

SAN FRANCISCO BAY RESTORATION AUTHORITY

Staff Recommendation

February 25, 2022

Bay Restoration: Youth Engagement and Service Learning in East Oakland

Project No. RA-031

Project Manager: Virgilio Cuasay

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$99,173 to Planting Justice to: 1) develop a curriculum for training youth interns through a series of ten workshops; 2) conduct the workshops to train approximately 20 youth interns in environmental justice issues and San Francisco Bay habitat restoration techniques; and 3) lead the youth interns in shoreline cleanup, invasive plant removal, and habitat restoration work at the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline in Alameda County.

LOCATION: Garretson Point Staging Area, Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline, Oakland, Alameda County; Measure AA Region: East Bay.

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

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Locations](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Photograph](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority adopt the following resolution pursuant to the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority Act, Gov. Code Sections 66700-66706:

Resolution:

The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed ninety-nine thousand seven hundred thirteen dollars (\$99,713) to Planting Justice to: 1) develop a curriculum for a series of ten workshops for youth interns; 2) conduct the workshops to train approximately 20 youth interns in environmental justice issues and San Francisco Bay habitat restoration techniques; and 3) lead the youth interns in shoreline cleanup,

invasive plant removal, and habitat restoration activities at the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline in Alameda County. 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 carrying out the project.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Authority funding.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
5. Evidence that the grantee has entered into written agreements with Save The Bay and/or East Bay Regional Park District sufficient to enable the grantee to implement, operate, and maintain the enhancement and restoration components of the project.

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't 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 that the Authority authorize a grant of up to \$99,173 to Planting Justice to carry out the Bay Restoration: Youth Engagement and Service Learning in East Oakland project which includes: 1) developing a curriculum for a series of ten training workshops for youth interns; 2) conducting the workshops using the curriculum to train approximately 20 youth interns in environmental justice issues and San Francisco Bay habitat restoration techniques; and 3) leading the interns in carrying out shoreline cleanup, invasive plant removal, and habitat restoration activities at the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline in Alameda County. The proposed project will empower youth participants to develop a personal relationship with the watershed in which they live through educational and hands-on content.

Planting Justice will partner with the Sogorea Te' Land Trust, an urban Indigenous women-led land trust that facilitates the return of Indigenous land to Indigenous people, to develop curriculum centered on topics including Bay habitat restoration, native shoreline plant identification, plant propagation and revegetation, water conservation, local environmental justice issues, permaculture, land repatriation and its connection to bay shoreline restoration, and Bay Area Native American history. This curriculum will be delivered through a paid internship consisting of a 10-session series of workshops that engages up to 20 local youth between the ages of 13 and 24, from the surrounding community. Participants will learn how to

identify, propagate, plant, maintain, and use native plants through hands-on activities that they will use in practice at the site selected for restoration work.

Upon completion of the workshop series, the project will conclude with a capstone internship experience where interns will carry out enhancement and restoration activities and one final educational activity over the course of two separate days at Save The Bay's Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline Nursery. Program participants will clean up the shoreline and remove invasive plant species on one day, then transplant native plants propagated in the nursery, and explore the transition from tidal wetland to uplands as an educational activity on a separate day. Native species propagated in the nursery are collected under proper permitting and from healthy transition zone and upland habitat as close to the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline as possible. The interns will transplant native plants such as creeping wild rye, western goldenrod, California rose, and yarrow to select locations on the site that will support the goal of ensuring non-native invasive plants do not establish. Targeted invasive species in this area include yellow star thistle, fennel, and invasive annual grass species. The interns will remove these invasive species using methods that minimize soil disturbance including hand pulling and use of hand tools. As part of the internship, participants will receive a stipend of \$500 upon successful completion of the program.

