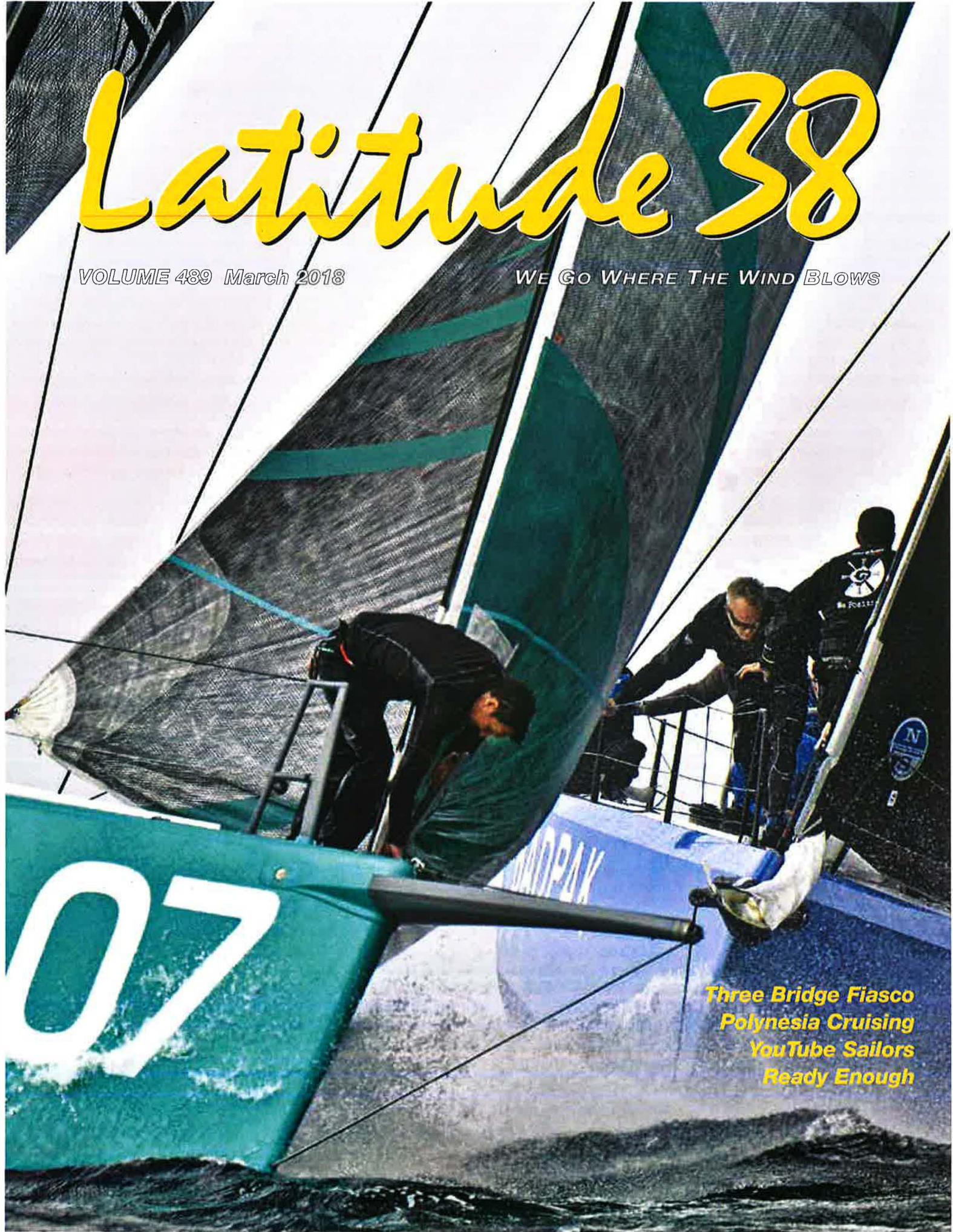


# Latitude 38

VOLUME 489 March 2018

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## LETTERS

### AN EDITORIAL ABOUT THE BCDC

Good news from the BCDC. Following their loss in the Point Buckler Delta case with John Sweeney and the riotous support from the masses for Westpoint Harbor in Redwood City, things are changing. It appears their efforts to clean up the Bay are largely complete and the agency will likely start winding down its operations. How do we know? As we mentioned in *Loose Lips* last month, among the BCDC's many regulatory citations, one of the issues cited in a multi-page complaint against Scott's waterfront restaurant in Jack London Square includes the following concerns from the chief enforcement officer: "All of the tables should be silver and round, and they were not. Instead four were silver and square, and 10 were brown and round." Clearly, if an agency created to improve the Bay now has the time to concern itself with the shape and color of tables at waterfront restaurants, its work must surely be finished. Granted, there were more serious charges raised against Scott's, but if we were an agency hoping for a shred of public support, we'd probably leave the tables out of the report.

