

Lisa Driscoll

From: Shoshana Wechsler <swechs@sonic.net>
Sent: Wednesday, July 28, 2021 9:36 PM
To: Lisa Driscoll
Subject: Measure X for Sustainability Projects

Dear Ms. Driscoll and Measure X Advisory Board Members,

There's just no denying it anymore: we're in a global climate emergency. The crisis has been rapidly accelerating since Contra Costa County passed its Climate Emergency Resolution in September of 2020.

Our planet is experiencing more frequent and intense wildfires, rising sea temperatures, melting sea ice, ocean acidification, habitat and biodiversity loss, drought, extreme flooding, and natural disasters. Countless lives have been lost in the last few months alone due to record-breaking heat, massive flooding, and monstrous climate-related wildfires. We are all experiencing fear and anxiety as we face the intensification of the California fire season.

Climate change is deadly, and its impacts are especially ruinous for vulnerable, low-income communities.

Our Department of Conservation and Development (DCD) recognizes the many climate-related challenges we're facing, and identifies several crucial areas for community planning initiatives which merit Measure X investment.

I strongly support DCD's proposal, but I also urge you to consider dedicating far *more* Measure X funding to climate equity and resilience than the extremely modest amount DCD is requesting (\$500,000/year). I offer just two examples in support. First, there's adaptation to sea level rise, which leads DCD's list of critical areas. This is clearly a matter of great urgency in a county with as much shoreline as Contra Costa. The Adapting to Rising Tides study of Contra County from Richmond to Bay Point (ART Study West) indicates that sea levels in the county may rise anywhere from 2 to 12 inches by 2030; from 5 to 24 inches by 2050, and anywhere from 17 to 66 inches by 2100 (1). And it shows us quite how extensive the impacts could be. At risk in the western sector alone are 277 commercial sites, 482 industrial facilities, 1,287 hazardous material sites, and 62 brownfields (2). Temporary and permanent flooding will be dangerous and costly. But as a study by the National Institute of Building Sciences has found, "each \$1 spent on mitigation saves an average of \$6 in future disaster costs" (3). In the long run, every dollar we invest in climate resilience will save both money and lives.

The impending threat of sea level rise is just one powerful reason why Contra Costa needs to seriously invest in climate resilience. But we face equally steep challenges when it comes to promoting climate equity. Our already heavily pollution-burdened, low-income communities of color could face even greater health and financial risks as the climate emergency intensifies. It is imperative that the county develop and implement a full range of community-facing projects that promote equal access to clean energy (and energy efficiency) and ensure disaster readiness. And as a major center of fossil fuel refining and distribution, our county also needs to begin preparing for a just and equitable transition away from its legacy industry. Fossil fuel workers will lose jobs and communities their tax revenue and other income unless we diligently plan ahead for what is coming—and in fact has already arrived.

The County would benefit greatly from contracting with the U.C. Berkeley Labor Center to develop a county-specific Just Transition Roadmap. The cost of such a study could easily absorb the entire annual amount DCD is requesting, but the overall benefit would be invaluable. Developing a just and equitable transition in Contra Costa County needs to be a real priority, but it cannot be unless we are willing to fully invest in the technical resources we need. It is my sincere belief that dedicating at least 1.5% of the \$80 million Measure X fund to Climate Equity and Resilience could enable rapid progress in this direction.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts.

Sincerely yours,

Shoshana Wechsler
District 1 Alternate, Contra Costa County Sustainability Commission

1. "Climate Resilience in Contra Costa County: Implementing the ART Study." <https://www.contracosta.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/61064/Climate-Resilience-in-Contra-Costa-County---Implementing-the-ART-Study-PDF>, p.6.
2. "Climate Resilience in Contra Costa County: Implementing the ART Study." <https://www.contracosta.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/61064/Climate-Resilience-in-Contra-Costa-County---Implementing-the-ART-Study-PDF>, p.6.
3. "Resilient San Mateo." San Mateo Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency Agency. <https://resilientsanmateo.org>. Quoted in "Implementing the ART Study," p.8.