

SAN FRANCISCO BAY RESTORATION AUTHORITY

Staff Recommendation

October 15, 2021

Candlestick Point Stewardship Project

Project No. RA-029

Project Manager: Erica Johnson

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$100,000 through the Restoration Authority Community Grants Program to Literacy for Environmental Justice for restoration activities through the Candlestick Point Stewardship Project in the City and County of San Francisco.

LOCATION: Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood, City and County of San Francisco, Measure AA Region: West Bay

MEASURE AA PROGRAM CATEGORY: Safe, Clean Water and Pollution Prevention Program; Vital Fish, Bird and Wildlife Habitat Program; Shoreline Public Access Program.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Habitat Areas](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Photos](#)

Exhibit 4: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority adopt the following resolution and findings:

Resolution:

The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) through the Community Grants Program to Literacy for Environmental Justice to conduct the Candlestick Point Stewardship Project in the City and County of San Francisco. Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Authority the following:

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be employed in implementing the project.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Authority funding.

Findings:

Based on the accompanying staff recommendation and attached exhibits, the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority Act, Gov. Code Sections 66700-66706.
2. The proposed authorization is consistent with The San Francisco Bay Clean Water, Pollution Prevention and Habitat Restoration Measure (Measure AA).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the disbursement of up to one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) through the Community Grants Program to Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ) to conduct the Candlestick Point Stewardship Project in the City and County of San Francisco (Exhibit 1). Candlestick Point State Recreation Area (project area) is located on the highly urbanized southeastern shoreline of San Francisco and is owned by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks). The restoration site within the project area is Sunrise Point, and makes up the southeastern end of the project area. The initial phases of restoration at Sunrise Point occurred from 2012-2015, during which time LEJ restored 2.5 acres of habitat at Sunrise Point, planting native trees, shrubs, perennial grasses and forbs with an emphasis on salt and flood resilient species near the bayshore and the lower-lying western isthmus of Sunrise Point. Although LEJ has worked to restore Sunrise Point for several years, the restoration is about 50% complete. This project will focus primarily on revegetating approximately 2 acres of upland habitat adjacent to bayland habitats (adjacent uplands), which is part of the shoreline habitat mosaic. Many species that use bayland habitats also use adjacent uplands, e.g., some birds that forage in the bay use adjacent uplands as nesting or roosting areas. Currently, the understory of the restoration site is covered in invasive plants, and this project will remove the invasives and plant 4,000-6,500 native plants grown at LEJ's native plant nursery, at which point the restoration of Sunrise Point will be 75% complete. LEJ assessed potential inundation of the targeted restoration areas within Sunrise Point using the Adapting to Rising Tides Tool. They have found that the areas are at very low risk of inundation in the next 100 years and will move forward with planting four different habitat areas (Exhibit 2). The project includes workforce development training, trash clean-up, monitoring and reporting of destructive activities for a two-year period, native plant propagation, and community engagement within the entire project area.

The project's stewardship activities will include removing invasive plants and planting up to 6,500 native plants in Sunrise Point, as well as trash clean-up throughout the project area. These

activities are crucial to protecting the habitat from highly invasive plants and maintaining a healthy ecosystem for wildlife that live and nest along the shoreline. The work will be led by the participants of the Eco-Apprentice Program, LEJ's workforce development program that will train and pay about 12 low-income transitional age (18-25-year-old) youth to gain experience in the fields of natural resource management, environmental education, and native plant nurseries.

LEJ is a non-profit that serves communities in southeastern San Francisco by promoting ecological health, environmental stewardship and community development. LEJ focuses on educating residents on ecological health, propagating and planting native plants, offering recreation activities, and providing workforce development opportunities that directly benefit community members. LEJ's native plant nursery located in the Hunters Point neighborhood specializes in growing native plants used in the revegetation of various shoreline habitats. Over the past 22 years, LEJ has completed numerous multi-year cleanup, revegetation, and stewardship projects, such as the revegetation of Heron's Head Park, the initial wetland and Bay Trail plantings at Yosemite Slough in Candlestick Point Recreation Area, and plantings at Pier 94. Cumulatively, these projects removed an estimated 30,000 pounds of debris from the shoreline, abated invasive species, propagated and out planted approximately 75,000 native plants and engaged thousands of community volunteers. LEJ has also played a key role in developing the Candlestick Point General Plan, including the restoration and stewardship aspects of the plan.

The proposed project is consistent with both the Candlestick Point 2013 General Plan and the master agreement between State Parks and LEJ for restoration of this area. The master agreement was the output of a series of organized community workshops to obtain residents' input and select of the best restoration alternative.

