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Mobilizing Regional Action: Insights from the San Diego Region Coastal Resilience Roadmap

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Mobilizing Regional Action: Insights from the San Diego Region Coastal Resilience Roadmap



About SDRCC

The San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative (SDRCC) was established in 2011 as a network for public agencies aiming to connect the region to advance climate change solutions to support a resilient region. SDRCC facilitates peer-to-peer networking, information sharing, and partnerships among local jurisdictions both to catalyze and strengthen regional action on climate change and drive climate investments to the region.

A Case for Regional Action

Taking regional action on climate change presents a number of challenges, including the same challenges faced at the local level, as well as unique challenges faced at the regional scale. Funding opportunities, while increasing in recent years, remain severely limited compared to the pace and scale of action required. The lack of an effective regional governance system and unclear roles and responsibilities for local and regional agencies create additional barriers. The urgency of addressing community needs and other local issues, particularly as the impacts of climate change worsen, combined with the perception that a regional focus could divert resources away from local needs, can also create barriers and delay adaptation progress across the region.

Despite these challenges, the importance of regional action, coordination, and collaboration has never been clearer. A regional perspective is essential to understanding community needs beyond the jurisdiction they reside or work in, to identify critical infrastructure and services to preserve and expand at the regional scale. This includes the natural ecosystems and resources that communities rely upon that span multiple jurisdictional boundaries. The benefits of regional coordination are extensive – from attracting greater investments into the region to better leveraging the region’s human capital to efficiently and inclusively plan and implement climate adaptation projects.

This case study details the process of developing the San Diego Region Coastal Resilience Roadmap with particular attention to how this process can be replicated in other regions throughout California – for coastal resilience, as well as other climate impacts and community priorities.

The San Diego Region Coastal Resilience Roadmap project was funded through a Coastal Resilience Grant awarded by the Ocean Protection Council, and led by the San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative (SDRCC) in partnership with Resilient Cities Catalyst and CivicWell. While the Roadmap itself has been completed, SDRCC will continue working with partners throughout the San Diego region to provide critical coordination support and ensure the successful implementation of the Roadmap.

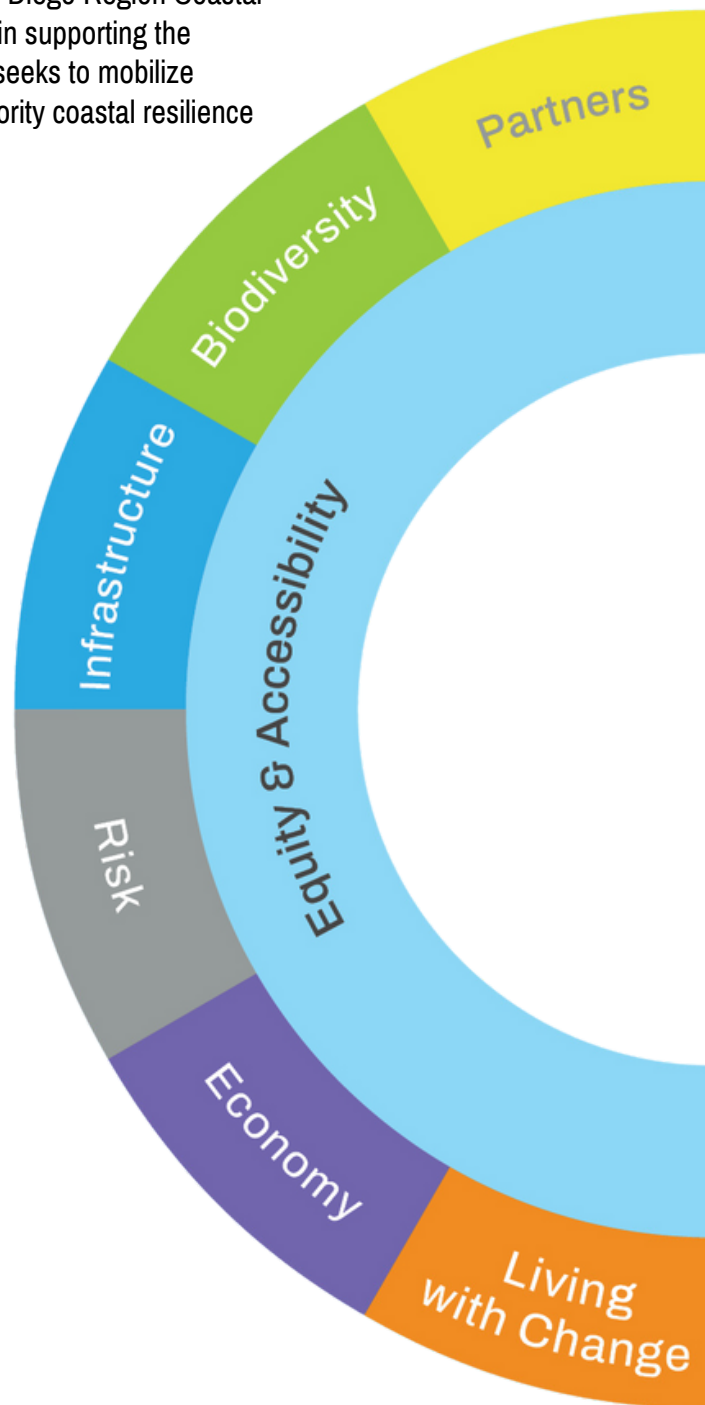
About the San Diego Region Coastal Resilience Roadmap

