



Photo credit Peter Alexander

SAN FRANCISCO  
COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

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# Annual Report 2017

20<sup>th</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY

COMMISSION ON THE  
ENVIRONMENT

*Celebrating twenty years of  
environmental activism*



**SF Environment**

**Our home. Our city. Our planet.**

A Department of the City and County of San Francisco

Prepared by SF Environment  
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# IN MEMORIAM



The Honorable Edwin Mah Lee  
May 5, 1952 – December 12, 2017

“We are going to remain a City that is welcoming to all and let me say to you today we are going to remain a City that takes aggressive and ambitious climate action no matter who is in the White House.”

-Mayor Edwin M. Lee

Delivered at the 2017 Mayor’s Earth Day Breakfast  
April 20, 2017



Photo credit Peter Alexander

## OUR MISSION

The Commission on the Environment sets policy for the Department of the Environment and advises the Mayor, Board of Supervisors, and other City departments on environmental matters. Appointed by the Mayor, the seven-member commission develops policies and programs on a wide range of environmental topics including zero waste, toxics reduction, environmental justice, green jobs, clean air and transportation, energy efficiency, green building, habitat restoration, biodiversity, urban forestry, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The mission of the San Francisco Commission on the Environment is to improve, enhance, and preserve the environment and to promote San Francisco's long-term environmental sustainability as set forth in Section 4.118 of the City Charter.



*(From L to R) Lisa Hoyos, Heather Stephenson, Elmy Bermejo (President), Johanna Wald (Vice President), Sarah Ching-Ting Wan, Eddie Ahn, Deborah Raphael (Director)*

### COMMISSIONERS LEAVING OFFICE IN 2016

Jacquelyn Omotalade, Past Commission President



Photo credit Peter Alexander

# LETTER FROM THE COMMISSION PRESIDENT

January 2018

Mayor Farrell, Members of the Board of Supervisors, Friends and Colleagues:

This year we were all very proud to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the San Francisco Commission on the Environment. I am honored to serve on a Commission that remains so deeply committed to environmental activism and climate justice in our city. The work of the Commission today builds on the tremendous leadership of so many who came before, and I want to thank our past and current Commissioners for their service and example. It continues to inspire us all to action.

Since the voters created the Commission and Department in 1996, we have become an international leader in sustainability policy and programming. It's remarkable to see how cities and nations from around the globe turn to our Department for guidance on developing forward-thinking environmental policies.

In 2017, we entered a new era of climate change politics in our country. In the wake of federal inaction and abdication of leadership, the Commission moved swiftly to affirm San Francisco's promise to meet the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, we stood behind bold, groundbreaking policies to support access to electric vehicle charging stations, labeling for antibiotics in meat, and the ban of flame retardants in furniture and children's products. The Commission also led a series of community meetings to ensure that the voice of all San Franciscans are represented in the Department's strategic planning process.

This year demonstrated that local and state governments can, and must, lead the global climate fight. In 2018, San Francisco will once again showcase its role on the international stage by hosting Governor Jerry Brown's Global Climate Action Summit, which will bring together leaders from around the world who are as committed as we are to addressing climate change. We look forward to showing the world that the City and County of San Francisco stands for science, for facts, and for action when it comes to this urgent threat facing our communities and our planet.

Every day, I am made proud by the dedicated staff at the Department of Environment and I look forward to working with our Department staff, our City's elected leadership, my fellow Commissioners, and the entire City family -- along with all of you -- as we kick off another twenty years of environmental activism in the city we love. Thank you for joining us and standing with us in the work that lies ahead.

Sincerely,

Elmy Bermejo, President  
San Francisco Commission on the Environment



## CELEBRATING 20 YEARS: LOOKING BACK



**Anne Eng**

**Member, Commission on the Environment - October 1996 – March 1998**

“The Commission was founded 20 years after the first Earth Day. It was time. By the 1990’s we felt like San Francisco was missing coordination on all of the topics and initiatives related to the environment. I am very proud that over the past two decades the Commission has recognized that social and racial justice are part of sustainability.”



**Johanna Wald**

**Member, Commission on the Environment - March 2003 - Present**

“At every Commission and Policy Committee meeting I attend, I am impressed anew by the committed and talented staff of the Department of the Environment, their outstanding accomplishments, and the open and responsive way they carry out their vitally important work.”



**Josh Arce**

**Member, Commission on the Environment - August 2012 – January 2016**

“The Commission worked with our amazing staff to achieve landmark clean energy wins that are now a model across the region, state, and beyond. During all of our initiatives, we sought to increase inclusion of communities historically disenfranchised from the traditional environmental movement and create jobs along the way.”