The project includes the following specific tasks:

1. **Workforce Development (Eco-Apprentice Program):** Approximately 12 transitional youth from the Bayview Hunters Point community will be recruited to participate in the Eco-Apprentice Program. Eco-Apprentices will receive paid training and work experience in native plant propagation, ecosystem restoration, environmental education, and community organizing.
2. **Native Plant Propagation:** Eco-Apprentices will support LEJ's two native plant nurseries at Bayview and Treasure Island to propagate approximately 6,500 native plants for planting in approximately 2 acres of Sunrise Point.
3. **Trash Removal:** LEJ staff and Eco-Apprentices will work with community volunteers and school children to remove trash from the wetland habitats and marsh-upland transition zones in Candlestick Point.
4. **Monitoring and Reporting of Destructive Activity:** LEJ, in collaboration with State Parks and the Bayview Hunters Point Environmental Justice Task Force (Task Force) will train Eco-Apprentices and community volunteers to report illegal dumping, dangerous activity, any new encampments of unhoused people in Candlestick Point, off-road vehicle use, and/or other destructive activities in the entire Candlestick Point area.

The Task Force is a community-led, problem-solving collaboration that brings together residents, community-based organizations, businesses, and government agencies to discuss and respond to reports and complaints of pollution and other destructive activities submitted to the Task Force online, via phone, or during the monthly meetings.

5. **Invasive Plant Removal:** LEJ staff and Eco-Apprentices, will manually remove major invasive plants, such as Bermuda grass, wild radish, wild mustard, fennel, stinkwort, and Russian start thistle, from the Sunrise Point restoration site. LEJ staff and Eco-Apprentices will coordinate community stewardship events to help with the identification and removal of invasive plants.
6. **Outplant Native Plants:** With the assistance of community volunteers, Eco-Apprentices will outplant native flowering plants and grasses, such as yarrow, sticky monkey flower, California fescue, and purple needle grass.
7. **Community Engagement/Volunteer Stewards:** Eco-Apprentices will plan and lead monthly volunteer days both at LEJ's native plant nurseries and at restoration sites and major annual events to mark Earth Day and Coastal Cleanup Day. Outreach and planning for these volunteer days and major events will be supported by program partners: the Task Force, Bayview Hunters Point Mobilization for Adolescent Growth in our Communities (BMAGIC), State Parks, and California State Parks Foundation. About 1,000 volunteers are expected to be engaged over the course of the project.

Site Description:

Candlestick Point Recreation Area is located in southeast San Francisco, along the bay shoreline. The area was historically a thriving ecosystem which encompassed tidal wetlands and adjacent upland habitats, including coastal sage scrub and coastal grasslands. The area is a major stopover for migratory birds such as the western snowy plover, and the tidal wetlands, a sandy beach, and open bay waters provide key habitat for protected species such as the salt marsh harvest mouse and Ridgway's rail, and double-crested cormorants that nest along the shoreline. The adjacent upland habitats (coastal sage scrub and grassland) support other wildlife such as the California ground squirrel, gopher snake, and jackrabbit. During industrial development, the shoreline experienced years of heavy industrial development, such as the establishment of shipyards and powerplants, and illegal dumping left the site badly polluted. The residents of the Bayview Hunters Point community, adjacent to Candlestick Point, have suffered from the impacts of industrial pollution and racial and class discrimination. The community remains one of the most economically disadvantaged in San Francisco. With the help of community activism, State Parks purchased the 170-acre landfill site in 1977. It became part of California's first urban park and various restoration projects have taken place within the park.

Other developments in the area include the recently established hike, bike, and boat-in campsite at Sunrise Point. LEJ, in partnership with State Parks has overseen projects at Sunrise Point and has stewarded the area since the restoration and public access developments (Exhibit 3). LEJ has been actively programming community activities such as hiking, kayaking, camping, as well as volunteer and paid opportunities for stewardship. The site has become a prominent location for Bayview Hunter's Point residents to engage in various outdoor recreational activities.

The project area has some unique challenges due to its history of use for illegal dumping and its location in an economically disadvantaged community. In light of Covid-19, the City and County of San Francisco is not clearing encampments of unhoused people and enforcement against dangerous and illegal activities diminished; this resulted in an increase in dangerous activities and encampments in Candlestick Park. These encampments have since been removed, but destructive activities, such as illegal dumping, still occur in the area. The proposed project will engage the community in stewardship of the park, including picking up trash and reporting any illegal or dangerous activity in the area to local authorities and the Bayview Hunters Point Environmental Justice Task Force.

