

# SAN FRANCISCO BAY RESTORATION AUTHORITY

Staff Recommendation  
June 24, 2022

## **DE-PAVE PARK**

Project No. RA-033  
Project Manager: Natasha Dunn

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$800,000 to the City of Alameda to complete a master plan, 30% design plans, and a community stewardship program for De-Pave Park in Alameda County to provide for the park to have a range of habitats, from subtidal and tidal to upland, and public access amenities.

**LOCATION:** Alameda Point, City of Alameda, Alameda County, Measure AA Region: East Bay

**MEASURE AA PROGRAM CATEGORY:** Vital Fish, Bird and Wildlife Habitat Program; Integrated Flood Protection Program; Shoreline Public Access Program

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### **EXHIBITS**

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location and Site Map](#)
- Exhibit 2: [Project Designs and Photographs](#)
- Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

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## **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 eight hundred thousand dollars (\$800,000) to the City of Alameda to complete a master plan, 30% design plans, and a community stewardship program for restoration and enhancement of De-Pave Park in the city of Alameda, Alameda County to provide for the park to have a range of habitats, from subtidal and tidal to upland, and public access amenities. 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.

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).
3. The grantee is not required to enter into a project labor agreement per Resolution 22 because the proposed authorization is for planning work.

**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends the Authority authorize disbursement of up to \$800,000 to the City of Alameda (City) to complete a master plan, 30% design plans, and a community stewardship program for De-Pave Park in Alameda County to provide for the park to have a range of habitats, from subtidal and tidal to upland, and public access amenities. (Exhibit 1)

The City's conceptual plan for the park includes 17.8 acres of habitat, including subtidal and tidal habitat for shorebirds, waterfowl, fish, and marine mammals and upland habitat for terrestrial species. In addition to restoring historical wetlands and creating new habitat, the park will be designed for habitats to evolve as sea level rises to create additional tidal wetlands with continued public access from a raised boardwalk (Exhibit 2). Because the project is adjacent to a dense urban area, the planned public access and educational programming is in high demand, as indicated by project letters (Exhibit 3). Specific educational elements will be identified during the design process.

The project may also establish a hydrological connection between De-Pave Park and adjacent wetlands owned by the U.S. Veterans Administration, which are undergoing restoration. Whether this connection can be implemented will depend upon scientific review. Specialists will explore the feasibility of constructing the connection during development of the schematic design. The VA staff have confirmed that they will work with City staff to share construction plans and hydrology information.

The City will conduct extensive outreach and seek community input by collaborating with local partner organizations to solicit feedback through an in-depth master plan process. This builds on previous community input on the De-Pave Park Vision Plan and outreach targeting low-income residents living nearby. Both the Town Center and Waterfront Specific Plan and De-Pave Park Vision Plan confirm the community's support for converting the site into an ecological park with tidal wetlands, uplands, and public access. However, these are high level planning documents, and the master plan process will provide an opportunity for residents to give input on details such as public access elements, park amenities, and educational components.

The City will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI) to provide scientific consultation throughout the life of the project, providing consultation and review of the master plan and schematic designs.

The City will partner with Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ) to develop the framework of a community stewardship program that ultimately will provide opportunities for the local community to assist in building, maintaining, and monitoring De-Pave Park. LEJ has deep experience in building these types of programs and will contribute its expertise to developing the program structure. Subsequently, and not funded by the grant, the City will build out the capacity of this program by partnering with Alameda Point Collaborative and its existing Ploughshares Nursery, which is a job training program for formerly homeless individuals, to grow plants for the park. This later program build-out also includes working with local communities to create a robust volunteer program for this work. The work to build the partnerships, community stewardship program infrastructure, and volunteer development will be funded by the City.

The project includes development of 30% schematic design and construction documents for De-Pave Park. City staff will work closely with the design team and department staff from Building, Planning, Public Works, Transportation (bike/ped), Fire, and Police, which will all review and provide design input.

