase funding availability
 - Flooding, drought and fire are highest priority risks
 - Each commission should review table 7-1 in the Climate Action Strategy and prioritize what their commission thinks are the top priorities
 - Consider priorities that will be easier to implement now and will be much harder to implement in the future
- Appointed an ad hoc subcommittee of the Commission on the Environment to draft a letter with recommendations regarding climate change adaptation to the Board of Supervisors
- The Commission recommended County staff consider stronger protections for riparian corridors in the County strategic planning process
- Received information on the Memorandum of Understanding regarding early mitigation planning for transportation projects in Santa Cruz County
- Received a presentations from Katherine O’Dea, Executive Director of Save Our Shores about a new initiative regarding further regulation of plastic products and trash clean up data.
- Commissioner Wise-West received the 2018 California Regional Adaptation Leadership Award from the American Society of Adaptation Professionals

- Received a state legislative update from Tim Goncharoff, Resource Planner regarding legislative processes in Sacramento that could benefit or conflict with County programs and objectives.
- Advised the Board of Supervisors in a letter on adaptation priorities for Santa Cruz County
- Recognized the issue of illegal dumping in the County particularly in the Pajaro River and received information on the efforts of the Public Work Department to address the issue and fund an illegal dumping prevention and enforcement program. Presentation on illegal dumping and trash clean up data
- Received regular updates from staff regarding actions by the Board of Supervisors related to topics of interest to the Commission.
- Heard presentations from the Director of Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services regarding the Open Space Project.
- The Commission received updates from the City of Santa Cruz staff regarding the status of their Climate Plan implementation.
- Established an Ad-Hoc inter commission working group to improve communication among environmental commissions.

Commissioner participation in local community meetings

One or more Commissioners attended community meetings to discuss issues related to environmental protection and cooperative opportunities that held potential for establishing local climate change policies and programs as well as identifying funding sources. These community groups included the Climate Action Compact Working Group and Municipal Sub Committee, Monterey Bay Community Power, AMBAG meetings, Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission Meetings, UCSC sustainability meetings, Valley Women's Club Environmental Committee, Fourth Climate Assessment workshop on Central Coast Climate Impacts, Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency board meetings, and various discussions with local and state government staff, County commissions and community based organization stakeholders.

7. Future Goals

The Commission's work plan reflects the Commission's intent to continue its efforts to inform the Board on the implementation of AB32 and related executive orders and legislation, impacts on the local environment due to climate change, and the ongoing work of various local community groups with specific recommendations for local policies and programs that are feasible and effective.

8. Recommendations

The Commission will develop a work plan for the next two year period and continue to focus on plans and initiatives to implement mitigation and adaptation priorities in the County Climate Action Strategy, including creation of a full-time Sustainability Coordinator position for the County. Other Commission work in the next two years will include continuing to advise the Board of Supervisors and make recommendations on ways to improve and protect the environment to ensure the long term environmental sustainability of the County. It is therefore recommended that the Board of Supervisors accept and file the 2017-2018 biennial report of the Commission on the Environment.