Planting Justice is well qualified to deliver this project. Founded in 2009, their mission is to empower people impacted by mass incarceration and other social inequities with the skills and resources to cultivate food sovereignty, economic justice, and community healing. Planting Justice operates five innovative and highly integrated programs that generate at least 60% of its \$2.5 million per year operating income and supports 38 full-time staff members, including 17 formerly incarcerated people, with full-time living-wage jobs in urban farming, nursery production/management, ecological landscaping, community education, and peer mentorship that position them as changemakers in their communities.

Planting Justice's programs cultivate a great deal of local interest which results in a nursery staffed predominantly by residents of the East Oakland neighborhood of Sobrante Park. Through this high level of community staffing, Planting Justice is able to establish direct connections to the community it serves by speaking about the organization's work as well as performing outreach for community events. So far, Planting Justice has held over 30 community events in the past 4.5 years of operating their nursery in Sobrante Park, each of which attracts between 75-400 people.

Site Description: The project will take place at two locations: (1) Planting Justice East Oakland Nursery and (2) Save The Bay's nursery near East Bay Regional Park District's Garretson Point Staging Area located at Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline. Both areas have CalEnviroScreen4.0 ratings of 83 and 97 respectively (ratings are on a scale of zero to 100 where 100 represents the highest percentile of environmental and health burden a community can face). All curriculum-based activities will take place at Planting Justice's 2-acre nursery. Located in the Sobrante Park neighborhood of East Oakland, the nursery is headquarters to Planting Justice's operations and acts as the staging ground for all instructional content, including plant propagation and cultural activities with the Sogorea Te' Land Trust. Community members of this neighborhood are disproportionately affected by poor air quality due to its location next to Interstate 880 as well as by lead from housing.

Shoreline restoration activities will occur on the shoreline next to Save The Bay’s Nursery at East Bay Regional Park District’s Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline, where Save The Bay conducts existing restoration work pursuant to a special permit from the District. This site features well established native plant species such as wild rye and western goldenrod along with occurrences of invasive plants such as yellow star thistle and annual native grass. Due to the site’s location in the Central Bay, trash is a common occurrence, particularly during storm events where urban runoff washes debris onto the shoreline.

PROJECT FINANCING

San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority	\$99,173
Others:	
Satterberg Foundation	\$41,250
Project Total	\$140,963

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

The proposed project is consistent with the Authority’s enabling legislation, Government Code Section 66704.5, and therefore is eligible for grant funding from the Authority. Planting Justice is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which is an eligible grantee under Section 66704.5(a). The project will occur along the Oakland shoreline of Alameda County, which is within the Authority’s jurisdiction. The project will restore natural habitats on the shoreline in the San Francisco Bay Area, making it an eligible project as defined in Section 66704.5(b). Funding this community-based education and habitat restoration project is consistent with Section 66704.5(e), which allows the Authority to award grants for “all phases of planning, construction, monitoring, operation, and maintenance” of eligible projects.

CONSISTENCY WITH MEASURE AA PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES:

The proposed project is consistent with the programs and activities of Measure AA, as outlined below:

The project would support the *Safe, Clean Water and Pollution Prevention Program*’s purpose of removing pollution, trash, and harmful toxins from the Bay, by facilitating the learning and partnerships needed for communities to reduce pollution and engage in restoration activities.

The project would support the *Vital Fish, Bird and Wildlife Habitat Program*’s purpose of significantly improving wildlife habitat by replacing invasive plant species with native plants and facilitating the learning and partnerships needed for communities to engage in stewardship, maintenance, and monitoring of habitat restoration projects in and around the Bay.

