

September 5, 2014

Guido Franco
Climate Change Research Lead
California Energy Commission

Re: Governor's Environmental Goals and Policy Report

Dear Guido,

The Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation (ARCCA) applauds the state's ongoing effort to research the wide array of climate change issues facing California, as articulated in the draft California Climate Change Research Plan (CCCRP). We are grateful for the opportunity to support the state's efforts by providing additional comments on the draft in the spirit of refining this important research agenda for the benefit of all California.

California's Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation (ARCCA) was formed in early 2012 out of the urgent need to prepare California's urban centers for the emerging impacts of climate change, including extreme storm events, wildfire, heat waves, droughts, and sea level rise. ARCCA brings together four regional multi-stakeholder collaborations - The Bay Area Joint Policy Committee, The Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability, the Capital Region Climate Readiness Collaborative, and The San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative. The Governor's Office of Planning and Research serves as an ex-officio member, and the Local Government Commission acts as Adaptation Coordinator and Fiscal Sponsor for ARCCA. These regional groups include a wide range of public, private, nonprofit, and academic institutions and are coordinating and supporting local climate partners in projects to enhance public health, protect natural systems, build economies, and improve the quality of life in all communities.

We are gratified to see the recommendations on regional research priorities that we previously provided are explicitly recognized in the current draft. Therefore, we wanted to take this opportunity to suggest refinements that would further facilitate the cross-cutting nature of the research priorities. In addition, we would like to focus attention on the importance of providing data to local and regional decision-makers in structures and tools that will enable more rapid and robust action on addressing climate change.

We hope you find these comments and suggestions useful and supportive of your efforts. We welcome any questions you might have.

Sincerely,



Bruce Riordan
ARCCA Chair

Bay Area Climate & Energy Resilience Project



Nicola Hedge
ARCCA Vice Chair

The San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative



Larry Greene
Resilient Sacramento



Krista Kline
The Los Angeles Regional Collaborative

Overall

- From our perspective - working with local and regional stakeholders who are trying to respond to climate change in real-time – the greatest value of climate research is to inform effective decision-making in the face of great uncertainty. Many of our stakeholders recognize that climate change is upending our ability to utilize the past to plan for the future, and they further acknowledge the limits of research to provide absolute answers. In such a context, the major priorities of the CCCRP are well focused on building basic understanding of what is occurring, while also facilitating our ability to analyze options for action. We are particularly supportive of research on decision-support, forecasting and scenario planning, and vulnerability assessments. Additionally, market transformation or diffusion of innovation research examined at scale is valuable to regional actors. Less critical at this time are granular studies of specific technologies and approaches that might provide long-term utility, but do not help our regions engage in the overall initiative of addressing climate change. In this vein, we feel Chapter 5 could precede Chapter 4 as many of these issues could be considered in almost all areas of research, including economics, environmental justice. Chapter 1, in fact, states that a goal of the plan is to foster cross-cutting and integrated research; therefore, it could be useful to consider folding Chapter 5 into Chapter 1 or, alternatively, having Chapter 5 follow Chapter 1 for clarity’s sake. This would also lead to some refinements and greater consistency in Chapter 4 which currently has a mixed level cross-cutting and integrated research across the specific sectors.
- There appears to be a significant amount of content dedicated to the history of climate research, including examples of relevant studies already completed. However, in many places throughout the draft - particularly in Chapter 4 - there is a varied level of detail regarding specific research questions. This limits the CCCRP’s utility as a plan for specific research in some issue areas. We suggest providing additional detail on the research priorities raised for particular issue areas.
- We would appreciate having specific detail regarding how the state will coordinate the research activities undertaken under the CCCRP, including how progress is tracked and reported. Although it is noted that the CAT will assume this role, details on the process are not articulated. For those of us interested in participating in research activities and/or accessing the research results, having information on metrics and timelines for each research project would be helpful. This information would also help clarify how research conducted in California, if not directed by the CCCRP, is still responsive to the plan and supportive of California’s climate strategy in the most efficient way.

