



## ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY POLICY COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS Friday, June 21, 2024

### ATTENDANCE

Members: Illece Buckley Weber (Chair); Max Perrey (Vice Chair); Rosa Acosta; Teresa Acosta; Paul Akinjo; Tess Albin-Smith; Katherine Aleman; Valerie Arkin; Bob Branstrom; James Breitling; David Burke; Jennifer Cavanaugh; Margaret Clark; David Cohen; Debra Garnes; Dan Kalb; Paige Kaluderovic; Sean Kelleher; Linda Launer; Candice Lee; Sylvia Lemus; Julio Martinez; Deborah McGarrey; Kitty Moore; Jennifer Nakamura; Jeffrey Nibert; Jason Nutt; Stephanie Oddo; Tomas Oliva; Andy Pease; Max Perrey; Michael Ponce; Karina Quintanilla; Gabriel Quinto; Candace Rankin Mumby; Vickie Riddle; Julie Ryan; Niropo Srivatsa; Artemio Villegas; Kevin Wilk; Thomas Wong

Cal Cities Partners: Roderick Brewer

Staff: Melissa Sparks-Kranz, Legislative Affairs Lobbyist  
Betsy Montiel, Legislative Affairs Policy Analyst

### I. **Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Illece Buckley Weber, Mayor, Agoura Hills and Cal Cities Staff, Melissa Sparks-Kranz welcomed the committee members and introduced themselves.

Cal Cities' Deputy Executive Director, Jennifer Whiting, joined the meeting to commend the work of the committee and provide an update on an impending decision from the California Supreme Court regarding the Taxpayer Deception Act. Ms. Coleman thanked members for their commitment to the committee and underscored that the policy committees drive the work that informs and sets the direction of Cal cities.

### II. **Public Comment**

Chair Buckley opened the meeting to public comment. There was none provided.

### III. **General Briefing**

The Cal Cities advocacy team compiled a [General Briefing Update Document](#), which includes the latest on legislative and budgetary matters affecting cities. Cal Cities staff gave a brief update during the meeting on topic issues for the organization.

### IV. **California Climate Action Corps**

Josh Fryday, Chief Service Officer, California Volunteers, Governor's Office, presented on the [California Climate Actions Corps](#), which focuses on solutions to build capacity in the state's climate workforce and how cities can help lead these efforts. Climate Corps is the nation's first statewide climate corps that is led by volunteers taking action to protect communities against the impacts of

climate change. Program volunteers work on solutions towards urban greening, organic waste and edible food recovery, and wildfire resiliency.

Mr. Fryday spoke about the shortage of climate workers across California and how this workforce gap is impacting statewide efforts to build and implement climate programs and funding priorities in the climate space. Climate Corps is looking to work with cities to build capacity and expand California's climate strategies to mobilize communities around climate change. He encouraged committee members to get their cities involved by recruiting through the Youth Jobs Corp and AmeriCorps Programs. Cities can also become a Host partner where program volunteers will be assigned to work. Additionally, cities can host their own Community Climate Action Day and Climate Corps will partner with the city to help roll-out resources and bolster local climate efforts.

#### **V. Cleanup in Vulnerable Communities Initiative**

Chair Buckley introduced Eddie Moreno and Patricia Ochoa with the Department of Toxic Substance Control, presented on the [Cleanup in Vulnerable Communities Initiative](#), which is a \$500 million multi-year investment in communities that suffer from multiple sources of contamination. Mr. Moreno provided an overview of the five core programs under the initiative and highlighted the Equitable Community Revitalization Grants (ECRG).

These investments are meant to incentivize cleanup and investment in disadvantaged areas with largely contaminated land. The goal of the grant program is for local communities to use possibly polluted lands for community use by identifying land contaminants, and methods to assess and clean the land in order to determine if the land can be repurposed. The committee was informed that stronger public health protections have been implemented to the second cycle of the program, which excludes industrial facilities from end-use once a site can be repurposed.

