

Friends of Five Creeks



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June 11, 2021

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Senate Pro Tempore
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Joint Legislative Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 5094
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Philip Ting
Vice Chair, Joint Legislative Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 3173
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Bob Wieckowski
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee 2
State Capitol, Room 4085
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Richard Bloom
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee 3
State Capitol, Room 2003
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for Investments in San Francisco Bay Wetland Protection & Restoration, Sea Level Rise Resilience in 2021-2022 State Budget

Dear Pro Tem Atkins, Speaker Rendon, and Chairs Skinner, Ting, Wieckowski, and Bloom, and members of the Bay Area delegation of the CA State Legislature,

On behalf of our 26 organizations and coalitions, representing hundreds of thousands of Californians, we write to express our strong encouragement for the inclusion of robust funding in the 2021-2022 state budget to support the protection, restoration and resilience of San Francisco Bay's wetlands, in support of the state's coastal protection, climate adaptation, and 30x30 land and water conservation goals. Specifically, we encourage the budget allocation of:

- \$300 Million for the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority
- \$100 Million for the Coastal Conservancy's San Francisco Bay Program

As the largest estuary on the Pacific Coast, containing 77% of California's remaining coastal wetlands, over 1,000 species of animals, 130 species of fish, millions of annual migratory waterbirds, over a dozen endangered species, and more than 7.5 million Californians, the protection, restoration and resilience of San Francisco Bay isn't just important to California, but to the entire western hemisphere.

Our region has worked hard for decades to protect and restore the San Francisco Bay Estuary; however, this remarkable progress faces an existential threat from climate change and development pressures. Sea level rise, in particular, is the single largest threat to the future of the San Francisco Bay ecosystem, threatening to drown the wetlands and putting at risk the future health of the Bay. Sea level rise also poses a significant risk to the built community,

potentially flooding over 80,000 homes, forcing the relocation of over 100,000 existing and 85,000 planned jobs and requiring the re-routing of over 5 million daily highway trips. **In fact, according to a study by the U.S. Geological Service, Point Blue Conservation Science and others, a full 2/3 of California's socioeconomic impacts from sea level rise are expected to be experienced in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Pacific Institute further anticipates that 4 out of 5 of the greatest impacts in California from sea level rise, both in terms of economic loss and human impact, will be in counties along San Francisco Bay.**

While wildfires and the drought are currently the primary focus of the state's climate adaptation efforts, if we do not act now, flooding caused by sea level rise (and the combination of sea level rise with high tides and winter storm surges) is predicted to eclipse the economic impacts of wildfire and drought in the coming years, resulting in tens of billions of dollars of economic damage. For this reason, the CA Legislative Analyst Office in their August 2020 report, "*What Threat Does Sea Level Rise Pose to California?*" urged the state to prioritize immediate action to minimize potential future disruptions to the economy and public safety.

San Francisco Bay scientists have consistently emphasized that the sooner we can restore the wetlands, the greater chance these habitats will be resilient in the face of rising sea levels and provide valuable flood attenuation to protect our communities for the decades that come. Additionally, the faster we implement wetland restoration projects around the Bay, the longer these natural systems will have to sequester carbon from the atmosphere, providing a valuable nature-based tool to support California's greenhouse gas reduction goals.

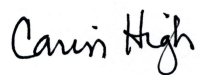
The 2021-2022 State Budget offers a critical opportunity for the State of California to support the protection, restoration and resilience of the state's most important estuary, San Francisco Bay, and to support the significant investments necessary to reduce future catastrophic flooding from sea level rise. We write to urge you to support robust funding for San Francisco Bay, including:

- **\$300 Million for the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority** - By approving Measure AA in 2016 with over a 70% vote, Bay Area residents are already supporting the restoration of our Bay wetlands, natural flood protection and bayside recreation for local communities. While the measure provides \$500 million over 20 years, additional state funding is urgently needed to address the impacts of sea level rise and to increase the pace and scale of these efforts.
- **\$100 Million for the Coastal Conservancy's San Francisco Bay Program** - The Coastal Conservancy plays a critical role in funding and supporting the protection and restoration of wetlands in San Francisco Bay, as well as multi-benefit projects and programs that improve wildlife habitat, assist communities in mitigating flood risk, and expanding access to the outdoors for underserved communities. Funding is needed to speed these actions in the face of sea level rise.

San Francisco Bay is home to 70% of California's coastal wetlands. The opportunity to restore these ecosystems to sequester carbon, attenuate the economic and human impacts of sea level rise and protect the abundance and biodiversity of the estuary's wildlife is not only within our capabilities, but a critical priority for the State of California. We urge you to take advantage of the budget surplus to invest in the restoration of the San Francisco Bay and in the protection of the Bay Area's vibrant economy and communities that ring this remarkable landscape.

We thank you for your leadership and for your consideration.

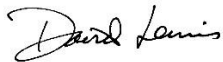
Sincerely,



Carin High, Co-Chair
Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge



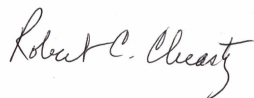
Brandon Dawson, Acting Director
Sierra Club California



David Lewis, Executive Director
Save The Bay



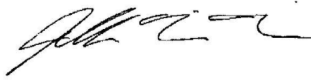
Annie Burke, Executive Director
TOGETHER Bay Area



Robert Cheasty, Executive Director
Citizens for Eastshore Parks



Glenn Phillips, Executive Director
Golden Gate Audubon Society



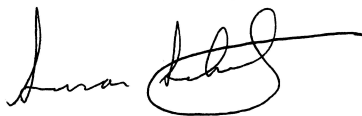
Jeff Miller, Director
Alameda Creek Alliance



Shani Kleinhaus, Environmental Advocate
Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society



Sarah Cardona, Deputy Director
Greenbelt Alliance



Susan Schwartz, President
Friends of Five Creeks



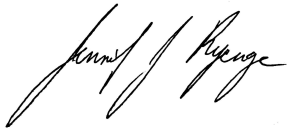
Peter Drekmeier, Policy Director
Tuolumne River Trust



Richard Lanman MD, Board President
Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District



William Hoppes, President
Ohlone Audubon Society



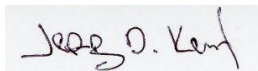
Jennifer Rycenga, President
Sequoia Audubon Society



Margaret Bruce, Executive Director
San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority



Alice Kaufman, Legislative Advocacy Director
Green Foothills



Jerry Kent, Board Member
Claremont Canyon Conservancy

Shoshana Wechsler

Shoshana Wechsler, Coordinator
Sunflower Alliance



Steve Holmes, Executive Director
South Bay Clean Creeks Coalition



Trish Mulvey, Co-Founder
CLEAN South Bay



Caroline Harris, Chair
Tri-City Ecology Center



Eamon O'Byrne, Executive Director
Sonoma Land Trust



Jason Su, Executive Director
Guadalupe River Park Conservancy

Violet Saena

Violet Saena, Director
Climate Resilient Communities



Ian Wren, Staff Scientist
San Francisco Baykeeper

Richard Fischer and Gretchen Logue

Richard Fischer and Gretchen Logue, Co-Founders
Tassajara Valley Preservation Association