The City will also submit a pre-application to the Bay Restoration Regulatory Integration Team (BRRIT) and utilize that feedback for future preparation of regulatory permit applications. If there are Authority grant funds remaining after the project is completed, staff anticipates amending the project scope to include additional planning tasks related to permitting and environmental review.

The City of Alameda is well qualified to carry out this project, given its recent experience implementing grant-funded park construction projects. Since 2017, the City of Alameda has completed construction of two new parks totaling 14 acres, including securing and managing grant funds with all required documentation. Examples include a \$4 million Land and Water Conservation grant through the California Natural Resources Agency and a \$2.5 million Active Transportation Program grant through Caltrans. These were complex projects requiring project management of soil contamination, permits, and all levels of project design and construction. In 2020, the City completed a full boat launch renovation including in-water work and regional permitting. The City accomplished these projects through close collaboration between City departments and with regulatory agencies, funders, and nonprofit partners.

The City has built strong community partnerships in the interest of successfully completing this project. Those partnerships include: State Coastal Conservancy, SFEI, LEJ, Alameda Point Collaborative, San Francisco Baykeeper, Golden Gate Audubon Society, Sierra Club, Community Action for a Sustainable Alameda, and Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Reserve. Stakeholders from many of these organizations provided detailed input into the De-Pave Park Vision Plan. As the City works to complete 30% schematic design, all partners will continue to provide input and galvanize residents to participate throughout the master plan process.

**Site Description:**

Alameda Point is located at the most westerly tip of the island of Alameda, surrounded on three sides by water. The existing site of De-Pave Park consists of a decommissioned naval air station

with concrete runways and ancillary buildings dating from the 1940s with sweeping views of San Francisco Bay in Alameda (Exhibit 2). Most of the City-owned site is paved, with some ice plant and riprap at water’s edge. The site is located directly adjacent to existing wetlands managed by the VA and will connect to them, if, during the design process, a hydrology analysis determines that such a connection is feasible. Connecting these wetland habitats would create a critical habitat corridor for wildlife. The park will also add up to five more seal haul-outs and expand upon a nearby existing and very successful haul-out which often has 60-70 seals.

The transformation of the site was originally envisioned in the larger 2014 Alameda Point Waterfront and Town Center Precise Plan, which sought to plan for redevelopment of the former naval station. In 2019, the Alameda City Council prioritized planning for De-Pave Park and in 2020 adopted the De-Pave Park Vision Plan, a high-level plan developed with key community stakeholders.

Part of the site is contaminated by historical petroleum pollution, but the contamination will not prevent park construction. The De-Pave Park site was originally included within an area previously characterized and remediated as a petroleum site. However, this was addressed and the case was closed by the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) with no restrictions. A small area around an existing well was closed with restrictions on uses, such as no residential land use and no shallow groundwater use, none of which are planned for park development, so will not limit park plans or site uses after development. The Site Management Plan for the project site will most likely require that the petroleum contamination is either excavated and appropriately disposed of or treated with a chemical oxidant to turn it into water and carbon dioxide. Vapor intrusion measures may be required for the planned park restrooms based on feedback from RWQCB.

De-Pave Park will sequester more carbon than is emitted to build and maintain it by re-using materials on site and maximizing native planting areas. After this, the park will continue to sequester large amounts of carbon.

**PROJECT FINANCING**

<b>San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority</b>	<b>\$800,000</b>
City of Alameda	\$50,000
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$850,000</b>

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

The proposed project is consistent with Government Code Section 66704.5 of the Authority’s enabling legislation and is therefore eligible for grant funding from the Authority. Consistent with Government Code Section 66704.5(a), the City of Alameda is a public entity and the project is located in Alameda County, along the shoreline, in the Authority’s jurisdiction.

Consistent with Government Code Section 66704.5(b)(1) the project will “Restore, protect or enhance tidal wetlands, managed ponds, or natural habitats on the shoreline in the San Francisco

Bay area” by creating subtidal, tidal, transitional and upland habitats along the Alameda shoreline.