PROJECT FINANCING

San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority	\$100,000
Parks California – Route to Parks Grant Program	\$30,000
Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation	\$20,000
BayArea Air Quality Management District – James Cary Smith Grant Program	\$14,000
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission Project Learning Grant (Pending)	\$25,000
Individual Donor (Pending)	\$14,000
Project Total	\$203,000

CONSISTENCY WITH AUTHORITY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION, THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY RESTORATION AUTHORITY ACT:

The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority Act, Government Code section 66704.5, authorizes the Authority to grant funds for eligible projects. Consistent with Section 66704.5(a), the project is located in San Francisco City and County.

The project meets the eligibility requirement of Section 66704.5(b) “Restore, protect, or enhance tidal wetlands, managed ponds, or natural habitats on the shoreline in the San Francisco Bay area, excluding the Delta primary zone” because it proposes to enhance and protect natural habitats on the shoreline at the project site by removing trash, reporting pollution, removing invasive plants, and planting native plants in order to enhance the habitat for wildlife, and inhibit the spread of invasive plants.

Consistent with Section 66704.5 (e) the grant award would support the construction phase of the project.

CONSISTENCY WITH MEASURE AA PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES:

The proposed project is consistent with the *Safe, Clean Water and Pollution Prevention Program* because the proposed project will remove trash and invasive plants from the Bay shoreline and report incidents of pollution.

The proposed project is also consistent with the *Vital Fish, Bird and Wildlife Habitat Program* because the removal of trash and invasive plants and native plantings will help to improve wildlife habitat and the ecology of upland habitat along the Bay shoreline. Habitat will be improved for wildlife to feed and nest along the shoreline.

This proposed project is consistent with the *Shoreline Public Access Program*. The stewardship element of the project provides workforce development and volunteer opportunities that promote hands-on learning on native and invasive plant identification and wildlife habitat to protect the Bay's health and encourage community engagement.

CONSISTENCY WITH MEASURE AA PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA:

- 1. Greatest positive impact.** Community involvement in the transformation of a polluted and neglected shoreline area in an economically disadvantaged community into a valuable wildlife habitat and recreation area will have a significant positive impact on the San Francisco Bay shoreline. Residents have already begun to use the area for recreation and outdoor education. Continued community stewardship of the natural resources and reporting destructive uses will discourage dumping and littering. Reduced pollution, reduced litter, and native plantings will provide healthy habitat and habitat structure for wildlife, and a healthy urban green space for residents to use.
- 2. Greatest long-term impact.** The training of the participants in the Eco-Apprentice Program is likely to have the greatest long-term impact because it will prepare approximately 12 transitional youth from the community for jobs in the environmental field. Their experience in native plant propagation, ecosystem restoration, environmental education, and community organizing, coupled with their connection to the community, will make them valuable future advocates for the restoration of the Bay and equitable access to the shoreline. It should be noted that long-term support for capital improvements and operations and maintenance at Candlestick Point are expected to come from future allocations by the State Legislature to State Parks. In addition, there is a newly established partnership called the Candlestick Collaborative (Collaborative) which includes LEJ, Candlestick Point, California State Parks Foundation, State Parks, Golden Gate Parks Conservancy, and local and Bay Area District State Parks leadership. The Collaborative will support State Parks with the planning and implementation of improvements to Candlestick Point. State Parks, the landowner, anticipates receiving an endowment to help with maintenance of Candlestick Point in the future; however, the appropriation of funds is contingent upon land exchanges. Due to the significant time that these exchanges may take to occur, State Parks is supportive of the Sunrise Point Baylands Stewardship Project and other projects that may assist with the clean-up and maintenance of Candlestick Point as an interim solution.