As communities across the San Diego region grapple with how to plan for greater risk and damages as a result of coastal flooding, annual storm surges, king tides, and other shocks and stresses, there is growing recognition of the need to strengthen collaboration across jurisdictions and across sectors. The San Diego Region Coastal Resilience Roadmap recognizes the vital role of the coastline in supporting the region's economic, environmental, and social prosperity, and seeks to mobilize climate practitioners around a common vision and a set of priority coastal resilience projects to advance across the San Diego region.

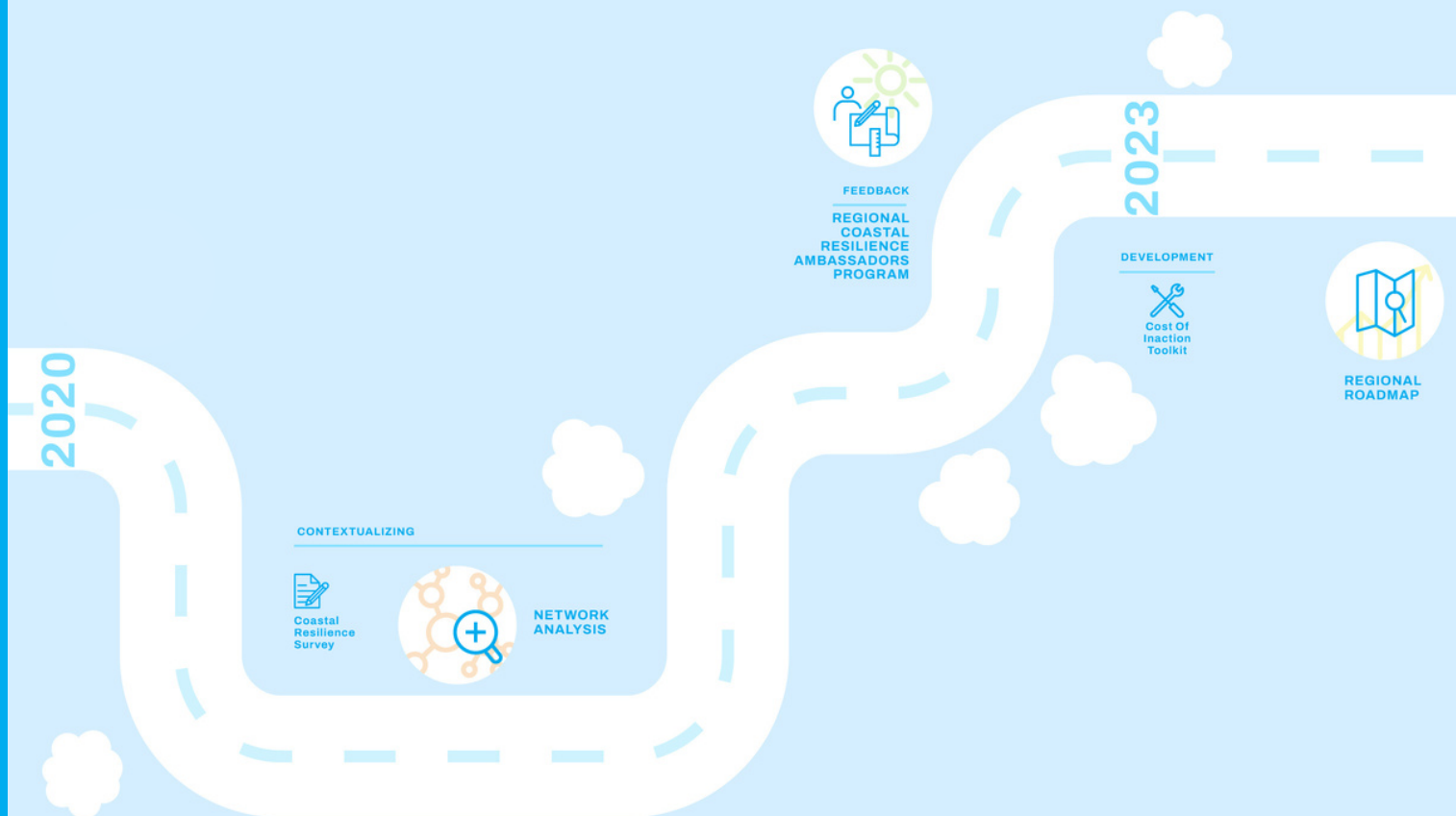
Grounded in equity and accessibility, the Roadmap reflects an approach that considers the region's holistic social-ecological coastal system and fosters a regional capacity to transform and become more resilient. The Roadmap is designed to serve as a dynamic document to facilitate and strengthen regional collaboration, motivating and inspiring coordinated ongoing action among regional partners.

