



DATE: September 15, 2017
TO: BARC Governing Board
FROM: Allison Brooks, BARC Executive Director
RE: *Raising the Bar on Regional Resilience Report – Call for Action*

This summer has brought an unprecedented number of catastrophic climate events upon many vulnerable people and places in the United States and around the world. From the devastation wrought by Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma to the extreme storms and flooding in South Asia to the shaking of an 8.2 magnitude earthquake in Southwestern Mexico, human civilization is in-the-midst of an urgent inflection point where we must begin to prepare ourselves for changing climatic conditions and their very real impacts on our communities and ways of life.

Over the last several years, the Bay Area and surrounding regions experienced our own extreme climactic events moving from a severe 5-year drought to unprecedented flooding in San Jose and intensifying “nuisance” flooding impeding our critical transportation infrastructure and cutting off major access points for vulnerable communities. Taken together, these events do not merely serve to reinforce what the climate scientists report, they bring a sense of urgency to our actions to make our communities, infrastructure and environment more resilient in the face of the changing climate, particularly our low-income communities and communities of color that are at the frontlines of risk to climate impacts. The draft Raising the Bay on Resilience Report included in the BARC Governing Board meeting packet, and released for public comment, is intended to serve as a call for action for BARC member agencies and our partners across the region to raise the bar on resilience and help set an example for others around the country and world.

What We Can Do

Building resilience is not a standalone tactic, but rather a coordinated strategy that needs to be integrated with current and future land use policies, transportation networks, and environmental planning, among other policies. The Raising the Bar Report outlines the activities BARC member agencies and partners are conducting to accomplish **three critical goals** over the coming years:

1. Accelerate local and regional progress in resilience planning and implementation.
2. Clearly identify which agency or agencies are responsible for conducting a regional resilience plan that is fully integrated with other regional climate planning processes, and determine if further authority and resources are necessary to do so effectively.

3. Clearly identify which agency or agencies regulate actions at the local and regional scales to support the regional resilience plan, and determine approach to increasing regulatory authority as appropriate.

Of near term importance is the need to establish a clear Bay Area-wide framework through which resilience planning and implementation will occur at the local, sub-regional, and regional levels. This framework should be integrated with established processes for reducing greenhouse gases, improving air quality, planning for land use and transportation, and mitigating hazards.

The draft Raising the Bar on Resilience report recommends that the BARC Governing Board and its member agency leadership establish a process and timeline through which the decision-making structure and roles and responsibilities for conducting regional resilience planning and implementation can be decided upon. The coordination and commitments required to clarify how the Bay Area will adopt a strong regional governance strategy to move forward climate-related actions should be a high priority for all member agencies. Establishing a successful approach will also depend on the support and active participation of local jurisdictions, special districts, transportation agencies, the business community, non-profit partners and community based organizations, among others.

Over the next year, some key questions that need to be answered include:

- What is a regional resilience plan? How often does it need to be updated?
- Which agency or agencies are responsible for developing and implementing such a regularly updated regional resilience plan?
- How will this regional resilience plan be integrated with existing regional planning processes?
- To what extent are additional authorities and/or resources needed for the agencies to accomplish their tasks?

As outlined in the Raising the Bar report, there are important projects underway in the region to help inform and advance resilience work at the local and regional level, as well as inform state level policies and programs. Two important projects that the BARC member agencies and BARC staff are leading have just kicked into high gear that will help meet the first goal listed above in advancing local and regional progress in resilience planning and implementation as well as informing the process of determining who is responsible for completing regional resilience planning and guiding implementation into the future.

The first is ART Bay Area (www.adaptingtorisingtides.org) which is having its first Regional Working Group on September 21st at the Bay Area Metro Center and which will complete a comprehensive regional vulnerability assessment of our transportation infrastructure, priority development and priority conversation areas and vulnerable and underserved, disadvantaged communities and begin to identify strategies for addressing those vulnerabilities. The second is Resilient by Design Bay Area Challenge (www.resilientbayarea.org) that on September 10th announced the 10 international multi-disciplinary design teams that were selected to work in 10 places in the Bay Area to develop tangible visions and strategies for making our diverse communities and supporting infrastructure and assets more resilient to the climate impacts looming before us.

It is time to Raise the Bar on resilience. The BARC Governing Board and the BARC member agency leaders can help outline a process by which the Bay Area regional agencies and partners can ensure that visionary and outcome-oriented regional planning and implementation take place more formally in a clear and transparent manner now and into the future.