3. **Leveraging resources and partnerships.** The proposed project will leverage support from other community groups and organizations to implement the project. See the PROJECT SUMMARY section above for a description of the roles of the Task Force and BMAGIC. LEJ has received a letter of support from BMAGIC, a San Francisco neighborhood network of organizations that develops community resources for youth in Bayview Hunters Point, and State Parks, the landowner (Exhibit 4).
4. **Economically disadvantaged communities.** The project is within the economically disadvantaged community of Bayview Hunters Point. The community is predominantly Black and Asian, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, low income, and is characterized by medium to high density residential and commercial development, including a powerplant and dilapidated shipyard. Candlestick Point Recreation Area is one of the few open spaces in the community that is maintained and easily accessible to community residents. The stewardship efforts supported by this project, led by community-based Eco-Apprentices, will help make the project area a cleaner and safer place to recreate.
5. **Engage youth and young adults.** The project will hire and provide field training on bay ecology, native plant revegetation, invasive plant control, and community organizing to approximately 12 Eco-Apprentices from the Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood. LEJ works closely with State Parks to ensure the skills they gain from their experiences will make them more competitive for a job in the environmental field, including possible employment by State Parks, and will prepare them to be leaders and advocates for their community and the environment. In addition, school children and other youth will be engaged during monthly volunteer days and annual stewardship events which engages approximately 50 people per event.
6. **Monitoring, maintenance, and stewardship.** This project will occur over two years during which an adaptive management strategy will be implemented by doing site walks. The survival and growth of the first-year plantings will allow LEJ and Eco-Apprentices to determine an optimal strategy for the second-year plantings. LEJ will assess progress at Sunrise Point with basic photo monitoring 3-4 times per month, for two hours each visit. LEJ staff will visit the park to photo monitor plants (assessing need for water, whether the plants are getting preyed on or trampled, etc.), and report illegal activities to city, State Parks, and the Bayview Hunters Point Environmental Justice Task Force.
7. **Coastal Conservancy's San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.** The project is consistent with the Conservancy's San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program's Criteria because it is supported by local and regional plans including the 2013 Candlestick Point State Recreation Area General Plan and others listed below. The project will serve a regional constituency by supporting community stewardship of a California State Park visited by residents throughout the Bay Area. The project can be implemented as soon as the funds become available must be implemented soon in order to protect the prior investment in restoration from fast-growing invasive plants. The revegetation effort would be more challenging and costly if implemented in the future. Native plants can grow into more robust populations if planted now, establishing a healthy ecosystem and inhibiting invasive plant growth. The proposed project includes matching funds (see Project Financing above) and multiple partners that will contribute their services to the project (see Leveraging resources and partnerships above)

- a. **California Water Action Plan (2016 update):** The project advances California Water Action Plan Action 4 – Protect and Restore Important Ecosystems; Restore Coastal Wetlands – by removing invasive plants on the bay shoreline and planting native plants in order to enhance habitat for wildlife.
 - b. **Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Report (1999):** The goals report presents goals and recommendations to restore vital habitat in the Bay area. The project will support the regional goal to protect the shoreline ecosystem, which includes adjacent upland habitat.
 - c. **Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Science Update (2015):** The update documents the progress made toward achieving the 1999 Baylands Goals and outlines strategies for continuing restoration progress in face of climate change and sea-level rise. The project is consistent with the update’s recommendations to design and restore complete tidal wetland systems that include active revegetation, in this case to the upland habitat adjacent to the shoreline.
 - d. **State Coastal Conservancy’s 2018-2022 Strategic Plan:** The project is consistent with Objective 12 “Protect and enhance natural habitats and connecting corridors, watersheds, scenic areas, and other open-space resources of regional importance in the Bay Area” which calls for the enhancement (12D) of upland habitat, and is consistent with revegetation of Sunrise Point.
- 8. San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission’s Coastal Management Program.** The project is consistent with San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission’s Coastal Management Program because it enhances native tidal marsh and controls invasive species that impact wetlands in San Francisco Bay:
- e. Water Quality Policy 1: Bay water pollution should be prevented to the greatest extent feasible.
 - f. Water Quality Policy 7: Whenever practicable, native vegetation buffer areas should be provided as part of a project to control pollutants from entering the Bay.
 - g. Fish, Other Aquatic Organisms and Wildlife Policy 2: Native species, including candidate, threatened, and endangered species and any species that provides substantial public benefits, as well as specific habitats that are needed to conserve, increase, or prevent the extinction of these species, should be protected.
 - h. Environmental Justice and Social Equity Policy 3: Equitable, culturally-relevant, community outreach and engagement should be conducted by local governments and project applicants to meaningfully involve potentially impacted communities for major projects and appropriate minor projects in underrepresented and/or identified vulnerable and/or disadvantaged communities.
- 9. San Francisco Bay Joint Venture’s Implementation Strategy.** The project is consistent with the Joint Venture’s Implementation Strategy because it includes actions to control invasive plants species and to enhance native upland habitat adjacent to baylands, but it is not listed as a priority project on the 2019 list.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The project is categorically exempt from review under CEQA Guidelines Section 15333 (14 Cal. Code Regs. §15333) as a small habitat restoration project, not exceeding five acres, to assure the restoration and enhancement of habitat for fish, plants, or wildlife and with no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat, no known hazardous materials at or around the project site and, given the scale and methodology, no potential for cumulatively significant effects. The proposed project is also categorically exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because removing trash and invasive species and planting native plants are landscaping activities that do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees.

Upon approval of the project, staff will file a Notice of Exemption.