Consistent with Government Code Section 66704.5(b)(3), the project will “Provide or improve public access or recreational amenities that are part of a project to restore, enhance, or protect tidal wetlands, managed ponds, or natural habitats” by developing trails and a raised boardwalk, observation points with interpretive signage, and an observation area accessible to people of all physical abilities in a newly-restored wetland area.

Consistent with Section 66704.5(e), this recommended grant will be used to support planning for the project, which is an eligible project as described above.

**CONSISTENCY WITH MEASURE AA PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES:** The project is consistent with Measure AA’s *Vital Fish, Bird and Wildlife Habitat Program*’s purpose of improving wildlife habitat through the restoration and enhancement of subtidal, tidal, transitional and upland habitats, which will increase connectivity and help support migratory birds, shorebirds, and other wildlife.

The project is consistent with Measure AA’s *Integrated Flood Protection Program*’s purpose of using natural habitats to protect communities along the Bay’s shoreline by incorporating eelgrass beds and oyster reefs to help mitigate wave action and sea level rise.

The project is consistent with Measure AA’s *Shoreline Public Access Program*’s purpose of enhancing the quality of life of Bay Area residents by creating a new public access area, including pedestrian trails, observation points and interpretive educational signs and programs.

**CONSISTENCY WITH MEASURE AA PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA:**

1. **Greatest positive impact.** De-Pave Park, once developed, will create habitat, feeding grounds, and rookeries for essential wildlife in San Francisco Bay. The park will provide an educational opportunity for the public as a wetlands park within a dense urban setting that is readily accessible to the Alameda community and beyond. The park will reduce shoreline erosion and create storm surge protection from sea level rise. This project will convert what is currently a swath of impervious concrete surface that results in storm runoff and pollutants flowing directly into the Bay, into an open space with over 90% permeable surface that reduces runoff, improves groundwater quality, and reduces flooding from heavy downpours. The project design will utilize Climate Positive design which will sequester more carbon than it emits. It is estimated to be carbon net neutral within only four years, largely due to the plan to crush and re-use all concrete onsite and will then sequester 8,268 tons of carbon over the next 50 years. De-Pave Park will be a high-profile example of how to design projects to maximize carbon sequestration.
2. **Greatest long-term impact.** De-Pave Park’s design will ensure that the restored wetlands and park amenities will adapt to climate change and continue to provide important habitat benefits and public access for generations to come. The wetlands, in addition to the anticipated oyster reefs and eelgrass beds, will help mitigate the effects of climate change by

sequestering atmospheric carbon and other harmful gases. The park will adapt to sea level rise and maintain the viability of the restored habitat as it evolves into wetlands, while providing continued recreational and educational public access. This climate change resilience can be a model for shoreline park development around San Francisco Bay.

3. **Economically disadvantaged communities.** The De-Pave Park project is located within an economically disadvantaged community, in which the median household income is less than 80% of the county median. The project is also less than one mile from a senior affordable housing site and the Alameda Point Collaborative, which provides supportive housing for formerly homeless families. Additionally, CalEnviroScreen identifies the project location as having a disproportionate environmental and health burden, being in the 70-75 percentile of impacted communities across the State. The project is also within two miles of a future affordable housing development, including Habitat for Humanity homes and housing dedicated to veterans. These communities often lack access to parks and open space, which is critical for mental health, physical health, and child development. De-Pave Park provides an opportunity to bring an outdoor nature experience within walking and biking distance to many residents who lack access to outdoor spaces, even in nearby Oakland and Hayward. Just as importantly, the community stewardship program will provide workforce development for residents of Alameda Point Collaborative, students from the nearby College of Alameda community college and other people from economically disadvantaged communities.
4. **Engage youth and young adults.** The master plan process will engage a wide and diverse range of youth organizations through community meetings and online surveys directed toward youth. The City will invite the participation of organizations such as Alameda Point Collaborative, Alameda Youth Committee, Youth Alameda Activists, Alameda Boys and Girls Club, Alameda Housing Authority, and Girls Inc. of the Island City. The Alameda Youth Committee, a youth leadership development group of the Recreation and Parks Department, will assist with gathering input from their peers on the De-Pave Park master plan. This outreach may occur in their classrooms, through distributing surveys and gathering other feedback from their peers. The project includes the development of the community stewardship program design in collaboration with Literacy for Environmental Justice, a non-profit devoted to ecological health, environmental stewardship, and community development. The future program implementation will provide youth education, volunteer engagement opportunities, and young adult internship programs to provide nature connection programming and green job training. This includes engaging over 270 formerly homeless youth residents living at Alameda Point, as well as students from the College of Alameda and Alameda Unified School District. The Alameda Recreation and Parks Department has a long history of hiring, training, and empowering young people to work in its programs and parks. Through its engagement with Alameda Point Collaborative for green workforce development and job training, the City will continue to do so for De-Pave Park maintenance and management.
5. **Monitoring, maintenance, and stewardship.** With LEJ's consultation, the ongoing maintenance and stewardship of De-Pave Park will include a workforce of young people and

