



SAN MATEO, SANTA CLARA & SAN BENITO COUNTIES



February 15, 2022

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District  
Attn: Board of Directors  
330 Distel Circle  
Los Altos, CA 94022-1404

**Re: MROSD February 16, 2022 Board Meeting, Agenda Item 1: Discussions on the District's Expanding Regional Role as it Relates to (1) Advocacy and (2) Baylands Conservation and Resiliency Work (R-22-22)**

Dear Members of the Board,

The Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter submits the following comments to introduce you to our [Bay Alive Campaign](#), to support and encourage expanded MROSD engagement in advocacy and baylands conservation and resilience, and to offer our enthusiasm for further collaboration with the District as the region confronts the challenges of adapting to a worsening threat of sea level rise.

**Sierra Club's Bay Alive Campaign**

Our chapter works to protect open space, wildlife habitat and nature in Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Benito Counties. We represent more than 100,000 members and supporters in the three county region.

**In partnership with our sister Chapters around the Bay, we recently launched a Bay-wide campaign to keep the San Francisco Bay Alive. Our Bay Alive Campaign aims to protect and enhance San Francisco Bay wildlife, habitat, and ecosystems and to advance community and regional resilience to sea level rise.**

Our programs strive to educate both policy-makers and the public, build advocacy strength and capacity, and engage frontline communities in adaptation planning. Our 2021 webinar series on the "whys and hows" of Nature Based Adaptation featured 18 leading experts and Bay scientists and attracted more than 450 public officials and community leaders from the region. To date, we have graduated 70 students from our Bay Advocate Program. Our three-chapter partnership enables coordinated advocacy at the regional level; at the local level, Bay Alive is engaged in nine jurisdictions in the Loma Prieta Chapter to protect shoreline ecosystems and advance sound planning for sea level rise adaptation, including coordination with future levee projects,

green stormwater infrastructure, and management of groundwater rise impacts on soil-borne toxics and underground infrastructure.

In East Palo Alto, for example, we are working with Green Foothills, the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, Sequoia Audubon, Climate Resilient Communities, and Nuestra Casa to communicate the potential impacts of development proposals in the Ravenswood Business District/4 Corners Specific Plan Update, engage residents in the planning process, and center decision-making around community priorities, such as traffic and air pollution, displacement and gentrification, water quality, and preservation of their healthy, biodiverse baylands assets for both low-impact recreation and natural climate mitigation services.

### **MROSD Has a Critical Role to Play in Advocacy and Bayland Resilience**

As outlined in your staff report, partnerships with local environmental advocacy groups have enabled MROSD to leverage small investments of District staff time (currently one to seven percent) to strong effect. Through information sharing and collaboration, MROSD's capacity to produce GIS analysis, scientific research, technical data, feasibility studies and the like combines with the outreach and mobilization strength of nonprofit groups to produce credible, compelling, and solution-oriented advocacy. We encourage you to build on that strategy, particularly around bayland resilience in the face of overdevelopment; even incremental additional District advocacy efforts can go a long way.

Furthermore, MROSD's demonstrated leadership, experience, and dedication to bayland protection, preservation and resiliency, makes the District a valued and trusted resource, with a powerful voice. Having worked across multiple jurisdictions, navigated complex and overlapping permitting and regulatory regimes, and engaged competing stakeholders in the many projects outlined in the staff report, the District is well positioned to expand its impact on regional baylands resilience. This could be particularly beneficial vis a vis planning for the SAFER Shoreline Levee in East Palo Alto where the sophisticated engagement of developers with ambitions for tall office buildings abutting the wetlands threaten to overshadow the community's environmental priorities and limit flexibility for future levee alignments.

### **Opportunities for Further Partnership**

It has been our pleasure to partner with MROSD to protect the Cargill Salt Ponds from development and encourage Redwood City to engage in meaningful adaptation planning. We welcome future opportunities for partnership, particularly around shoreline ecosystems and Bay resilience. Some potential areas of overlapping interest include the following:

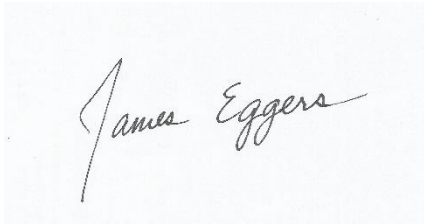
- East Palo Alto's Ravenswood Business District Specific Plan Update
- Sunnyvale's Moffett Park Specific Plan Update
- San Francisco Joint Powers Authority SAFER Shoreline Levee
- Ecosystems and endangered species along the Bay
- Bird safety and lighting in shoreline development

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on this item and encourage you to consider the beneficial multiplying effects of expanding MROSD's regional role and advocacy efforts related to baylands conservation and resilience.

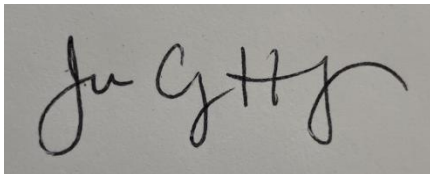
Sincerely,



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