

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

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Resolution No. 2019-04

Adoption of a Resolution by the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission Committing to the Protection of the Bay, its Shoreline and Habitat, and the Economy and Quality of Life in the Bay Area in the Face of Climate Change and Rising Sea Level

Whereas, in 1965 the McAteer-Petris Act established the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (“BCDC” or “Commission”) as a temporary state agency, designated the San Francisco Bay as a State-protected resource, and charged the Commission with preparing a plan for the protection and long-term use of the Bay and regulating development in and around the Bay while the plan was being prepared; and,

Whereas, the initial *San Francisco Bay Plan* was approved in 1968, BCDC was made permanent one year later, and BCDC updates the *Bay Plan* and various other plans, regulations, policies, and strategies regularly to ensure that the Bay and its shoreline are conserved and developed responsibly and to address new issues as the Bay Area changes; and,

Whereas, the Commission’s role is to protect and enhance San Francisco Bay and encourage the Bay’s responsible and productive use for this and future generations; and,

Whereas, after fifty years of groundbreaking stewardship, the Bay is now larger than when the Commission was established, the shoreline is now ringed by hundreds of miles of trails, parks, beaches, promenades, and restoration projects even in heavily urbanized and industrial locales, and the Bay hosts the nation’s largest urban wildlife refuge and thousands of acres of permanently protected diked former Baylands in the Suisun Marsh – all while the Bay continues to spur some of the largest economic growth and highest quality of life in the world; and,

Whereas, climate change has resulted in, and will continue to cause, rising sea levels and more intense storm activities that pose grave threats to the Bay’s shoreline, its neighborhoods and communities, tidal wetlands, infrastructure, and the Bay Area’s economy; and,

Whereas, on October 6, 2011, the Commission adopted Bay Plan Amendment No. 1-08 adding new and groundbreaking climate change findings and policies to the *Bay Plan*; and,

Whereas, BCDC’s 2017-2020 Strategic Plan Update, which builds upon the Commission’s October 2016 Rising Sea Level Policy Recommendations, includes several objectives to maintain and enhance Bay habitats and built communities in the face of rising sea level and climate change; and,

Whereas, the California Ocean Protection Council’s 2017 *Rising Seas in California* report and the State’s *Sea Level Rise Guidance 2018 Update* provide the best available science regarding future rising sea levels rise for the region and highlight the potential for extreme rising sea level scenarios, finding that Antarctic ice sheet loss may lead to a rise of approximately ten feet by 2100, which would inundate beaches and habitat, shoreline neighborhoods and communities, and public and private assets; and,

Whereas, a 2018 State Coastal Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy assessment of statewide coastal habitat vulnerability found that 55% of current coastal habitat is highly vulnerable to five feet of rising sea level, including 60% of California’s beaches, 58% of rocky intertidal habitat, 58% of coastal marshes, and 55% of tidal flats, that rising sea level will further stress populations of 39 rare,

threatened, or endangered species, and that 41,000 acres of public conservation lands are projected to be drowned by rising waters; and,

Whereas, an additional two to three feet of rising sea level absent increased shoreline resilience will inundate shoreline habitat and public access areas, vulnerable at-risk communities around the Bay shoreline, integral parts of the Bay Area's transportation network, and other critical infrastructure such as wastewater treatment plants, and will result in a massive disruption of the Bay Area's quality of life; and,

Whereas, the consequences of inundation of the shoreline will disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, increase the risk of displacement for all populations, create economic stress that will have negative impacts on Bay Area residents and markets, and will cause significant harm to the region's unique ecosystems; and,

Whereas, research by the US Geological Survey and others have highlighted the reduction of suspended sediment flowing to the Bay from the Delta concurrent with the need for large quantities of sediment to restore tidal marshes and their adaptation to rising seas over time; and

Whereas, the Commission continues to lead the groundbreaking "Adapting to Rising Tides" program that works with public, private, and nonprofit organizations to make the Bay shoreline more resilient to the impacts of climate change, most notably the challenges posed by rising sea level; and,

Whereas, the Commission is a proud partner with six other regional, state, and federal regulatory agencies of the Bay Restoration Regulatory Implementation Team (the "BRRIT") that will dramatically shorten the time for multi-benefit habitat restoration projects to move from the pre-application design stage to full permitting by collaborating internally and externally, allowing multi-benefit habitat restoration projects to be implemented in time to act as natural buffers to rising tides; and,

Whereas, the Commission recognizes that shoreline flooding will affect communities differently depending on their locations, resources, and adaptive capacity and that, in particular, low income communities and those historically underrepresented likely will have more difficulty preparing for, responding to, or relocating due to flooding, prompting the Commission to begin considering an amendment to the *Bay Plan* to include in it new policies to address social equity and environmental justice (BPA 2-17); and,

Whereas, as climate science has improved and advanced, and as adaptation measures have been discussed and developed, the Commission has recognized that some of its current policies may unintentionally restrict or delay actions needed to enhance and/or create wetlands, prompting the Commission to begin considering an amendment to the *Bay Plan* to pivot toward permitting larger amounts of Bay fill for multi-benefit habitat projects (BPA 1-17).

Now, Therefore, be it Resolved, that the Commission strongly and unequivocally commits to continuing its efforts to maintain, protect, and enhance San Francisco Bay's diverse coastal habitats and the Bay's diverse shoreline communities in the face of rising sea level and, in so doing, ensure a vibrant Bay and shoreline for future generations – one that retains and expands habitat and wildlife, and promotes even more social, economic, and recreational benefits than we enjoy today.

And, be it Further Resolved, that the Commission commits to using its authority to increase the Bay's natural and built communities' resilience to rising sea level by:

- Using the groundbreaking Adapting to Rising Tides (ART) Program as the foundation of a novel Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan to protect the Bay’s habitat, shoreline communities, and the Bay Area’s quality of life;
- Supporting local efforts to become more resilient to rising sea level, and responding to environmental justice issues across the region;
- Better coordinating and integrating rising sea level planning and regulatory functions;
- Increasing beneficial reuse of sediment as a resource to help wetlands prepare for rising sea level;
- Promoting adaptive management approaches to address scientific, economic, and social uncertainties inherent in analyzing responses to rising sea level;
- Encouraging the development of living shorelines where appropriate in the Bay; and,
- Developing an education campaign to increase the public’s understanding of rising sea level vulnerabilities and resilience strategies.

We certify that this resolution was adopted by a vote of ___ yes” votes, ___ “no” votes and ___ abstentions at the Commission meeting held on May 16, 2019 at San Francisco, California.

Executed on this _____ day of _____, 2019 at San Francisco, California.

R. ZACHARY WASSERMAN
Chair

Executed on this _____ day of _____, 2019 at San Francisco, California

LAWRENCE J. GOLDZBAND
Executive Director