CONSISTENCY WITH MEASURE AA PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA:

1. **Greatest positive impact.** The proposed project will train and educate Oakland youth in environmental justice issues and hands-on habitat restoration work which is expected to encourage a sense of ownership and investment in preserving their shoreline habitats.
2. **Greatest long-term impact.** Frontline communities are disproportionately more vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The proposed project will train participants to address this disparity by engaging them on topics that will facilitate a greater sense of place and connections between the community and the land. Training on invasive species identification, plant propagation, and shoreline habitat restoration will set them up for Planting Justice's broader internship program for older youth as well as prepare them for potential jobs at the nursery or in the environmental field.
3. **Leveraging resources and partnerships.** The proposed project will leverage Planting Justice's relationships with multiple community partners. Planting Justice will work with the Sogorea Te' Land Trust to develop program curriculum and with Save The Bay to implement habitat restoration work at the East Bay Regional Park District-owned Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline.
4. **Economically disadvantaged communities.** The proposed project will benefit economically-disadvantaged communities in East Oakland, which are predominantly Black and Latinx. Sobrante Park residents make just \$17,483 per capita as compared to \$44,283 for Alameda County overall. Sobrante Park is also considered an economically disadvantaged community, which is defined as a community with a median household income less than 80% of the area median income (AMI), according to SFBRA's Economically Disadvantaged Communities mapping tool. Planting Justice will pay participants for their time in the program and will equip them with the knowledge to participate in future community-centered environmental work.
5. **Benefits to economy.** The proposed project will provide financial compensation for up to 20 participants. Participants will also complete an internship through the program where they develop the soft and hard skills that prepares them for potential part-time or full-time work at Planting Justice or in the broader conservation field, thereby contributing to the economic vitality of East Oakland communities.
6. **Engage youth and young adults.** The project will engage 20 local youth interns between the ages of 13 and 24, from the Sobrante Park community, which is a community located within walking distance to the shoreline, in a 10-session curriculum on the topics discussed above, including native shoreline plant propagation, and a 2-day capstone experience at the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline where the curriculum they engaged is put into action.
7. **Monitoring, maintenance, and stewardship.** Project participants will perform only short-term restoration activities under this grant. However, the curriculum developed through this grant will be incorporated into Planting Justice's Education Program, which serves the local

community on an ongoing basis. The project partner, Save The Bay, will conduct annual vegetation monitoring of the site using the *Plant Community Structure of Intertidal–Upland Ecotone* protocol that has been in use at the site since restoration activities there first began. The method is stratified random sampling intended to characterize the plant community of the ecotone with regard to the abundance of plant species – native and invasive – within 2-4 elevation strata.

8. **Coastal Conservancy’s San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.** The Bay Restoration: Youth Engagement and Service Learning in East Oakland project is consistent with the Conservancy’s San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. The proposed project can be implemented in a timely way as it is conducted primarily outdoors (and so will likely not be delayed due to the pandemic) and is led by Planting Justice Staff and partners who are experienced in similar projects.
9. **San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission’s Coastal Management Program.** The proposed project is consistent with BCDC’s Bay Plan, part of its Coastal Management Program. In particular, the proposed project would support the Environmental Justice and Social Equity Policies of the Bay Plan, which state that the Commission recognizes the importance of low-income communities of color as invaluable stakeholders and is committed to uplifting the voices of communities who have been historically excluded from decision-making processes. Meaningfully involving these communities means making sure people can participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and health. The project would help equip youth in East Oakland with the knowledge and skills necessary to become local conservation leaders and empower them to participate in government decisions that affect the Baylands near their community.
10. **San Francisco Bay Joint Venture’s Implementation Strategy.** The proposed project is consistent with the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture’s implementation strategy because it will facilitate community-based restoration and enhancement of wetlands on the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline in the strategy’s “Central Bay Subregion.”

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15333, because the habitat restoration component of the project does not exceed five acres in size and is designed to assure the restoration and enhancement, of habitat for fish, plants, and wildlife by revegetating disturbed areas with native plant species through the use of hand labor only. The project is also categorically exempt under Section 15304 because it involves small-scale removal of invasive species and planting of native plants without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. The curriculum development and training components of the project are exempt from CEQA under Sections 15322, which exempts the development of curriculum and training methods, and 15323 which exempts the normal operations of existing facilities for public gatherings for which the facilities were designed. Both the Planting Justice East Bay Nursery and the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline Nursery were designed to grow plants while also serving as educational facilities.