Likewise with Westpoint Harbor, which is a beautifully built, environmentally friendly marina that has created public access out of a waste zone. In response to an ongoing BCDC action against Westpoint, a petition has been circulating and has almost 5,000 signatures in support of the marina and calling on the California legislature and state auditor to investigate the BCDC. What's more, numerous advocates have been willing to trek to BCDC headquarters in San Francisco to testify on behalf of Westpoint, a testament to the waterfront value Mark Sanders has delivered to South Bay residents. (The next opportunity for community support of Westpoint Harbor will be at the BCDC offices near City Hall at 55 Golden Gate Ave., San Francisco, on March 15.)

Amidst the blight that was post-industrial San Francisco Bay in 1965, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission was formed to "encourage the Bay's responsible and productive use for this and future generations" as well as being "tasked with requiring maximum feasible public access within the Bay's 100-foot shoreline band." In the 50-plus years since, the BCDC and other agencies have done a remarkable job in restoring the Bay's health. For those of you who grew up in the Bay Area in the '70s, you might remember seeing mattresses, washing machines and all manner of outrageous flotsam littering the shoreline. Back in the day, we remember hearing people say, "The Bay should just be filled in, because it's full of raw sewage and it stinks."

Today, the vast, multi-county expanse of San Francisco Bay is teeming with life, including humpback whales, seals, porpoise, windsurfers, kites and sailors. Last summer, Bay Area waters received "remarkable grades" from [www.healththebay.org](http://www.healththebay.org), a nonprofit that monitors water quality throughout California. Heal the Bay found that "100% of the 15 monitored beaches" in San Francisco County earned A or B grades in 2017, even after the torrential rains and toxic runoff from last winter. If Alcatraz Sharkfest Swim had been held 50 years ago, you might have dissolved before you hit the shore, but today, the event sells out, attesting to everyone's enjoyment of our waters and the faith that the Bay is clean and safe.

Unfortunately, the once-admirable mission of the BCDC has now become more toxic to the people around the Bay Area than the spoils that it was created to clean up.

Fifty years ago, the BCDC had numerous supporters as they took on industrial and municipal entities whose unfiltered pipes were dumping straight into the Bay. The fact that public support appears to have swung almost 180° from

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## LETTERS

those days suggests it's time for a course correction. As so often happens, the well-intentioned mission has turned into an overzealous bureaucracy that has lost sight of the values it once shared with its natural allies. The public — which enjoys swimming, paddling, fishing and sailing on the Bay — finds their Bay access points and marine service facilities threatened by a well-meaning staff who appear to have lost sight of the agency's mission for "responsible and productive use" and "maximum feasible public access." As the saying goes, having lost sight of our objective, we've redoubled our efforts.

Over the last 50 years we've all added holding tanks, welcomed increased pump-out stations, switched to biodegradable soaps, continued our education, reduced, reused, recycled, participated in beach cleanups, and continued to support a more sustainable Bay. However, as we look at the various artist's renderings of proposed new waterfront condo developments complete with views of elegant sailboats seen from condo decks, we wonder how much longer those sailboats will be there to enhance the views and lifestyle of these new waterfront dwellers.

If we were the BCDC, we'd do all we could to expand access, because we know that if more people get in and on the Bay, more people will want to protect its waters. We'd add launch ramps with nearby adjacent parking (like the major public ramp expansion on Shelter Island in San Diego), we'd make sure there was an ample number of boatyards and marine services, and we'd make sure any proposed waterfront development incorporated expanded Bay access — that does not mean a path allowing you to walk near the Bay, it means a beach, a dock, a ramp, a marina and any other facility that increases the ease and frequency of Bay use.

Finally, we'd suggest that the BCDC sponsor the Westpoint Regatta as a gesture of goodwill to South Bay sailors. While we understand that there are fine points to be ironed out between a business and a regulatory body, we think that Westpoint's overwhelming environmentally friendly design is something to be celebrated — as is the BCDC itself.

Without question, the Bay is better because of the BCDC, so we should be applauding their success rather than defending against its overreach.

*Readers — Next month, we will bring you the BCDC's response to this editorial. And in May, we'll have a response from Mark Sanders at Westpoint Harbor.*