Chapter 1

- The six major research areas reflect exactly the kind of integrated and decision-supportive approaches most critical to our ability to take action on the local and regional scale.
- The main principles for research are well articulated and encouraging to read. However, vis-à-vis our comment above regarding clarity for tracking the CCCRP’s implementation, it is important to articulate how various agencies will follow these principles in their research activities.

Chapter 3

- We are very supportive of the importance of analysis and monitoring. Our stakeholders are awash in data of varying specificity and utility. Climate change poses an analytic problem that local stakeholders are in no position to untangle on their own. Therefore, providing data analysis support to decision makers that leverages the scale of the state is incredibly valuable to all of our stakeholders. We particularly support any efforts to harness this information to “develop the next generation of climate scenarios that produce relevant regional information that can support engineering design and long-term planning.” This is our greatest data black-hole and one that is not easily tackled on our own. We also strongly support the additional development of data-driven risk assessment resources. To move forward in the face of climate change we must make decisions with the “best-available” information, and this includes providing our local and regional policy-makers with this data in a useful format.

Chapter 4

- Chapter 4 includes many discrete topics and agendas that reflect the needs of specific sectors to address climate change. We will not comment on these specific priorities because we think they are likely to evolve and respond to changing conditions and resources for funding. We would like to note that there are a significant number of research actions throughout this chapter that reflect the kind of cross-cutting and integrated focus we feel will be most useful in the long run. We particularly support the projects that foster innovative solutions (e.g. water management), consider multi-sectoral impacts (e.g. forest readiness), document cost-benefits, facilitate decision making through the development of tools, or scenarios. (e.g. ocean and coastal risks), evaluate behavior change and consumer choice (e.g. public health risk communication).

Chapter 5 - Crosscutting and Local/Regional Issues

- As noted in the overall comments, relevant climate research integrates cross-cutting issues, including local and regional concerns. Therefore, portions of this chapter might better serve the CCCRP by being folded into Chapter 1, or being presented in advance of Chapter 4. For example, informed response to climate change requires utilizing a robust set of science-based indicators that will change over time. These indicators are relevant to many of the specific research questions outlined in Chapter 4, therefore, cut across numerous research priorities and issue areas.
- We support the importance of raising local and regional concerns and are grateful for the direct reference to our contributions to the CCCRP. We fully support the position outlined in the plan that, “Local or regional agencies should have a strong voice shaping the studies funded by the State of California, helping identify specific research needs and enhancing the link between research and actual implementation of measures to reduce GHG emissions and climate risks. A well-coordinated research activity involving local and regional efforts with research funded by state agencies is also critical because local studies must use parallel scenarios and assumptions if they are to effectively leverage, and be coherent with, related studies at the regional or national levels.” Given the importance of local/regional issues, we believe it should be considered a cross-cutting topic, not separate issue as set up in this chapter. Nearly all the climate research conducted in California is going to be place-based and will ultimately inform actions taken overwhelmingly by local decision-makers. Therefore, we believe that bridging all state research with local and regional concerns would be one of the most salient cross-cutting topics.
- With respect to the specific cross-cutting topics mentioned, we have the following comments:
 - Where possible, draw attention to the need for successful case studies. At the local level we need to know what works and how we can act on it. This is particularly true with the economics, barriers, and disturbance topics. Positive feedbacks, co-benefits, and replicable outcomes are critical to engaging local leaders to take action.
 - For several topics (e.g. environmental justice or barriers to adoption), its importance is outlined, and past studies are offered as examples, but there is a lack of information on key questions or research topics. More guidance would be useful in these cases.
 - The Delta the only specific geographic focus area identified. An explanation of why Delta research is a state priority would be warranted here to clarify for readers unfamiliar with the critical role the Delta plays in providing water to the southern half of the state.
 - Ecosystem services might better fit as significant element of the economics topic. A major issue with our current approach to ecosystem services is their lack of valuation against the fiscal economy. Treating ecosystem services as an economic topic may help to unite them.

Chapter 6

- With respect to implementation and the conceptual model of research outlined in Figure 9: This is a closed loop and does not show how the research is released to decision-makers or the general public, or how interested parties can engage in particular research activities. This model is at odds with the vein of accessibility and engagement running through much of the CCCRP itself; therefore, we suggest revising it to better reflect this commitment to openness.