Through 6 Principles, 30 Goals, and 76 specific Actions, the Roadmap amplifies tangible opportunities to implement aligned multi-benefit projects that address the region's most urgent shocks and stresses. Actions set forth within these Principles are not exclusively focused on achieving outcomes for natural, ecological systems, nor are they focused solely on economic or social impacts—rather, each Action drives towards multiple benefits.

By aligning planning goals on a regional scale, the Roadmap aims to foster multi-jurisdictional resilience through coordinated planning that leads to high-impact projects and tangible outcomes to further local and regional climate resilience goals. Through specific Principles and Goals, the Roadmap elevates and outlines comprehensive, practical, and tangible pathways to build multi-sectoral consensus around a high-level vision, and delivers a set of prioritized actions to guide implementation for decades to come.



Roadmap Development



The development of the San Diego Region Coastal Resilience Roadmap was informed by three critical project phases:

1 Assessing Existing Conditions

The project team conducted a **Network Analysis** through an online survey to better understand the current and potential roles of key regional partners in building a more resilient coastal region. Survey respondents shared their perceptions of how key actors are connected to coastal resilience and how these relationships might be strengthened to facilitate additional collaborative action. This phase revealed four opportunities for action – developing a shared vision, making funding more accessible, amplifying knowledge sharing networks, and supporting cross-sector engagement.

2 Assessing Existing Assets

A robust **Literature Review** was conducted that analyzed 150 regional documents and plans to explore, understand, and synthesize how the region identifies exposure to shocks and stresses, as well as what actions are underway to mitigate and adapt to these impacts. This phase provided the project team with a deep understanding of the region's existing priorities, plans, and projects related to coastal resilience and reinforced the need to support leaders in continuing, scaling, and implementing their efforts.

3 Deep Engagement with Regional Stakeholders

With a robust understanding of the region's resilience landscape, a **Regional Coastal Resilience Ambassadors (RCRA) Cohort** was formed to provide strategic guidance and inform the direction of the Roadmap. The RCRA Cohort included grassroots organizations, local and regional government agencies, Tribes and tribal partners, and research institutions representing a diversity of sectors, disciplines, and sub-regions. The RCRA Cohort identified common threads across regional priorities to directly inform the development of the Roadmap's Principles and Goals. The project team then convened **Focus Groups** for each of the Roadmap's six Principles to convene regional experts and partners to identify actions already underway, ripe for application in the Roadmap, as well as proposed actions to address key gaps and advance coastal resilience efforts across the region.

Guidance & Lessons Learned

The San Diego Region Coastal Resilience Roadmap serves as a model that other regions can replicate to align practitioners across their region around a common vision for climate resilience and to develop a strategic roadmap to catalyze action. This section highlights guidance and lessons learned from the project team to support others interested in pursuing a similar roadmapping process.

Readiness Conditions

Before embarking on your region's roadmapping journey, having the following conditions in place can help to ensure a productive and successful effort.

1 A robust understanding of the region

The leadership and active involvement of the San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative (SDRCC) was critical for the development of the Roadmap, due to its long history as a vital regional coordinating entity and direct experience working on climate issues throughout the region. By actively participating in and guiding all aspects of this project, SDRCC supported the team to better understand the region's climate risks, cultural values, political context, and existing connections across organizations and agencies.