**Ruth Gravanis**

**Member, Commission on the Environment - July 2006 – Nov 2014**

“In 2011 San Francisco was named the most sustainable city in the nation by Siemens and the Economist Intelligence Unit. The commission and department can be justly proud of their roles in achieving this honor for the City. However, conspicuously missing from Siemens’ evaluation categories was anything to do with nature. In late 2011 the commission passed a biodiversity policy and in 2012 created and staffed an Office of Biodiversity which helps keep our City in the vanguard of urban sustainability”





**Linda Fadeke Richardson**

**Member, Commission on the Environment - October 1996 – March 1999**

“The commissioners I served with were visionaries. We established the first framework of policies to uphold and guide the new department’s mission, hired competent staff to work on the key environmental initiatives such as the landmark Integrated Pest Management, Green Building Sustainable Development – all of which have become models for the State of California, the United States and United Nations.”



**Randall Hayes**

**Member, Commission on the Environment - April 1999 – December 2003**

“One of the Commission’s greatest accomplishments was working with staff on the Precautionary Principle which the trade industry lobbied hard against by attending meetings and speaking out. The only reason the policy was adopted by the Mayor and Board of Supervisors was because the strength of the community that organized around the issue.”



**Nick Josefowitz**

**Member, Commission on the Environment - January 2013 – May 2014**

“The Department is a national leader on so many urban environmental issues, from waste and toxics reduction to climate change mitigation. I was always in awe of staff’s expertise and commitment, and am so proud to have worked together with them to deliver some real environmental victories on clean energy and clean transportation that have served as a model for cities across the country.”



*The 20th Anniversary of the Commission on the Environment was the theme of the 2017 Mayor’s Earth Day Breakfast*





## COMMISSION MILESTONES

### **1995 San Franciscans Vote to Establish the Commission on the Environment**

Voters of San Francisco pass a charter amendment, which among other things, established a new San Francisco Commission on the Environment and the San Francisco Department of the Environment.

### **1996 First Commission**

First Commission on the Environment sworn in.

### **San Francisco's First Sustainability Plan**

Department and Commission endorses San Francisco's First Sustainability Plan.

### **1997 Advocacy for Bicycle Plan**

Commission urges Board of Supervisors to adopt the citywide Bicycle Plan developed by the Department of Parking and Traffic.

### **1998 Advocacy for Power Plant Closures**

Commission advocates that the City close the remaining two power plants operating in San Francisco's southeast neighborhoods.

### **Advocacy for Use of Alternative Fuel for Public Transportation**

Starting in 1998 the Commission passed a series of resolutions urging the purchase of alternative-fuel vehicles for public transit.

### **2000 Environmental Justice Grants**

Commission creates the Environmental Justice Program and begins issuing \$13 million in Environmental Justice Grants to community based organizations serving the Potrero Hill and Bayview Hunters Point communities.



### **Urges Prioritization of Urban Forestry**

Commission urges the Mayor and Board of Supervisors to make urban forestry a high priority in San Francisco.

### **2001 Community Meetings**

The Commission begins holding at least one meeting a year outside of its regular meeting room in City Hall to bring the discussion about the City's environmental policies and programs out to San Francisco's various neighborhoods.

### **2002 San Francisco Zero Waste Goals**

At the request of the Board of Supervisors, the Commission on the Environment sets San Francisco's Zero Waste goal.

### **2003 Precautionary Principle**

Commissioners are challenged by a range of powerful interests in adopting the Precautionary Principle. The Precautionary Principle was a milestone for San Francisco – requiring that in the absence of conclusive proof that something is harmful, the burden lies with the producer to prove that it is safe when conducting the City and County's affairs.

### **Creation of San Francisco Environmental Code**

The Environmental Code was developed to consolidate the City's ordinances governing protection of the environment, natural resources and sustainability that were previously scattered throughout the Administrative Code.

### **Mandate for Toxics Reduction in Dental Offices**

Commission worked with the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission in an effort to mandate mercury separators in all dental offices.



## **2005 Ban on Single-Use Plastic Bags**

Commission supported a ban on single-use plastic bags in San Francisco, setting the stage for the California state-wide ban.

### **SF Hosts UN World Environment Day**

Commission calls on Department to adopt key Urban Environmental Accords developed at the conference by mayors from around the world.

### **Advocacy for Garden in Every School**

Commission calls on the Mayor's Office and the San Francisco Unified School District to create a garden in every school in San Francisco.

## **2009 SF Carbon Fund**

Commission begins approving projects that mitigate and sequester greenhouse gas emissions, funded through an innovative fee of 13% of the cost of municipal employees' air travel for city business as well as from private conferences seeking to mitigate their event-related emissions.

