

Marin Voice: Measure AA critical for clean and healthy bay in Marin

No one understands the importance of maintaining a strong and healthy San Francisco Bay more than the people of Marin County.

For us, the bay is more than a tourist destination or the photo backdrop to the Golden Gate. The bay is our home, an iconic symbol of what we love and cherish about living in Northern California. The natural beauty of the bay shines a light on everything we do, but it's an ecosystem that is fragile and under constant man-made and environmental threat. It needs to be protected and nourished if it is to survive.

The need for bay funding has never been more acute. Many of the bay's wetlands have been paved over or diked off, and pollution has contaminated fish with dangerous chemicals like PCBs, mercury and pesticides. With increased climate change low-lying areas near the bay face increasing threats of flood risks from extreme storms and sea-level rise.

For the first time in our history, the entire Bay Area has an opportunity to come together in support of San Francisco Bay to make it healthier and safer for future generations. Measure AA calls for a modest \$12 annual parcel tax for all nine Bay Area counties that would raise \$500 million over the next 20 years for vital habitat restoration and protection along the bay's shorelines.

This sustainable funding mechanism would be used to obtain matching federal environmental grants.

The benefits of Measure AA funds are numerous. They will be used to enhance threatened areas, restoring marshland and retired salt ponds that now sit barren for lack of funds to improve them. The measure will reduce trash and toxins in the bay and restore habitat for fish, birds and wildlife.

Funds would also be used to add new trails and public recreational spaces, many in low-income areas that have been long neglected. Many of the dozens of targeted restoration projects around the bay are located in Marin County, including Bothin Marsh, lower Corte Madera Creek and Madera Bay Park.

Measure AA has many built-in provisions to ensure the funds are used where they are most needed. The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority, which has been authorized by the state Legislature to administer funding for bay protection, would be accountable to the region's voters.

The authority is composed of an appointed board of elected representatives from all geographic regions surrounding the bay. Under its authorizing provisions, all decisions by the authority must be made at advertised public meetings, and all funds must stay in the Bay Area. Plus, the authority will

be subject to an outside yearly audit, and an advisory committee and an independent citizens oversight committee will ensure the funds are administered fairly across the entire region.

These kinds of safeguards instill confidence in the regional approach to bay restoration, and, along with the vast economic and environmental benefits of the bay, explain the depth and diversity of support behind Measure AA. Progressive leaders from across the region have joined business groups, environmentalists, labor leaders and community activists in resounding support of the measure.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein and the entire Bay Area congressional delegation are standing behind the measure, and the ranks of supporters continue to grow by the day.

Measure AA represents an historic opportunity — a smart and responsible approach to ensure lasting funding for much needed protection and restoration. We can now come together with the surrounding Bay Area counties to ensure our children and grandchildren enjoy a clean, healthy and safe bay. On June 7, vote yes on Measure AA. It is our bay, and it deserves our support.

Josh Fryday is a member of the Novato City Council.