disadvantaged residents as well as volunteers consisting of local residents, businesses and organizations to manage the local plant propagation nursery at Alameda Point Collaborative and, through the community stewardship program, continually monitor and maintain the site. In addition, SF Baykeeper will monitor sea level rise through its existing drone program as the park continues to adapt and change over time. Lastly, the City will use a Citizen Science Program for monitoring in collaboration with Alameda chapters of Golden Gate Audubon Society and Sierra Club as well as Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Reserve, all of which have active members that already visit the site on a weekly basis and have taken thousands of photographs of local wildlife and habitat. The data will be used to continually adjust and adapt the maintenance strategies.

6. **Coastal Conservancy's San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.** The project is consistent with the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program's Criteria, as follows:
  - a. It is consistent with several local/regional plans including the:
    - Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Report (1999)
    - Baylands Goals Science Update (2015)
    - State Coastal Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan
    - Alameda Point Town Center and Waterfront Precise Plan
    - City of Alameda Climate Action and Resiliency Plan
  - b. The project is multi-jurisdictional in that it may create connected tidal marsh habitat across federal and City lands, is adjacent to a future section of the San Francisco Bay Trail, and provides a beach connected to the San Francisco Bay Water Trail.
  - c. Planning for the project can be implemented immediately by the City, which plans to complete 30% schematic designs by the end of 2023.
7. **San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission's Coastal Management Program.** The project meets the following priorities of the program:
  - a. Climate Change Policy: Where feasible and appropriate, effective, innovative sea level rise adaptation approaches should be encouraged.
  - b. Fish, Other Aquatic Organisms and Wildlife Policy: Conserve and restore the Bay's tidal marshes, tidal flats, and subtidal habitat to assure benefits to fish and other aquatic organisms and wildlife for future generations.
  - c. Public Access Policy: To ensure the optimum use of the Bay for recreation, enhancing access of waterfront parts by improving Bay Trail segments that connect to the waterfront and interpretive programs that inform visitors about the wildlife and habitat values present in the park.
8. **San Francisco Bay Joint Venture's Implementation Strategy.** The proposed project is not currently on the Joint Venture's list but is consistent with the Joint Venture's Implementation Strategy. For the Central Bay Subregion, which includes Alameda County, the Joint Venture aims to restore 4,000 acres of bay habitats and enhance 4,000 acres of bay habitats. The project offers an opportunity to create subtidal, tidal and upland habitat in one of the region's most urbanized areas.

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

The proposed planning work for the project is statutorily exempt from the requirement to prepare an environmental document under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and categorically exempt from CEQA under 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Sections 15262 and 15306, as it involves only preparation of feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions that have not yet been approved, adopted, or funded, and basic data collection, research and resource evaluation activities that will not result in serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The planning studies will consider environmental factors. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval of funding.