



**CITY OF NOVATO**  
**CALIFORNIA**

922 Machin Avenue  
Novato, CA 94945  
415/899-8900  
FAX 415/899-8213  
[novato.org](http://novato.org)

Mayor  
Denise Athas  
Mayor Pro Tem  
Pat Eklund  
Councilmembers  
Eric Lucan  
Amy Peele  
Susan Wernick

City Manager  
Adam McGill

November 11, 2020

The Honorable Judge Andrew Sweet  
Marin County Superior Court  
P.O. Box 4988  
San Rafael, CA 94913-4988

**RE: Response to Grand Jury Report "Climate Change: How Will Marin Adapt?"**

Dear Judge Sweet,

At its regular meeting on November 10, 2020, the Novato City Council reviewed the above report which requests the City Council respond to Findings F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, and F7 and to Recommendations R1, R4, and R5.

Attached please find the City of Novato's response.

If the members of the Grand Jury require additional information, please contact City Manager Adam McGill at [amcgill@novato.org](mailto:amcgill@novato.org).

We appreciate the work of the Grand Jury and thank you for your service to our residents and the Marin County community.

Sincerely,

Denise Athas  
Mayor

Attachments (1)

cc: Lucy Dilworth, Foreperson  
Marin County Civil Grand Jury  
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room #275  
San Rafael, CA 94903

## Response to Grand Jury Report

Report Title: Climate Change: How Will Marin Adapt?"

Respondent/Agency Name: City of Novato

Your Name: Denise Athas Title: Mayor

### FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: **F1, F2, and F5**
- I (we) disagree *partially* with the findings numbered: **F3, F4, and F7**
- I (we) disagree *wholly* with the findings numbered: **N/A**

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendation numbered **R1** requires further analysis.
- Recommendation numbered **R4** will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable.
- Recommendation numbered **R6** has already been implemented.

*Denise Athas*

Date: 11/10/20 Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Denise Athas, Mayor  
City of Novato

Number of pages attached: **4**

# **RESPONSE OF THE CITY OF NOVATO TO GRAND JURY REPORT “CLIMATE CHANGE: HOW WILL MARIN ADAPT”**

## **Grand Jury Findings and City of Novato Responses**

**F1. Climate change mitigation efforts by Marin governments have been notably effective in meeting their goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.**

**Response:** Agree

The City of Novato’s 2009 Climate Change Action Plan established the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 15% below baseline (2005) emissions by 2020, and by 40% below baseline emissions by 2030. The City reached (and significantly exceeded) the 2020 goal two years early, and by 2018 had reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 24%.

The City remains committed to implementing solutions that mitigate greenhouse gas emissions as a core strategy to reduce the need for climate adaptation interventions.

**F2. Adaptation planning is essential to protect local public utility and transportation infrastructure as well as private property interests, and to enable Marin’s citizens to maintain their current standards of living.**

**Response:** Agree

The City of Novato agrees that adaptation planning is essential to address the threat that climate change poses to utility, transportation, and other public right-of-way infrastructure, in addition to private property interests. County- and area- wide modeling of risks to these assets guide the City’s prioritization of planning and capital improvement processes.

**F3. With the BayWAVE and C-SMART initial vulnerability assessments completed, the county is now well-positioned to focus on adaptation planning and policies related to sea level rise.**

**Response:** Partially Disagree

Even though the BayWave and C-SMART assessments can be utilized to inform adaptation planning and policymaking, stating that the “county is now well-positioned to focus on adaptation planning and policies” does not take into account the need to align planning efforts across the broader region, nor does it address the resourcing requirements to implement the planning and policymaking process. The City concurs that this work will need to be prioritized and funded at the county, regional, state, and federal levels.

**F4. The existing adaptation efforts across the county pay insufficient attention to the other potential effects of climate change, including impacts on public health, ecosystems, and social equity.**

**Response:** Partially Disagree

Land use considerations impacting public health, ecosystems, and social equity occur in the course of long-range planning and during the plan and project review processes, whether a project has adaptation implications or not. The City of Novato's Planning Commission and/or City Council can choose to place emphasis and higher prioritization on addressing the effects of climate change, including impacts on public health, ecosystems, and social equity through the existing planning processes and in accordance with its recently adopted General Plan 2035.

