

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

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September 5, 2025

TO: Commissioners and Alternates

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SUBJECT: Staff Report and Preliminary Recommendation to Initiate Proposed Bay Plan Amendment No. 1-25, an update to the Cartography of the San Francisco Bay Plan Maps
(For Commission consideration on September 18, 2025)

Staff Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Commission: (1) adopt the attached “Descriptive Notice” to initiate the process to consider an amendment to the San Francisco Bay Plan to update the cartography of the Bay Plan maps and data citations to improve clarity, accuracy, and ADA-accessibility; and (2) schedule a public hearing to consider the proposed amendment. This amendment is for cartographic purposes only and will not result in any policy changes to the Bay Plan.

Staff Report

I. Background

As described in section 66651 of the McAteer-Petris Act, the San Francisco Bay Plan is “a comprehensive plan containing statements and *maps*...that shall constitute the plan for the commission to use to establish policies for reviewing and acting on projects....” (emphasis added). As described in the San Francisco Bay Plan Part V: The Plan Maps, the maps included in the Bay Plan, “are integral part of the Bay Plan. They are based on—and show how to apply—the Bay Plan policies.” The maps identify the Bay Plan-designated Priority Use Areas (as provided by California Government Code Section 66602), include enforceable geographic-specific Bay Plan Map Policies, provide advisory notes and suggestions, and assist in jurisdictional determinations.

There are seven maps included in the Bay Plan. These maps have not received an update to the cartography since at least 2006, and have received only minor updates over time to reflect amendments to Priority Use Area boundaries and related Bay Plan Map Policies and notes. The maps are not consistent with modern cartographic best practices, are difficult to update, may not reflect the geography of the existing shoreline, and are not accessible to individuals with disabilities. The current maps use the same symbology, or colored shapes, for different feature types, use inconsistent colors and lines to depict the Bay’s edge, and use illegible font sizes at the printed scale.



The maps are not currently published using Geographic Information System (GIS), which makes them difficult to update with recent, more accurate data.

Staff has been working to modernize the mapping approach for the Commission, including future Bay Plan map updates. BCDC staff digitized Priority Use Area boundaries through a Geographic Information System (GIS), and made this data publicly available through an [online mapping application](#) to support transparency of the Commission's jurisdiction. As part of this work, on April 20, 2023, the Commission voted to adopt clarifying edits to Resolution 16 describing the boundaries of the Priority Use Areas in the 100-foot Shoreline Band jurisdiction.

Staff recommend initiating a limited amendment to enhance readability, accuracy, and labelling of the Bay Plan maps. The amended Bay Plan Maps would be easier to use as a reference for understanding and applying the Bay Plan policies and BCDC-related laws and regulations through clearer symbology, labeling, and more geographically accurate maps. As part of this process, BCDC staff is not recommending modifying the Bay Plan Maps in a way that would result in substantive policy amendments, such changes to any Priority Use Areas, Bay Plan Map Policies, or notes within Section V of the Bay Plan, aside from updating cited data sources.


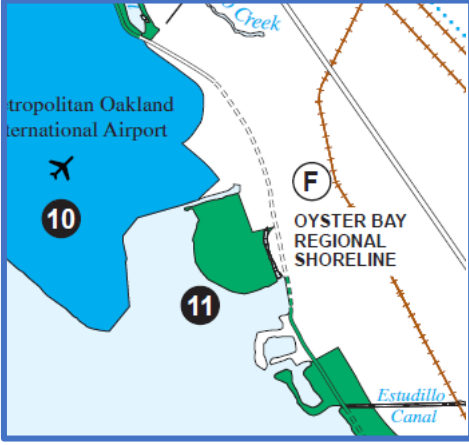

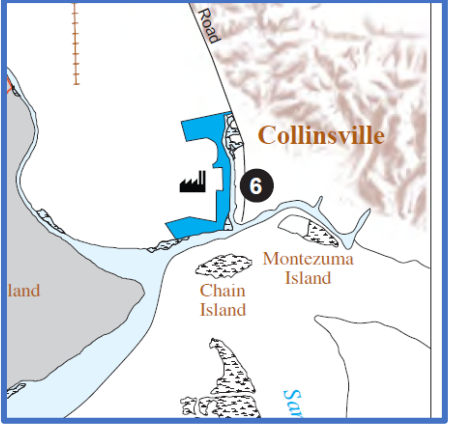
Specifically, the proposed Bay Plan Amendment will achieve the following:

