

# The Mercury News

It's difficult to overstate the impact the San Francisco Bay has on our lives here in the Bay Area and how much it defines our region. The bay is vital to our economy and vital to our environment -- the physical center of the place we call home.

Despite its importance, through our history we haven't always taken care of it as we should. The environmental awakening in the 1960s opened eyes to the harm being inflicted on the Bay by pollution and other elements, but still not enough was being done to help restore it. Then in 2003 Sen. Dianne Feinstein led the effort to secure 16,500 acres of salt ponds and shoreline properties for wetlands restoration. The goal was to clean the bay's waters, provide flood protection and add critical public infrastructure. Miles of new Bay Trails were to be built. Yet more than a decade later, a lack of funding has held us back on fulfilling the mission of restoring all but a fraction of these acres. The same is true of 30,000 acres of publicly held wetlands in need of restoration that ring the Bay.

Increasing flood risks due to more extreme weather and the threat of faster rising seas make it imperative that we come together as a region and act now.

A recent study found that the Bay Area could suffer more than \$10 billion in economic damages in an extreme storm event, about the equivalent of damages caused by Loma Prieta. Scientists who study the Bay tell us that the time we have to restore the Bay has grown considerably shorter due to impending environmental and man-made threats.

The clock is ticking. Every year due to climate change, wetlands areas along the shoreline are being destroyed, and those that remain are more expensive and difficult to restore.

This is a regional problem that requires a regional solution. That's why we are proud to serve as honorary co-chairs of Measure AA on the June ballot.

A modest parcel tax of \$12 a year would provide \$500 million over the next two decades to restore, preserve and protect our precious Bay.

A unique coalition of elected and business leaders, environmentalists, labor and community activists from all walks of life has formed to support Measure AA, which will appear on the ballot of all nine counties that surround the Bay. They recognize the importance of developing a sustainable funding source to bring the Bay back to good health while making it more accessible to our residents and the millions of people who visit our region every year.

Measure AA would provide the financial resources we need to restore thousands of acres of wetlands and provide natural flood protection for critical infrastructure on the shorelines. Levees could be built to facilitate these wetlands projects, while 25 miles of new trails would be put in place to improve recreational and open space access.

For the sake of future generations, we need to take this opportunity to preserve and protect the Bay we love. The time is now if we are to leave a lasting legacy to our children and grandchildren. Please join us in supporting Measure AA.

Visit [YesonAAfortheBay.com](http://YesonAAfortheBay.com) for more information or to sign up as a supporter.

Dianne Feinstein is California's senior U.S. Senator. and Bob Fisher is chairman of The Gap board and a longtime environmentalist. They are honorary co-chairs the Yes on Measure AA, People for a Clean and Healthy Bay campaign, and wrote this for the Mercury News.