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Testimony on California Climate Change Adaptation Strategies  
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Thank you for providing this opportunity to testify before the Little Hoover Commission on how to help California's major metropolitan regions adapt effectively to changing climate conditions. My testimony is organized around the four questions I received from the Commission, delineated below. I will begin with background on the role of The San Diego Foundation in helping to advance regional efforts to address climate change, and then provide recommendations for what that state could provide to cities, counties, and regions on climate change adaptation, along with suggestions for strengthening governance of this process.

***How the San Diego Foundation came to focus on climate change adaptation and decided to act in the interests of the region. Please describe the process of discovery regarding climate threats, the initial research, studies and building blocks of foundation's regional initiative.***

The San Diego Foundation launched the Climate Initiative in 2006 to engage local government, nonprofits, and business in more comprehensive efforts to curb regional emissions and prepare for local climate change impacts to which we will be most vulnerable. We are one of the first community foundations nationwide to establish a local program focused specifically on climate change, as it relates to local planning and policy for land use and transportation, water and energy resources, natural lands, and public health.

Since the Climate Initiative's launch in 2006, we have invested approximately \$2,000,000 in:

- Scientific research and public opinion surveys to inform regional planning and policy
- Technical expertise, information sharing, and peer-to-peer networking for elected officials and staff from our region's 18 cities, county government, public agencies, San Diego Gas & Electric, and CleanTECH San Diego (an association of local clean technology businesses)
- Nonprofits working to engage local communities in efforts to advance regional plans, policies and programs that address climate change
- Community outreach and education to raise public awareness about the implications of climate change for our region

- Building the next generation of climate leadership in the region, through fellowships for recent graduates

The San Diego Foundation came to focus on climate change adaptation for three primary reasons. First, we came to realize that our other environmental investments in efforts to protect our region's air, water, natural lands and quality of life would be overshadowed by the detrimental impacts of climate change. Second, we recognized that climate change was beginning to affect our grant making, as we experienced two of San Diego County's (and California's) largest wildfires in a century in 2003 and 2007. The Foundation granted over \$13.5 million<sup>1</sup> to support disaster response, recovery, and rebuilding efforts after these two events, which also cost the region approximately \$2.5 billion in losses in 2003 and a roughly similar amount in 2007.<sup>2</sup> Third, with the passage of state legislation – AB 32 and related policies – it became clear that local communities and regions were poised to play a pivotal role in grappling with climate change.

With these factors in mind, together with an ongoing commitment to protecting the region's environment and quality of life, The Foundation assessed how philanthropy could play a constructive role in advancing comprehensive, regional action to both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and manage the most harmful impacts of climate change in San Diego County. From interviews with elected officials, local government staff, business and community leaders, we found that the greatest needs that The Foundation could fill were in supporting locally relevant research to inform climate action and related planning and policy in the San Diego region. We also learned that technical assistance would be helpful to local governments and public agencies, to compile greenhouse gas emissions inventories, assess vulnerabilities to climate change, and put together climate action plans and policies. Finally, we found that we could facilitate collaboration across jurisdictions by convening local government staff on a regular basis for peer-to-peer networking, information sharing, and training around lessons learned and best practices from climate action planning across the country.

The initial research projects we supported were: (1) a comprehensive assessment of the potential impacts of climate change to the San Diego region, involving 40 scientists and technical experts from UCSD Scripps Institution of Oceanography and other local universities, public agencies, and consulting firms<sup>3</sup>; and (2) a regional greenhouse gas emissions inventory, performed by the University of San Diego's Energy Policy Initiatives Center<sup>4</sup>. We complemented

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<sup>1</sup> See: The San Diego Foundation. 2011. *October 2007 Wildfires: Final Report*, and The San Diego Foundation. 2004. *San Diego After-the Fire Report: Responding, Recovering, and Rebuilding – A Progress Report* <http://www.sdfoundation.org/TSDFProjects/SanDiegoRegionalDisasterFund.aspx>

<sup>2</sup>Rahn, Matt. 2009. *Wildfire Impact Analysis: 2003 Wildfires in Retrospect*. 2009 California Wildfire Economic Study, Wildfire Research Report No. 1. San Diego State University.