- **Improve visual clarity and legibility of the maps.** The revised maps will align with current federal US Geological Survey (USGS) and other mapping standards and address some of the confusing labeling and imprecision in the current maps. The revised maps will also include landmark labels, make Priority Use Area labeling easier to understand, and increase the font size of the labels to improve legibility.
- **Accessibility.** The revised maps will conform to more ADA compliant best practices for color contrast and legibility.
- **Update data sources using best available regional resources.**¹ The revised maps will use the regional data identified in the Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan for reference features (e.g. transportation lines and tidal marsh extent), digitize features from historic documents where records are missing (e.g. salt marsh/managed wetland, scenic drives, and scenic vistas), incorporate elements of BCDC's draft Jurisdictional Screening map, and show additional regional context (e.g. county boundaries, SF Bay Trail).
- **Modernize the mapping approach to streamline future PUA map updates.** BCDC staff will migrate map development and staging to GIS, making maps more accurate and consistent with our published Priority Use Area data. Publishing the maps using GIS would ensure the maps show accurate Priority Use Area boundaries, make the maps more efficient to update for future Bay Plan map amendments, and better align the Bay Plan Maps with the online mapping application.

¹ As stated in Using the Bay Plan Maps Policy 4 of the Bay Plan: "The Plan maps are not intended to delineate the Commission's jurisdiction. The Commission's legal jurisdiction is described in the McAteer-Petris Act and the Commission's regulations, and has been affected by certain court decisions. The Commission's staff should be consulted concerning questions of precise jurisdiction."

Some of the issues with the existing maps are depicted through examples in Table 1. These and other issues will be described further should the Commission choose to initiate this amendment.

Table 1. Clipped images from the current Bay Plan Maps that show issues described above. These map excerpts are not shown to scale.

Current Map Issue Description	Example 1	Example 2
Symbols are hard to distinguish or are not explained in the legend		
	<p>The Waterfront Park, Beach Priority Use Areas and the Scenic Drives are both shown in the same green, making it unclear what feature type is represented.</p>	<p>The dashed hollow and dashed green lines here are not defined in any legend, which causes confusion on what these lines mean.</p>
The western and eastern extent of Bay jurisdiction are not displayed the same way		
	<p>The light blue Bay color extends west of Pt. Bonita and Pt. Lobos, beyond where BCDC's Bay jurisdiction ends.</p>	<p>The light blue Bay color ends at a black line where BCDC's jurisdiction ends at the interface with the Delta.</p>

II. Commission Procedure

Circulating a descriptive notice to the public is the first step in the process of amending the Bay Plan. Notice of the proposed amendment is required by the McAteer-Petris Act² and Section 11001 of the Commission's regulations.³ If the attached proposed descriptive notice is approved by the Commission on September 18, 2025, at least one public hearing will be held to discuss the potential amendment not less than 30 days following the mailing of the descriptive notice adopted by the Commission.⁴ Staff will distribute a report with a preliminary recommendation for specific changes to the *Bay Plan* to all Commissioners, Alternates, and interested parties who received the descriptive notice at least 30 days prior to that initial public hearing (tentatively planned for November 6, 2025).⁵ After the public hearing, staff will make any necessary revisions to the proposed Bay Plan amendment based on public and Commissioner input, and then send the revisions along with a final recommendation and a response to public comments to all Commissioners, Alternates, and interested parties who received the preliminary staff recommendation.⁶ Finally, the Commission will vote on the proposed amendment (tentatively scheduled for December 5, 2025).

² Gov. Code § 66652.

³ 14 CCR § 11001.

⁴ *Id.* § 11004(a).

⁵ *Id.* § 11003(a).

⁶ *Id.* § 11005(c).