For emergency response planning, the City partners with many agencies from Marin County (Health and Human Services, the Sheriff's Office, the Office of Emergency Services), the Novato Fire, Water and Sanitary Districts, and Marin County Flood Control & Water Conservation District to address the health and life safety during emergencies local flooding, extreme heat, and wildfire preparedness.

**F5. There are insufficient staff and financial resources devoted to climate change adaptation efforts across county government as well as in the cities, towns, and other agencies, and many of the existing efforts are highly dependent on grant funding.**

**Response:** Agree

The City of Novato agrees with this finding and unfortunately, constraints on staff and financial resources have been further exacerbated by the fiscal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is unlikely that additional funding will be available to address climate change adaptation efforts unless it comes from special grant sources.

**F7. Cross-jurisdictional collaboration and coordination will be required for successful adaptation efforts, but Marin lacks any overarching organizational or governance structure to facilitate this.**

**Response:** Partially Disagree

While cross-jurisdictional collaboration and coordination is essential to address climate change, both City staff and elected officials have been actively working alongside their Marin county, city, and town counterparts on a range of mitigation and adaptation issues for many years.

Although there is currently no overarching organizational or governance structure to facilitate adaptation efforts in Marin, there are numerous existing collaborations that are well-positioned to successfully advance countywide adaptation work. These include the Marin Climate and Energy Partnership (MCEP), Drawdown: Marin, Marin County Council of Mayors and Councilmembers Climate Action Committee, BayWAVE, and the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority. There are also numerous regional collaborations focused on adaptation including Bay Area Climate Adaptation Network, Bay Adapt, and Adapting to Rising Tides.

Before pursuing the creation of any new overarching organizational or governance structure, an evaluation of existing collaborative initiatives should be carried to clarify purpose, roles, responsibilities, and authority, and to reduce redundancy and duplication.

## **Grand Jury Recommendations and City of Novato Responses**

**R1. The Board of Supervisors, in collaboration with the municipalities and other agencies affected by climate change, should convene a multi-jurisdictional task force charged with developing a single, comprehensive, multi-jurisdictional adaptation strategy for all of Marin.**

**Response:** Requires further analysis.

Although the City of Novato acknowledges the need to develop a multi-jurisdictional adaptation strategy, the City recommends that County of Marin staff lead this effort, rather than forming a new multi-jurisdictional task force. In addition, due to the geographic relationship of Marin County to other Bay Area counties, County staff are best positioned to participate in Bay Area-wide adaptation strategies.

Should a task force be convened, their primary role should be to act as a conduit for jurisdiction-specific information and data to inform adaptation plan development and to review draft versions of the plan prior to adoption. Before agreeing to participate on a multi-jurisdictional task force, the City would need to assess City resources required.

The City's General Plan 2035 includes numerous adaptation strategies, goals, and objectives, and the City would want to ensure that these are incorporated in a countywide adaptation strategy.

**R4. Each member of the Marin Climate & Energy Partnership, should declare its support for broadening the partnership's mission and increasing its funding as necessary to enable it to support overall climate change planning efforts, including both mitigation and adaptation in cities, towns, and other member agencies throughout the county.**

**Response:** This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable.

The Marin Climate & Energy Partnership's (MCEP) current mission statement already includes a reference to adaptation ("*... discuss, study, and implement overarching policies and programs, ranging from emission reduction strategies to **adaptation**...*").

The City of Novato acknowledges that the MCEP has predominantly focused on mitigation efforts to date, and the City would support the MCEP increasing its emphasis on climate adaptation efforts, particularly in regard to exploring opportunities for multi-jurisdictional adaptation programs and projects. The City would also support the MCEP expanding its work program to include evaluating and quantifying the effectiveness of adaptation programs and projects within Marin (similar to the greenhouse gas emission inventories MCEP currently produces) in order to measure progress, share lessons learned, and document local best practices.

Prior to considering any increase in funding for the MCEP, the City would need to evaluate the benefits that additional funding would bring to the residents of Novato.

**R6. Each city and town, if it does not have a full-time sustainability coordinator (or similar position), should appoint a committee or commission charged with monitoring and reporting on its climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.**

**Response:** This recommendation has already been implemented.

The City of Novato employs a full-time sustainability coordinator.