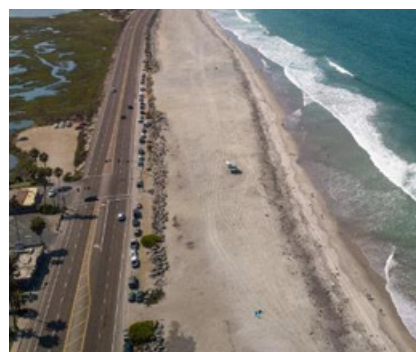


2 Reciprocal relationships in place

An inclusive roadmapping effort will require participation from a diversity of partners, many of whom will undoubtedly be facing capacity constraints. Having reciprocal relationships already in place helped the project team engage a broad set of practitioners across the San Diego region, including representatives from both coastal and inland communities to inform the regional roadmap. Furthermore, keeping reciprocity front and center throughout the project reinforced a collaborative environment with active participation from partners who also received targeted support from the project team to help address their needs and challenges.

3 Connections to past planning efforts

The Roadmap is a reflection of many years of work, input, and, especially, collaboration from partners throughout the San Diego region. By recognizing both previous and parallel regional planning efforts to situate the development of this roadmap in the region's broader context, this effort is built upon and is helping to build momentum for regional collaboration and action.



Roadmap Development

A thoughtful and flexible approach is critical to developing a regional roadmap that creates a strong foundation for collaborative action.

1 Do your homework before engaging stakeholders

The project team conducted a desktop literature review, analyzing 150 regional documents and plans, to obtain a robust understanding of how partners throughout the region are prioritizing shocks and stresses, as well as actions being undertaken to address climate impacts. This enabled the team to respectfully engage stakeholders, honoring their time and energy participating in workshops and focus groups, by guiding informed and productive dialogues focused on critical gaps and opportunities for coastal resilience.

2 Focus on foundational principles to establish a shared vision

A shared vision is needed to serve as a North Star to guide the development of a regional roadmap. However, by bringing a very diverse group of leaders together for the RCRA Cohort, the project team quickly realized that starting with a vision could be a challenge due to the many different perspectives and priorities represented. The project team focused first on establishing a common set of principles that resonated with Cohort leaders, which informed the creation of a shared regional vision for coastal resilience. This approach ensured early buy-in and a sense of co-ownership among partners.

3 Elevate existing and planned projects

The literature review and network analysis revealed the variety of coastal resilience initiatives being led by the region's robust ecosystem of partners, as well as opportunities for greater coordination to bolster ongoing efforts, scale successful programs, and pursue new multi-benefit projects. The project team also recognized that ongoing capacity and resource constraints have created barriers to fully implementing planned projects. As such, the Roadmap was designed to meet existing needs across the region and to connect individual projects to a broader regional vision by uplifting existing and planned projects to be fully funded and proposing a set of new actions to address critical coastal resilience gaps.



Moving Towards Outcomes

Clearly identifying and staying focused on the desired outcomes of a regional roadmap can ensure an action-oriented effort that generates tangible results.

1 Consider the usability of the Roadmap beyond the creation of a report

The project team recognized the need to develop a cross-cutting strategic plan that could effectively drive toward improved resilience outcomes. The team was intentional about designing a structure that would elevate priority projects and support practitioners in gaining buy-in from the necessary stakeholders, funders, and decision makers. The resulting Roadmap is a dynamic tool that can be leveraged to attract investments and will ultimately accelerate the implementation of projects that build the region's coastal resilience.

2 Repurpose findings to develop additional tools

To inform the Roadmap, a significant amount of information was gathered from partners in regards to existing and planned projects, as well as proposed actions to advance coastal resilience, some of which was not included in the final Roadmap as it is intended to serve as a strategic plan focused on a set of priority projects. The project team decided to repurpose this wealth of information to develop an Actions Database, which was not part of the project's original scope of work. By remaining focused on the project's desired outcomes (rather than contracted outputs), the team developed a living tool to provide practitioners with a better understanding of the suite of actions already underway or planned throughout the region, and offers an opportunity to provide ongoing updates and ideas on new actions to prioritize.

3 Identify a lead coordinator to shepherd forward the next steps

Having a lead coordinator is critical to support the level of collaboration that is needed to move a regional roadmap forward. Without a lead coordinator, the completion of the roadmap may not result in the outcomes envisioned, or even discourage partners from supporting implementation efforts or participating in a future regional planning effort. SDRCC, as a coordinating entity situated in the San Diego region with a core membership representing greater than 80% of the region, is well-equipped to continue building momentum for implementation and maintaining a collaborative environment along the way.