Additionally, the program helps transform vacant, underdeveloped land for various uses. Cleanup sites can be converted into parks, housing, office spaces, education spaces, and other multi-use projects that provide communitywide benefits. The program is also working on building up the workforce development pipeline in climate-related professions to help build capacity for assessing sites.

The guest speakers let members know that staff is available to visit their cities and connect with their community organizations interested in cleanups.

#### **VI. Draft Climate Adaptation Strategy Overview**

Guest Speaker, Jennifer Phillips, Assistant Secretary for Climate Change with the California Natural Resources Agency gave an overview of the [California Climate Adoption Strategy](#), and what steps are being taken to reach carbon-neutrality by 2035. The climate strategy is focused on clarity, organization, and transparency to advance the state's climate goals by coordinating across other environmental agencies. The speaker gave an in-depth presentation of the 2024

adaptation strategy, which also serves as a template for the planning efforts of cities in their local climate resilience plans.

Ms. Phillips discussed the 2024 Adaptation Strategy, which includes updated metrics and new ways of tracking progress. Information was provided about the timing of these efforts as well as what agencies are leaders in this space. She also discussed why it is essential to include climate vulnerable communities in the adaptation strategy and why funding should be bolstered in these communities to help address past underinvestment. The adaptation strategy is also focused on building the climate workforce and connection. Additionally, the 2024 update prioritizes scaling the work around climate change by removing barriers to getting nature-based projects off the ground. The agency wants to be a resource for cities and is refining regional web pages to share information about statewide and regional progress around the climate strategy.

## **VII. Federal Funding Updates**

### *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act Funding Program*

Guest speaker Dallas Shattock with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provided an overview of the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act Funding Program ([WIFIA](#)), which is a federal credit program to accelerate investment in water and wastewater infrastructure projects by offering low-cost credit assistance. The presentation included information about WIFIA projects in California. Across the state, WIFIA financing supported over \$14 billion in water infrastructure projects that served over 22 million people.

Each year, Congress appropriates funds to WIFIA, which allows the program to have money on an ongoing basis. Local governments are encouraged to apply for a WIFIA loan, which offers special features for borrowers that include flexible financing terms and attractive interest rates. The committee also received information about the application process and other key benefits of WIFIA financing. Requests to learn more about the program can be sent to [wifia@epa.gov](mailto:wifia@epa.gov).

### *U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant*

Guest speakers Audrey Bragg and Melissa Farrington with the United States Department of Energy, presented on the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant ([EECBG](#)), which is designed to assist states and local governments in strategies to improve energy efficiency and reduce fossil fuel emissions. Approximately 222 cities in the state are eligible for grants under the program, and the average award is \$170,643.

The committee was informed that application deadline for local governments to apply for a grant has been extend until October 31, 2024. The speaker highlighted how cities can use EECBG funds to deploy various projects that offer conservation and mitigation efforts. Local governments can choose between two different funding options, a traditional grant, or a voucher. Additionally, tax credits earned through elective pay can be combined with Department of

Energy grants and loans, with some limitations. The committee received an overview of Elective-Pay, which allows tax-exempt and governmental entities to receive a cash payment from the IRS for eligible clean energy investments.

Committee members were encouraged to attend the EECBG program's support services which include office hours, application support and access to the program's project officers or vouchers team. For more information, please visit [Energy.gov](https://www.energy.gov).

#### **VIII. Legislative and Regulatory Update**

Cal Cities Legislative Lobbyist, Melissa Sparks-Kranz, provided a legislative update and detailed discussion on priority legislation related to Environmental Quality. More information on Environmental Quality position bills can be found [here](#).

#### **IX. Adjourn**

Chair Buckley thanked committee members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

**Next Meeting:** Staff will notify committee members by August 23 if the policy committee will meet **virtually** in October. If you have any questions, please contact [Meg Desmond](#), Cal Cities Associate Manager, Legislative Administration.