

**LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION**  
**Hearing on California Climate Change Adaptation Strategies**  
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Testimony by

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Thank you so much for the invitation to testify before you today. It is an honor. The Little Hoover Commission's decision to raise the issue of governance in the climate change dialogue is gratifying, to say the least. This an important conversation because it goes straight to the heart of *how* we must address the impacts of climate change, not simply *what* we must do or *why* we must do it. And it is a timely discussion: Local governmental entities are beginning to think about the climate impacts that will occur within their jurisdictional boundaries, and make decisions on how to handle them.

I will start by providing you with a brief background of my experience below, focusing on my work in the sustainability field in both local government and on a regional scale.

**Professional Background**

I am currently the Managing Director of the Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability. We are a membership organization housed at the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA, dedicated to fostering greater coordination and cooperation at the local and regional levels by bringing together leadership from governmental organizations, academia, business, non-governmental organizations, and the public to address impacts related to climate change. Our goal is to enhance collaboration on climate mitigation and adaptation in the Los Angeles region.

Prior to my time at UCLA, I had extensive experience working in local government at the City of Los Angeles. I held a variety of positions while with the City, both with elected officials and in the city's Housing Department. While administering the \$4.7 million Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (EECBG ARRA) Multifamily Retrofit Financing Program grant for the Housing Department, I worked closely with the City of Los Angeles Mayor's Office and the federal Department of Energy to achieve certain energy efficiency metrics. I also worked with fellow city departments and the private sector while developing an enhancement to the Department's existing multifamily rental inspection program, which added sustainability criteria to each inspection. Ultimately, this program will provide water and energy information to each of the 100,000 multifamily building owners in Los Angeles and to induce them to invest in retrofit work to increase their building's performance.

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Before coming to the Housing Department, I handled urban planning and land use issues for Antonio R. Villaraigosa, both in his Council Office and in his Mayoral administration. I also headed up his green building initiative, coordinating staff in City Departments, Bureaus, and Agencies – and working with the private development sector - to develop a strategy to push sustainable design and construction into the mainstream. During this time, I worked in conjunction with the Los Angeles City Council to implement the city's green building retrofit and workforce development ordinance. As the Mayor's staff lead on the implementation of the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan, I worked with multiple entities both inside and outside of city government, including layers of local, regional, state, and federal jurisdictions.

### **Addressing the Commission's Questions & Goals**

The questions from the Commission present an opportunity to describe the current climate adaptation efforts underway in the Los Angeles region and to discuss some of the needs we are facing as we pursue our efforts towards climate adaptation.

I hold firm to the belief that using solid research to build awareness leads to better decision-making and creditable action. All climate adaptation action should start with an awareness of localized climate impacts. This imparts an understanding to local jurisdictions of the specific climate effects they will encounter in the future. Facing limited financial and staffing resources makes it imperative that entities prepare for actual future impacts, rather than wasting their efforts on preparing for occurrences that are not likely to happen.

Fortunately for the LA Region, Dr. Alex Hall in the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences at UCLA has performed downscaled climate modeling work to determine climate change effects in Los Angeles at a 2-kilometer scale. This granular data shows our temperature, precipitation, snow pack, and wildfire impacts for the years 2041-2060. This body of data about our localized climate impacts is available to the decision-makers in our local jurisdictions so that they can begin their adaptation planning.

Data on local Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is now available to local decision-makers in the LA region. GHG emissions inventories have been prepared for the 88 cities in Los Angeles County, as well as the County's unincorporated areas for the year 2010. These GHG emissions include those from community activities and correspond to emissions that occur as a result of action within the jurisdictional boundaries of the incorporated cities and the unincorporated area of LA County, or occur outside of the county but are the result of activities inside the county. The inventory focuses on community emissions most readily under the control or subject to the influence of LA County and the cities. By including such emissions, the inventory can form the basis for local climate action planning.

Yet another data set will soon be available to local decision-makers in LA County. The California Center for Sustainable Communities (CCSC), housed in the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA, has created the first highly interactive map of electricity use in Los Angeles. This web-based map is a tool for visualizing and analyzing

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the energy usage trends within the City of Los Angeles and is being used to improve energy planning, efficiency programs, and renewable energy policies. Currently CCSC is expanding the map to include energy data for Los Angeles County in its entirety so that the tool will be available to decision-makers throughout the region. In the expanded map, CCSC will also include County-wide water use data.

Earlier this year, USC Sea Grant in partnership with the City of Los Angeles, developed AdaptLA, a science-based and stakeholder-supported sea level rise adaptation planning process and vulnerability assessment. AdaptLA provides the city with a methodology to help it identify the vulnerabilities of its assets, its resources, and its residents.

Additional individual adaptation planning efforts are underway at the Port of Long Beach, the City of Redondo Beach, the South Bay Cities Council of Governments, and the City of Santa Monica. This reflects the diverse nature of climate change response in the LA region: Some local jurisdictions are aware of the need for adaptation planning, and have to the staff knowledge, capacity, and other tools to undertake such an effort; however, this level of understanding and ability is unfortunately not the prevailing standard in the LA region.

In order to overcome the disparity in understanding and effort and to build local jurisdictional capacity, LARC is engaging decision-makers throughout the region on the issue of climate adaptation. This entails imparting a basic awareness of the local climate research and data now available – and described above - and includes an education effort on how their respective jurisdictions can use the research as they pursue a responsive climate adaptation program.

LARC is performing this work as part of an effort to create a Framework Plan for climate action in the LA Region. LARC is developing this climate mitigation and adaptation plan in partnership with the regional transit authority (Metro), under the auspices of a Strategic Growth Council grant. A coordinated regional response to climate change impacts builds opportunities for cooperative and mutually beneficial planning while taking advantage of economies of scale in training, information acquisition, and scientific guidance.

