

SAN FRANCISCO BAY RESTORATION AUTHORITY

Staff Recommendation  
March 3, 2023

**AUGMENTATION FOR THE SAFER BAY PROJECT: PLANNING**

Project No. RA-035  
Project Manager: Laura Cholodenko

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$3,980,000 to the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority to augment the grant previously authorized by the Authority to conduct planning, perform data collection and analysis, develop design plans, and prepare program-level and project-level California Environmental Quality Act documentation for the Strategy to Advance Flood Protection, Ecosystems and Recreation along San Francisco Bay (SAFER Bay) Project in San Mateo County.

**LOCATION:** Cities of East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, and Palo Alto, San Mateo County; Measure AA Region: West Bay

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

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**EXHIBITS**

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location](#)  
Exhibit 2: [SAFER Bay Planning Project \(June 24, 2022 Authority Staff Recommendation\)](#)  
Exhibit 3: [Site Map and Project Designs](#)
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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 three million nine hundred eighty thousand dollars (\$3,980,000) to the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority to augment the grant previously authorized by the

Authority to conduct planning, perform data collection and analysis, develop design plans, and prepare program-level and project-level California Environmental Quality Act documentation for the Strategy to Advance Flood Protection, Ecosystems and Recreation along San Francisco Bay (SAFER Bay) Project in San Mateo County. Prior to commencement of the work to be funded with this augmentation, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Authority an updated work program, schedule, and budget.

**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 that the San Francisco Bay Authority (Authority) authorize a grant of up to \$3,980,000 to the San Francisco Bay Joint Powers Authority (SFCJPA) to conduct planning, perform data collection and analysis, develop design plans, and prepare program-level and project-level California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation for the Strategy to Advance Flood Protection, Ecosystems and Recreation along San Francisco Bay (SAFER Bay) Project in San Mateo County (Exhibit 1). This disbursement would augment the \$1,000,000 authorized for the project on June 24, 2022 (Exhibit 2), an amount substantially less than that requested by the SFCJPA in grant round 5. Staff recommended a smaller amount because Authority funding for grant round 5 was limited and the project was identified as being a strong candidate for other sources of funding based on its proposed flood protection benefits. The SFCJPA reapplied to the Authority for additional funding in grant round 6 and is now being recommended for almost full funding because of significant project benefits, the availability of more funding, and in consideration of the need to balance funding for projects between the four regions of the Bay.

The SAFER Bay project aims to restore and enhance more than 550 acres of wetlands and improve coastal flood protection for communities in East Palo Alto and Menlo Park. The project will be implemented in phases along seven miles of the San Mateo County shoreline. The proposed Phase 1 of the SAFER Bay project will occur along the shoreline of East Palo Alto south of Bay Road and in former salt-production ponds R1 and R2 within the Ravenswood Pond Complex, part of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (Exhibit 3). Restoring these former salt-production ponds to tidal wetlands requires development of new coastal flood protection to ensure that shoreline infrastructure is not affected when one or both ponds are breached and reconnected to the Bay. The design of flood protection at Ponds R1 and R2 and throughout the entire seven-mile project area will address current and future flood risk

associated with 3.5 feet of sea level rise. Project goals are described in greater detail in the June 24, 2022, staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

Project activities authorized for funding on June 24, 2022 include data collection and hydraulic and geotechnical analysis, development of engineered design plans, and preparation of CEQA documentation at a project-level for all of the Phase 1 actions and at a program level for actions in other parts of the project area. The funding also supports outreach with stakeholders, the public, and the locally affected communities. The June 24, 2022, staff recommendation provides a description of the SFCJPA’s experience, the project’s community involvement, and site conditions.

Progress made on the project since May 2022 includes completion of the CEQA public scoping process, completion of a targeted geotechnical field investigation for the area south of Bay Road, and development of a community outreach plan. The SFCJPA also held the first stakeholder advisory committee meeting for the project on December 7, 2022, with approximately 40 people in attendance from the communities of Belle Haven and East Palo Alto.

**PROJECT FINANCING**

<b>San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority</b>	<b>\$3,980,000</b>
Department of Water Resources (Local Levee Assistance Program)	\$366,003
San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority	\$1,000,000
(June 24, 2022 Authorization)	
FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program	\$1,174,000
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$6,520,003</b>

The SAFER Bay Project has been awarded \$68 million in planning and implementation funding through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Five million dollars of that award was recently allocated for Phase 1 of the SAFER Bay project. It is estimated that \$1,174,000 will be used to complete Phase 1 planning (as shown above) and the remaining \$3,826,000 will be applied to implementation of Phase 1. The project is also receiving \$17.8 million in private funding from Pacific Gas & Electric and META/Facebook for construction as match for FEMA HMGP funding.

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

The project is consistent with the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority Act as described in the June 24, 2022, staff recommendation.

**CONSISTENCY WITH MEASURE AA PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES:**

The project is consistent with Measure AA programs and activities, as described in the June 24, 2022, staff recommendation.

**CONSISTENCY WITH MEASURE AA PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA:**

The project is consistent with Measure AA Prioritization Criteria, as described in the June 24, 2022, staff recommendation.

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

The project is exempt from CEQA, as described in the June 24, 2022, staff recommendation.