<sup>3</sup> The San Diego Foundation. 2008. *San Diego's Changing Climate: A Regional Wake-Up Call*. A Summary of the Focus 2050 Study presented by The San Diego Foundation. <http://www.sdfoundation.org/Portals/0/Newsroom/PDF/Reports/Focus2050glossySDF-ClimateReport.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Energy Policy Initiatives Center. 2008. *San Diego County Greenhouse Gas Inventory: An Analysis of Regional Emissions and Strategies to Achieve AB 2 Targets*. <http://catcher.sandiego.edu/items/epic/ESPReport1.pdf>

these research investments with a grant to ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, to partner with The Foundation in facilitating quarterly, peer-to-peer networking, information sharing and collaboration among local governments, as well as to provide technical assistance and climate fellows (typically recent university graduates) to help local governments develop greenhouse gas emissions inventories as the basis for developing climate action plans. We have continued to support research, public opinion polling, and technical assistance to further advance climate action planning across the region.

We complemented support for local research, polling, technical assistance and collaboration with funding for local nonprofits working at the community level to promote local land use and transportation plans/policies that will enable the development of more pedestrian- and bike-friendly communities, parks and open space, expanded transit, water and energy conservation, and greater focus on protecting public health through the built environment. Furthermore, in order to augment the funding we had available at the foundation, we engaged additional financial support from individual and corporate funders, as well as other foundations. Last – but not least – we brought together a diverse group of advisors from business, government, nonprofits, and universities, to provide us with ongoing guidance on where our philanthropy could make the greatest impact.

***Please also describe for the Commission the foundation's convening role in determining key issues, assembling a cast of regional policy-makers and stakeholders, financing the ongoing effort and keeping it from bogging down. The San Diego Foundation's organizational and convening efforts regarding climate change appear to be unique in California. What has the process produced so far and what are its ongoing goals for coming years?***

Over the course of our Climate Initiative, we have learned that by serving as a neutral convener, our community foundation can provide an ongoing forum for local governments to identify common challenges, share lessons learned and best practices, and strengthen their individual, jurisdictional efforts by working together. This has been especially important given competing priorities, shrinking budgets, and limited staffing at the local government level to deal with the complexity and long time horizon of climate change. It has also helped to keep the momentum behind local climate action.

This forum has helped us to identify critical, locally relevant research, polling and technical assistance needs that can be met with foundation financing, to advance regional efforts to grapple with climate change. We have found that this research has greater credibility in the community, given the independent nature of the funding source and the local connections that the scientists have to the community. Similarly, where there are few resources for independent polling to understand local perceptions and attitudes around climate change, foundation funding can play a helpful role.

With this partnership of philanthropy, business, community, and government, we have realized significant progress over the past few years. When we launched our Climate Initiative, there were only two cities that were actively engaged in climate-related planning. Today:

- All eighteen cities, the county, and major public agencies (port, airport, water authority, and metropolitan planning organization) have completed greenhouse gas emissions inventories and approximately half have climate action plans in development or completed.
- Our region has one of the first multi-jurisdictional efforts to address sea level rise, involving the Port of San Diego, its five member cities, and the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority. Since the *Sea Level Rise Adaptation Strategy for San Diego Bay*<sup>5</sup> was released last year, the U.S. Navy and three other coastal cities from North San Diego County have joined this collaborative effort to grapple with coastal flooding and climate change.
- The San Diego County Water Authority is working with scientists from Scripps Institution of Oceanography and the foundation to plan for climate change as it relates to our region's future water supply and demand.
- With funding from The National Science Foundation, the University of San Diego, Energy Policy Initiatives Center, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, California State University at San Marcos, Steve Alexander Group and San Diego Foundation are working together as *Climate Education Partners* to help regional leaders and their communities learn more about the impacts of a changing climate in order to prepare for, respond to, and even reduce those impacts.
- The cities of Chula Vista, San Diego, County of San Diego, Port of San Diego, San Diego Association of Governments, San Diego Gas & Electric, and University of San Diego co-founded the *Climate Collaborative*, a San Diego regional forum for public agencies to share expertise and leverage resources to facilitate climate action planning. By partnering with academia, non-profit organizations, and business and community leaders, these agencies work to inspire regional leadership and ensure a vibrant economy and healthy environment.
- The San Diego region is part of the *Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation (ARCCA)*, with members from the Sacramento, Bay Area, Los Angeles, and San Diego regions. Members are sharing information and knowledge on best practices and lessons learned to enhance the effectiveness of local and regional adaptation efforts. The four regions are together with state agencies to ensure efficient use of our limited resources and streamline state and regional adaptation assistance to local governments.

Over the next few years, the foundation plans to continue its support of local research, technical assistance, collaboration, community engagement, and public awareness and engagement. Our priorities are to help strengthen the efforts of both the *Climate Collaborative* and *Climate Education Partners*, as well as to support ICLEI's continued work with local governments and public agencies to integrate climate change considerations into the region's latest Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan. Furthermore, we intend to expand our efforts to engage business leadership in helping to raise public awareness and advance private sector efforts to grapple with climate change in our region.

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<sup>5</sup> ICLEI. 2012. *Sea Level Rise Adaptation Strategy for San Diego Bay*.  
[http://www.iclei.org/climate\\_and\\_energy/Climate\\_Adaptation\\_Guidance/san-diego-bay-sea-level-rise-adaptation-strategy-1/san-diego-bay-sea-level-rise-adaptation-strategy](http://www.iclei.org/climate_and_energy/Climate_Adaptation_Guidance/san-diego-bay-sea-level-rise-adaptation-strategy-1/san-diego-bay-sea-level-rise-adaptation-strategy)

***What does the San Diego region need from the state? Given that cities and regions will assume the leading responsibility for adaptation and related land use issues, what would be helpful at the nexus of state government and local/regional government in terms of structures, guidance, grants and incentives? What might the Commission recommend to the state regarding its dealings with cities, counties and regions on climate change adaptation?***

There are many ways that the state could help to facilitate the integration of local, regional and California-wide efforts to adapt to climate change:

*Support regional/local monitoring* – Provide funding to support cities and regions to monitor climate change impacts, as well as to monitor current adaptation efforts and other projects that could serve as future adaptation strategies, to assess their costs, benefits, and viability for broader adoption.

*Provide more specific guidance to local/regional jurisdictions about the range, timespan and latest scientific understanding of local climate impacts* - Local governments and public agencies would greatly benefit from more specific guidance from the state on the ranges of impacts they should plan for (e.g., sea level rise and coastal flooding, drought and water supplies, heat waves, and wildfires), as well as the timeframe for such plans (e.g., 2035, 2050, or a more extended timeframe). This would make it easier for local jurisdictions to align and integrate their efforts around common data and analyses, to better manage climate risk and enhance regional climate resilience. To date, resources such as the California Climate Change Portal and other ongoing collaboration and outreach from agencies such as the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research have greatly helped enhance communications about State activities and between state and local entities.

*Incentivize SB 375-equivalent, integrated regional planning to increase climate resilience* - Provide incentives for regional collaboration among metropolitan planning organizations, counties, cities and other local public agencies, to integrate climate preparedness and adaptation into land use, transportation, urban water management, hazard mitigation and other local plans/policies. Incentives could include CEQA streamlining, as well as special funding for localities that follow or exceed state guidance around adaptation planning. Such integrated planning should also be done in a way that protects local decision-making authority. Furthermore, it would be helpful for the State to encourage both mitigation and adaptation in an integrated way, so that local communities continue to hear the message from the State that climate action plans should ideally focus on both mitigation and adaptation.

