

YES on AA

CLEAN AND HEALTHY BAY

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

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EDITORIAL

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A WAY TO HELP SAVE THE BAY

The bay is what we love about living in the San Francisco Bay Area. It defines the landscape, sets the mood with its ever-changing aspect, helps provide the foods we love and connects us with nature — whether you sail the bay, walk the bay shore, bird-watch or just cross the bay during your day. The bay is our protector from severe weather. But the bay needs your help.

A parcel tax, Measure AA on the June 7 ballot in nine Bay Area counties, would generate funds to restore the bay wetlands and shelter bay communities from flooding and storm surge. Its very genesis as our region's first nine-county tax measure conveys its importance to the Bay Area's future. "This is a true regional opportunity to make something happen that needs to get done," said Jim Wunderman, the president and CEO of the Bay Area Council, a business organization.

What needs doing is restoring the bay wetlands. Those watery swaths of grasses and pickleweed that line the bay's edge are more than nurseries for fish and birds and attractive places to walk and paddle. The broad plains of marsh plants and wandering waterways allow storm-driven waves to spread out, dissipating their destructive force and lowering floodwaters. The problem is: There aren't enough to act as the sponge we need to protect the airports, hospitals and office buildings we've built alongside the bay.



Photo: Leah Millis, *The Chronicle*

Wetlands that are among those the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority wants restored near Point Isabel Regional Shoreline Jan. 13, 2015 in Richmond, Calif. A proposed ballot measure in all nine Bay Area counties would pay for major restoration in wetlands and coastal ecosystems of the San Francisco Bay, including the wetlands near Point Isabel Regional Shoreline in Richmond.



Since the 1800s, we have paved over wetlands for building sites or diked them for hay fields. Today, rising seas threaten to drown the marshes we do have because dams have held back the needed, nourishing sediment carried to the bay each spring. Work started in

the 1960s has about 44,000 acres of tidal wetlands restored. There are another 35,000 acres available for restoration now, with the goal of reaching a total of 100,000 acres by 2030. Modern engineered levees, rather than mounded earth berms, also are needed to protect homes and offices.

The \$12-a-parcel tax is expected to raise \$25 million a year or \$500 million over its 20-year term to aid that work. Those dollars will be used to leverage funding from state, federal and philanthropic sources. Other wetlands restoration projects — notably Chesapeake Bay and Puget Sound — have attracted four times the federal dollars that San Francisco Bay projects have, according to David Lewis, executive director of Save the Bay. A source for a local match will help draw more federal funding here.

Persuading two-thirds of voters in nine counties to tax themselves remains a heavy but necessary lift. The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority, created by the Legislature in 2008, put the measure on the ballot and will allocate the funds. It will rank projects by need and geography so that every county receives some funding.

The need encircles the bay. The chair, San Mateo County Supervisor Dave Pine, noted that his county is the most vulnerable to sea level rise, as measured by property value. Santa Clara County, with areas lying 13 feet below sea level, has highways and a water treatment plant at risk.

Fewer issues link our economic vitality and environmental future as the protection and restoration of our San Francisco Bay,” said Mike Mielke, senior vice president of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, which has played a key role in the effort. “We all win when we come together to enhance the environmental wonder we call the bay, protecting it for generations to come.”

We recommend a “yes” vote on Measure AA.