

Measure AA supported by both environmental groups and industry

On June 7, Bay Area voters will have an opportunity to vote for a small, first-of-its-kind parcel tax that may be one of the most significant in terms of its potential to protect San Francisco Bay for future generations.

Environmental, political and business leaders from around the Bay Area's nine-county region have lined up to support Measure AA, a \$12-per-year parcel tax over 20 years that is projected to raise about \$500 million to restore wetlands and protect shorelines along the Bay Area.

The \$500 million raised by Measure AA would be dedicated to publicly vetted projects -- including several in Richmond — that would be leveraged to procure larger state and federal grant awards. The measure has been in the works for 13 years, with 30,000 acres in the Bay Area having been reserved for wetlands restoration projects, said David Lewis, Executive Director of Save the Bay.

Lewis, who spoke Friday to a crowd of 200 at the Bay Planning Coalition's annual Spring Summit on a panel entitled, "*Can We Dig Ourselves Out of What's Coming? Dredging, Beneficial Reuse, and Measure AA*," said the list of Measure AA supporters is long and includes not only residents but also Gov. Jerry Brown, multiple public agencies and companies like Facebook, Google, Kaiser Permanente and others.

The reason for the broad coalition is all Bay Area residents and businesses will be affected by increased storms and flooding resulting from imminent sea level rise, he added.

"There's a list and map of projects eligible for funding...sites that we need to get prepped," he said.

But current funding from state and federal sources isn't enough to fulfill the number of projects needed, Lewis added.

Funds raised from Measure AA would be less expensive than proposed alternatives to sea-level rise, such as building sea walls, he said. And the longer these projects are delayed, the more expensive they will become, he warned.

"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," Lewis wrote in the Save the Bay [blog](#) supporting Measure AA. "Pressures on bay wildlife also will increase with the region's population and business growth."

Lewis reported that Chevron and Pacific Gas & Electric Co. have donated a combined \$300,000 to promote Measure AA, or about one-tenth of all the funds the campaign has raised to date.

“This is a unique opportunity to partner with elected officials and environmental, business and community leaders from across the Bay Area to preserve and protect San Francisco Bay,” Chevron spokesman Braden Reddall said.

Chevron has collaborated in the past with organizations spearheading Measure AA, including Save the Bay and the East Bay Regional Parks District, on restoration projects, such as the creation of Eastshore State Park and Breuner Marsh, which are adjacent to the Richmond Refinery.

Despite Measure AA’s broad support, backers still fear too few voters are aware of the measure and its potential impact, Lewis said. The measure needs approval from two-thirds of voters in the nine Bay Area counties to pass, a high bar, he said. He urged anyone supporting the measure to help educate family, friends and colleagues before they cast their ballots.

“Measure AA is a tiny tax for a huge benefit,” Lewis said. “This is the end of a 13-year journey to give the Bay Area as a whole an opportunity to vote on the future of the bay. We never before had an opportunity as a whole Bay Area — 3.5 million voters — to vote for the Bay.”