## **2011 Biodiversity Program**

Commission advocated for a biodiversity program that protects San Francisco's remaining natural heritage, including plant and animal species supported by naturally occurring ecosystems, naturalistic landscapes and urban development.

### **Preservative-treated Wood Containing Arsenic**

Commission calls on the City to find alternatives to the use of wood treated with arsenic for playgrounds and in the Port.



**2012 Calls for Congress to Expand Commuter Benefits Employee Transportation Benefit**  
Commission calls on the United States Congress to extend the Commuter Benefits Employee Transportation Benefit to encourage and incentivize the use of public transportation by San Francisco residents.

**2013 Marine Plastic Reduction**  
Commission pushes for statewide effort to address marine plastic pollution producer responsibility.

**2014 Bottled Water Legislation**  
Commission supports legislation halting the purchase of plastic water bottles by the City and encourages increased availability of drinking water in public areas.

**2016 Solar Installation**  
Commission supports policies making San Francisco the first city in the country to require solar installation on all new buildings.

**2017 Electric Vehicle Readiness**  
Commission supports legislation requiring that parking spaces in new buildings or buildings undergoing major alterations have infrastructure to make them ready for electric vehicle chargers.

### **Climate Crisis**

Commission affirms its commitment to continue advancing bold climate action strategies.

### **Biodiversity Goals**

Commission develops citywide biodiversity goals, articulates the role of the Department of the Environment in protecting San Francisco's natural heritage, and calls on sister city agencies to affirm their support for these goals.



# 2017 COMMISSION HIGHLIGHTS

## COMMUNITY MEETINGS

In 2017, the Commission held seven community meetings to seek community input on the Department's Draft Strategic Plan.

The Commission's goal was to see if the Department was on the right track in their planning and meeting the needs of San Francisco. To do this the Department scheduled a series of seven meetings with participants that included a diverse cross section of San Franciscans. Based on recommendations from the Commission, the Department held meetings with seniors in the Bayview Hunters Point Neighborhood, the small business community, families in the Portola District, an innovator community in the South of Market Area, families in the Mission District and young adults. The Portola District community meeting was in Chinese and the Mission District meeting in Spanish.

The Department worked with nonprofit community partners to identify San Francisco residents who were willing to spend an evening sharing their feedback. Participants spent two-and-a-half hours talking in a small-group setting, answering questions and communicating their experiences with Department of the Environment programs. The results were overwhelmingly positive. Members of the public expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to share their hopes and concerns directly with their City government and both commissioners and members of the public left the meetings inspired to take action to make an impact on the environment.

In 2018, the San Francisco Department of the Environment will analyze the information collected during the community meetings and report back to the Commission on the Environment with a revised Strategic Plan that includes the ideas and feedback from the residents of San Francisco.





# 2017 COMMISSION HIGHLIGHTS *continued*

## 0-50-100-ROOTS-THEMED MEETINGS

The Commission has continued the tradition of holding meetings that highlight efforts by the Department of the Environment and City agencies to achieve our shared climate action goals. 0-50-100 Roots represents: zero waste, 50 percent trips using a transportation mode other than a single-occupancy vehicle, 100 percent renewable energy and carbon sequestration by means of enhancing and promoting San Francisco's urban forest and biodiversity.

In May 2017, the Commission held a Roots-themed meeting which included presentations on the City's Urban Forestry Plan Phase 1; the recently completed San Francisco Street Tree Census; and the implementation of San Francisco voter-passed Proposition E of 2016, which transferred responsibility from property owners to the City for the maintenance of street trees and surrounding sidewalks. The Commission also passed a resolution in support of citywide biodiversity goals and the Department of the Environment's role in protecting San Francisco's natural heritage.

In October 2017, the Commission held a Zero Waste-themed meeting that provided an overview of new Zero Waste programs, including identifying progress-to-date and plans for future San Francisco services, as well as an outline of the Department's communications plan and collateral for public outreach.

### COMMISSION FIELD TRIP

#### **Visit to Recology's Recycle Central/Pier 96 and the Recology Transfer Station**

In advance of the October full Commission meeting highlighting the City's Zero Waste program, Commissioners were given a tour of Recology's recently upgraded facilities to learn how materials are sorted and processed. The \$11 million upgrade has increased capacity for Recology, enabling them to collect more items in the blue recycling bin and green compost bin, thereby sending less material to the landfill. Commissioners also had an opportunity to meet with artists participating in Recology San Francisco's Artist-in-Residence Program, which invites artists to reuse materials salvaged from the facility.