*Provide funding for Regional Chief Resilience Officers* – The Rockefeller Foundation recently issued a 100 Resilient Cities Centennial Challenge for cities worldwide to compete for funding to hire a Chief Resilience Officer, receive technical support and other resources for developing and implementing plans to enhance urban resilience. This challenge sparked considerable interest among local governments, nonprofits, and business associations in the San Diego region. These groups also noted that having such resources at a regional level could have an even greater impact, given the multijurisdictional nature of climate impacts and preparedness

planning. The state could build upon the Rockefeller example and issue a similar challenge for counties and metropolitan planning organizations, to work in partnership with other local governments and community based organizations toward regional climate resilience. In the meantime, exploring innovative partnerships such as that being considered with AmeriCorps can significantly help to enhance the resources localities and regions have to actively address climate change.

*Provide funding for climate-related research and technical expertise that can be shared by local governments and public agencies* – From our experience, we have learned that support for locally relevant research and technical assistance that can be shared across jurisdictions can facilitate collaboration and greater alignment of planning and policies around climate change. This funding could be used to help local governments work together to minimize duplication/waste and facilitate replication of best practices. While philanthropy can support this work for a period of time, it needs a sustainable, ongoing source of funding.

*Provide funding for local jurisdictions to develop decision-making frameworks that include risk management and cost/benefit analysis* – This would enable local jurisdictions to more effectively evaluate their options, in both the selection and implementation of appropriate management practices in communities vulnerable to inundation or regular flooding, wildfires, and other challenges likely to worsen with climate change, utilizing such frameworks as risk management and cost/benefit analysis (see also *San Diego Bay Sea Level Rise Adaptation Strategy*, Comprehensive Strategy recommendation #10).

*Provide funding for implementation of adaptation plans* – While many local jurisdictions have developed climate action plans, they do not have the resources to implement them. Funding for on-the-ground projects would not only help to build local climate resilience but also enable localities to assess the effectiveness of different measures in the plans.

*Provide funding for local governments to invest in civic technology* – There are a growing number of civic technology tools that governments are adopting to promote greater public participation in community problem-solving. State funding for cities and counties to invest in civic technology for civic engagement could provide a useful outreach and educational tool for citizens to “own the problem” and get involved in climate change at the neighborhood level, as well as to facilitate greater community involvement in climate-related planning and policymaking.

***What institutional and governing barriers frustrate efforts to organize effective responses at this stage? What barriers are likely to frustrate future efforts as the climate threat becomes more pronounced? How, in short, should this entire process be governed?***

Until recently, planning for future growth and development has assumed a stable climate. However, in coming decades, the impacts of our changing climate will become increasingly pronounced, threatening our quality of life and economic prosperity. As the threats from climate change become more prominent, it will become increasingly essential that state,

regional, and local jurisdictions take an integrated, collaborative approach to managing the threats. Currently, there are few mechanisms to support this type of approach.

Recognizing this need for greater collaboration at all levels, many regions have come together within their own regions and across the state, best exemplified by the Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation. This is a model that could provide a way forward, particularly if it could be formalized and expanded to include other regions, with strong support from state agencies.

Additional challenges that could be met with additional state resources and involvement include: (1) the need for broader, ongoing stakeholder and community engagement to build public awareness of and support for efforts to enhance regional climate preparedness and resilience, (2) clear and consistent regulatory guidance from the state on how to address sea level rise and other climate change impacts in development permitting; and (3) the need for more detailed vulnerability assessments at a site-specific level as significant plans or capital projects are undertaken (excerpted from *San Diego Bay Sea Level Rise Adaptation Strategy, Comprehensive Strategies* section).