



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

San Jose Mercury News

OPINION

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, 2015

24/7 COVERAGE ONLINE: WWW.MERCURYNEWS.COM

ACT NOW TO PROTECT SAN FRANCISCO BAY

*By David Lewis and Andy Ball
Special to the Mercury News*

As the Bay Area's boom continues, it's essential that we protect what makes this such a desirable place to live and work — San Francisco Bay itself. The bay is central to our region's identity, quality of life and strong economy, but its waters and shoreline are challenged by pollution, population pressures and the effects of climate change. Low-lying communities and critical infrastructure face increasing risk from intense storms and flash floods. Animals that live only in our bay marshes face extinction. Fortunately, we have an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate improvements around the bay that will benefit people and wildlife and make our economy more resilient to climate change.

Public agencies already own more than 30,000 acres of salt ponds and diked shoreline areas that are slated for restoration to tidal marsh. Many of these marsh projects also would improve flood protection for adjacent homes, businesses, roads, railways and sewage treatment plants. This protection is crucial for companies that want to stay and grow and for others that want to move here. Marsh projects in Redwood City, Alviso, Hayward and Novato are stalled by inadequate federal and state funding, but we can close the gap. Polling shows voters throughout the nine Bay Area counties overwhelmingly support paying a small parcel tax to restore the bay and protect our communities and jobs from flooding today and in the future.

Now business, labor, and environmental leaders are joining with cities and counties in a broad coalition to offer voters that opportunity next year. For as little as \$12 annually per parcel, we can achieve enormous improvements that make the bay healthier for fish, add trails for recreation and protect our communities and our economy from intense storms and high tides. Because we all love the bay, most voters agree these benefits are a great deal for a small price shared by all of us.

The price of inaction is much higher. The Bay Area Council Economic Institute's report, "Surviving the Storm," details the devastating risk floods now pose to our regional economy, and how climate change will increase the frequency of floods. Pressures on bay wildlife also will increase with the region's population and business growth.

Uniting as a region to improve the bay also will provide momentum to tackle other problems. We lack housing that working families can afford; BART and other transit systems can't meet demand. Yet agreement on solutions has eluded us.

Better regional transit around, under or even on the bay can get cars off the roads, reducing air pollution and traffic. Building affordable housing near jobs, open space and recreation can sustain economic growth in healthy, livable communities. Working together for bay restoration will encourage broader regional collaboration on these important issues.

Generations of visionaries protected natural resources and open spaces that make the Bay Area livable and attractive, from Big Basin to Point Reyes. Leaders with foresight built us world-class universities, regional transit systems, ports and airports for mobility, commerce and tourism. These make our vibrant economy in a spectacular natural setting the envy of the world. Now it's our turn. In the coming months, we'll expand this regional conversation about investing in the bay for everyone's benefit. Let's seize this moment to make the bay we love healthier and make the Bay Area a better place to live and work for all of its residents.

David Lewis is executive director of Save The Bay. Andy Ball is West Region President of Suffolk Construction and a long-time board member of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group and Bay Area Council. They wrote this for this newspaper.

Paid for by Yes on Measure AA — People for a Clean and Healthy Bay, Sponsored by Save the Bay, Save the Bay Action Fund, Bay Area Council, and Silicon Valley Leadership Group, with Major Funding by The Nature Conservancy and Save the Bay Action Fund PAC. Printing Donated.