

YES on AA

CLEAN AND HEALTHY BAY

Vote YES on Measure AA
For a Clean and Healthy San Francisco Bay

**SAN FRANCISCO
BUSINESS TIMES**

OPINION

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2016

BAY PRESERVATION MEASURE: GREAT DEAL FOR A SMALL PRICE

By David Lewis and Jim Wunderman

The Bay Area rarely unites as a whole region to improve this place we love and cherish. Now all of us have an unprecedented opportunity to come together to make San Francisco Bay better for our children and grandchildren.

Regional Measure AA on this June's ballot will ask voters in all nine Bay Area counties to approve a small \$12 per parcel tax that generates huge benefits, raising \$500 million over 20 years to accelerate bay wetland restoration projects that also protect us against floods. This restoration is the best way for us to make the bay and its shoreline healthier for fish and wildlife, cleaner for recreation, and resilient against the storms and rising tides.

We all benefit from a healthy bay, whether we live near it or see it from a distance, bike on the bay trail or windsurf its waves. The bay is central to our quality of life and economy, the top reason tourists visit here and why so many visitors stay to raise families and build businesses.

But we can't take the bay for granted as threats increase from pollution, population pressure and the effects of climate change. The bay needs our help to thrive as a natural treasure in the midst of 7 million people.

If we each give a little we can improve the bay a lot. That's why businesses, environmental organizations and many elected leaders have endorsed Measure AA, including the mayors of San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose.

Measure AA will fund projects in every county to help endangered wildlife, make the bay's waters cleaner and provide shoreline trails for recreation. These projects would increase crucial habitat for hundreds of species, including salmon and shorebirds, Dungeness crab, sea lions and porpoises. They would reduce trash and toxins that flow into the bay and ocean. And from Richmond to Redwood City, many of these wetland restoration projects also would protect low-lying homes, roads and sewage treatment plants at risk of flooding.

That natural shoreline protection would make our region more resilient against devastating floods from an extreme storm. The Bay Area Council Economic Institute's research found that kind of storm could cost our region \$10.4 billion, almost as much as the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. Fortunately, public agencies already own more than 30,000 acres of retired salt ponds and diked hayfields that are awaiting restoration – they just lack the funds to finish the work. We need Measure AA funds to accelerate that restoration and leverage millions more in state and federal dollars for the bay.

The generations before us protected open spaces and spectacular natural areas that make our Bay Area beautiful, from the Marin Headlands and Crissy Field to Muir Woods and Mt. Diablo. Now it's our turn to invest a little in the bay for everyone's benefit.

Let's seize our moment to act together as a region to protect and restore the bay we love for all of its residents. Measure AA is a great deal for a small price.

David Lewis is executive director of Save The Bay. Jim Wunderman is president and CEO of the Bay Area Council. Learn more about Measure AA at www.peopleforacleanandhealthybay.org