In order to be an effective catalyst in facilitating collaboration on climate action and to engage local stakeholders who would otherwise avoid their climate adaptation planning, LARC is forming – or leveraging existing – working groups based on particular local climate impacts. For the LA region this includes wildfire, emergency management, temperature and public health, water resources, and coastal impact.

The importance of integrated region-wide climate adaptation planning is apparent if one looks to our coastline as an example. In coastal Los Angeles County, numerous separate jurisdictions comprise a system of incorporated cities, unincorporated county-managed facilities, and state-managed beaches. Although all of these governmental authorities are independent entities, actions such as building sea walls, or non-action such as allowing seawater to infiltrate groundwater, taken by any one of them will impact the others, sometimes in a profound way.

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It is apparent that, in addition to ensuring economies of scale in research and training, as well as standardized scientific guidance, regional coordination and collaboration on climate action is key to resolving potential conflicts of interest among the municipalities and other governmental authorities within that geographic region.

It is worth noting here that each region will face a diverse array of climate impacts, therefore, adaptation response must also necessarily differ across localities. Currently, there are at least four regional collaboratives in the state. Each of us is responding to a different set of climate challenges and each, therefore, is shaping a somewhat different response.

LARC has achieved some success in encouraging individual local response to climate impact, as well as integrated regional climate action. However, existing regional collaboratives such as LARC have restricted, if any, legal authority. Therefore, our work is limited to building the capacity of local jurisdictions to undertake climate change mitigation and adaptation action, and to coordinate their climate impact response with their neighbors throughout the region. If the role of regional collaboratives were to be institutionalized, the performance of local jurisdictions would be superior and an integrated regional response would be ensured.

Institutionalizing the role of the existing regional climate collaboratives is one solution to the adaptation planning and governance conundrum. There are a number of different models to accomplish this. I will lay out three of them here, with their respective advantages and disadvantages for the Commission to consider.

One alternative would be to allow the regional collaboratives to apply for regional planning and climate adaptation grants from state agencies such as the Strategic Growth Council and the Coastal Conservancy. Modeled on the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Grant Program, the intent of these collaboratives would be to promote and practice integrated regional climate adaptation planning, including enhanced research and data collection, data management, community engagement, and local jurisdiction staff training and education.

This recommendation has many positive aspects including the opportunity to enhance an existing framework of entities that already understand the local climate impacts for their respective regions and are working on climate adaptation efforts across their respective regions.

Some of the drawbacks to this approach are that some areas in the state do not have regional collaboratives; therefore, either new collaboratives would have to be formed or large swaths of the state would not be included in this type of climate adaptation planning and governance. Another disadvantage would be that the collaboratives would remain voluntary entities, meaning that local jurisdictions would retain the authority to choose whether or not to participate in the adaptation efforts. This could undermine a truly regional attempt to address climate impact.

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A second solution would be to create Joint Powers Authorities at a regional level throughout the state to address climate adaptation. Each JPA would assume all climate adaptation planning and implementation efforts for its respective region. This would ensure that adaptation planning took place and that adaptation programs and actions were put into place.

The advantages of this approach are that the activities of the JPA would transcend the boundaries of existing public authorities, which is an ideal construct given the nature of climate impacts and adaptation response. Regional adaptation work would ease the likelihood of unintentional harm done by one local government to another through preferred adaptation measure/s. In addition, research would be performed on a regional scale, and the scientific methodology would be standardized. Finally, the JPA would result in the creation of an “economy of scale” to alleviate limited local resources for planning work, as well as the implementation of adaptation policies and programs. Moreover, if each region had a JPA, those authorities could coordinate their efforts amongst each other statewide: this is an endeavor that the regional climate collaboratives already undertake.

The disadvantages of this approach are that these types of entities are given the powers inherent in all of the participating agencies. Because some of these powers would likely include land use planning, emergency management, and public health, local governments would very likely not be in favor of creating these JPAs. In addition, because the authorizing agreement states the powers the new authority will be allowed to exercise and specifies the term, membership, and standing orders of the board of the authority, it leaves them very inflexible to change. Within the climate arena, which is rapidly shifting as superior research occurs and better data is made available, organizations must also be nimble and able to evolve, so that climate response remains relevant and up-to-date.

A third solution would be to mandate climate adaptation planning by local jurisdictions through the General Plans and Local Coastal Plans. Because of the benefits of regional collaboration on the climate issue, as mentioned above, a second piece to this solution would be to mandate local collaboration at a regional level. This could be done through the creation of “special climate adaptation districts” within each Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). “Local collaboration” would be reflective of the work already being performed by the existing regional collaboratives, such as LARC, to build climate planning capacity within local jurisdictions through outreach to decision-makers, and staff training.

Additional displays of “local collaboration” would include the recognition of standardized scientific protocols and methodologies, and regional research efforts, in partnership with academic institutions and research facilities. Finally, “local collaboration” would include a requirement of local jurisdictions, as they perform their respective adaptation planning work, to coordinate with one another on their individual climate response and ensure consistency among general plan elements.

The benefits of this approach are that these special districts would institute common climate principals, vocabulary, and adaptation protocols across the region. This would

extend to science and data methodology, by institutionalizing partnerships with academia. In addition, each region would be free to focus on those climate impacts that will affect them on both a regional scale and a more granular local level.

The drawbacks of this approach are finding an appropriate funding mechanism for the special districts and a tool to ensure that local governments are performing their adaptation planning work within their general plan updates.

In closing, I'd like to thank the Commission again for the opportunity to testify as you develop your recommendations on adaptation planning and governance for the governor and the state assembly. Your efforts on this front are incredibly important and timely as California prepares for future climate impacts. I would be happy to answer any questions or further discuss any of my thoughts above.

Thank you very much.



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