## POLICY COMMITTEE

The Commission on the Environment Policy Committee meets monthly to oversee long-term planning and policy development for the Department, including the assessment of environmental conditions and the development, updating, and review of plans for the long-term environmental sustainability of the City.

In 2017, the Policy Committee heard presentations on the Department of the Environment's collaborations with other City agencies and community stakeholders to promote long-term environmental sustainability. Discussions included: the Department's Reduced Risk Pesticide List; the San Francisco Electric Vehicle Working Group; the value of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Certification and efforts to bring San Francisco in compliance with LEED Version 4; the Department's work to address illegal dumping in the Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood; citywide biodiversity goals and the Department of the Environment's role in protecting San Francisco's natural heritage; a maintenance pilot to increase energy efficiency in the refrigeration units of small businesses; San Francisco's efforts to update California state policy regarding beverage container redemption convenience; the effects on environmental and public health of using antibiotics in meat production; an overview of the Department's Toxics Reduction program; implementation of the Safe Drug Disposal Stewardship Ordinance of 2015; a City policy on flame retardants in upholstered furniture; the annual Green Purchasing Report; the 2017 Transportation Sector Climate Action Strategy; the Department's Integrated Pest Management Program; San Francisco's requirements for commercial activity relating to medicinal and adult use of cannabis; San Francisco's Solar+Storage for Resiliency Project; the use of renewable fuels by City agencies; and the work of the Citizen's Climate Lobby.

## OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

The Commission on the Environment Operations Committee meets quarterly to discuss the Department of the Environment's budget, financial planning, and operations. The Committee also oversees public education and community outreach on environmental issues.

In 2017, the Operations Committee discussed the Department's budget; outreach regarding the Food Service and Packaging Waste Reduction Ordinance; 2016 successes and 2017 plans for the Step Up Power Down campaign; the progress of the Zero Waste Community Council; the Department's information technology; the School Education program; and outreach and collateral development for the new Zero Waste programs.



*Health Without Harm and Antonio Diaz*



*Guillermo Rodriguez*



*Leah Shahum*



*Cindy Wu Sustainable Chinatown*



## COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICE AWARD

The San Francisco Commission on the Environment strives to recognize individuals and organizations that help the Commission and the Department fulfill its mission of conducting public education and outreach to the community on environmental issues and in supporting long-term sustainability in San Francisco.

The 2017 recipients of the Commission on the Environment – Environmental Service Award were:

### **Individuals**

Antonio Diaz, Organizational Director, People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Justice

Guillermo Rodriguez, Former San Francisco Department of the Environment Policy and Communications Director

Leah Shahum – Founder and Director of the Vision Zero Network

### **Organizations**

Sustainable Chinatown

Health Care Without Harm



# COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

Adopted a Reduced-Risk Pesticides List (“RRPL”) For 2017 (Resolution No. 001-17-COE)

Urged the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor to adopt an ordinance amending the Green Building Code to establish requirements for installation of electric vehicle charger infrastructure in new buildings or buildings undergoing major alterations (Resolution No. 002-17-COE)

Affirmed the Commission on the Environment’s commitment to continue advancing bold climate action in the wake of the new federal administration’s attempt to weaken and eliminate policies and programs that reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions, and urging the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor to adopt a similar resolution (Resolution No. 003-17-COE)

Adopted citywide biodiversity goals and articulated the role of the Department of Environment in protecting San Francisco’s natural heritage (Resolution No. 004-17-COE)

Urged the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor to adopt an ordinance to ban the sale in San Francisco of furniture and certain juvenile products containing flame retardant chemicals (Resolution No. 005-17-COE)

Approved Zero Waste grant awards totaling \$857,000 to be disbursed during Fiscal Years 2017-2019 to Asian Pacific American Community Center, Bio-Link Depot, Boys & Girls Clubs of San Francisco, Friends of the San Francisco Public Library, Garden for the Environment (San Francisco Parks Alliance), Literacy for Environmental Justice, Recycle for Change, SCRAP, San Francisco Conservation Corps, San Francisco State University, San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market (The Produce Market), University of California, San Francisco - Office of Sustainability and the University of California, San Francisco - Recycling & Waste Reduction Program (Resolution No. 006-17-COE)

Commended Guillermo Rodriguez for his service to the Commission on the Environment and the Department of the Environment as Policy and Communications Director (Resolution No. 007-17-COE)

Approved the 2016 Annual Green Purchasing Report

Affirmed support for the San Francisco Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan, a work program comprised of strategies to support sustainable travel options for existing and future residents, tenants, employees and visitors (Resolution File No. 2017-08-COE)



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**San Francisco Commission on the Environment**

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