

SAN FRANCISCO BAY RESTORATION AUTHORITY

Staff Recommendation
May 5, 2023

CANDLESTICK POINT STEWARDSHIP PROJECT PHASE 2: SUNRISE POINT RESTORATION

Project No. RA-029
Project Manager: Erica Johnson

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$200,000 through the Community Grants Program to Literacy for Environmental Justice to continue the restoration activities of Candlestick Point Stewardship Project in the City and County of San Francisco.

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

MEASURE AA PROGRAM CATEGORY: Vital Fish, Bird and Wildlife Habitat Program; Shoreline Public Access Program.

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
Exhibit 2: [Project Habitat Areas and Photos](#)
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 two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) through the Community Grants Program to Literacy for Environmental Justice to continue the restoration activities of 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.

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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).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the disbursement of up to two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000), under the Restoration Authority's Community Grants Program, to Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ) to continue the restoration activities of the Candlestick Point Stewardship Project in the City and County of San Francisco (the project). 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). See Exhibit 1. The restoration site within the project area is Sunrise Point, a six-acre peninsula which makes up the southeastern end of the project area.

LEJ has been leading restoration work at Sunrise Point for over ten years. The initial phase 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 bay shore and the lower-lying western isthmus of Sunrise Point. The Authority supported the next phase of restoration at Sunrise Point with a Community Grant, authorized on October 15, 2021, which funded LEJ to outplant natives on approximately 2 acres of habitat at Sunrise Point, as well as undertake other stewardship activities throughout the project area. The project area has some unique challenges due to its history of use for destructive activities such as illegal dumping and its location adjacent to an underserved community. During the COVID-19 pandemic there was an increase in encampments along and inside the park and a decrease in police monitoring. Destructive or dangerous activities and trash in the project area increased. The October 15, 2021, Board Authorization funded trash clean-up and training to report destructive or dangerous activities to the Bayview Hunters Point Environmental Justice Task Force and local authorities.

With support from its first Community Grant, LEJ planted 6,500 native plants at Sunrise Point, cleaned up trash throughout the project area, provided paid job training to 12 transitional-aged youth (18-25 years old) through their Eco-Apprentice program, and engaged more than 300 community members in the stewardship of the project area. The first Community Grant period

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will end in May of 2023 and the restoration of Sunrise Point will be 75% complete. Also, during this period, the city set up a triage center for encampments, State Parks hired a security firm to monitor the project area, and Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy worked with the community (including LEJ) to host park revitalization activities. There has since been a decrease in destructive or dangerous activities and trash.

The proposed project will focus on completing the restoration at Sunrise Point by removing invasive plants and outplanting an additional 13,000 native plants. These plantings will go to the ~ 2.8 acres of coastal sage scrub habitat in the northern area and ~ 1.4 acres of coastal perennial grasslands in the southern area of Sunrise Point. In addition, this project will plant up to 70 native oak and toyon trees appropriate to the local climate to supplement the diseased and/or dying trees throughout Sunrise Point (Exhibit 2). The new trees will double the tree cover at Sunrise Point, expanding the shaded area for wildlife and park visitors on the park's increasingly hot days. These native trees are expected to have a higher survival rate because they are not susceptible to the diseases affecting the Monterey pines and cypresses. Rather than remove dead trees from the site, LEJ will use them for onsite erosion control and habitat for wildlife. The project will provide workforce development opportunities via the Eco-Apprentice Program for 12 transitional-aged youth from the adjacent communities and engage up to 750 local youth and community members in the stewardship of Sunrise Point.

The project includes the following specific tasks:

1. **Workforce Development (Eco-Apprentice Program):** Approximately 12 transitional-aged youth from the Bayview and Hunters Point community, including the new community triage center, will be recruited to participate in the Eco-Apprentice Program. Eco-Apprentices will receive up to 300 hours each of paid training and work experience in plant identification, native plant propagation, ecosystem restoration, environmental education, and community organizing.
2. **Native Plant Propagation:** Eco-Apprentices will support LEJ's two native plant nurseries in the Hunters Point and Treasure Island neighborhoods to propagate approximately 13,000 native plants for planting in ~ 4.2 acres of Sunrise Point.
3. **Restoration Activities**
 - a. **Invasive Plant Removal:** LEJ staff and Eco-Apprentices will manually remove major invasive plants in the northern area of Sunrise Point, such as Bermuda grass, wild radish, wild mustard, fennel, stinkwort, and Russian star thistle. In the southern area of Sunrise Point they will mow invasive grasses before they go to seed. LEJ staff and Eco-Apprentices will coordinate community stewardship events to help with the identification, removal, and management of invasive plants.
 - b. **Outplant ~ 13,000 Native Plants:** LEJ staff, Eco-Apprentices and community volunteers will outplant ~4,000 native plants in the northern area of Sunrise Point to complete the mixed native coastal scrub and perennial grasslands infill. LEJ will hire a contractor to hydroseed the southern area of Sunrise Point. After the

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hydro-seeding, LEJ staff, Eco-Apprentices, and community volunteers will plant ~9,000 native grasses and forbs to complete the perennial grasslands restoration.

- c. **Outplant ~ 70 native trees:** Native oak and toyon trees are better adapted to the local climate and are not susceptible to the diseases affecting the Monterey pine and cypress trees. They will be planted throughout Sunrise Point to supplement the number of diseased and/or dying trees.
4. **Community Engagement/Volunteer Stewards:** Eco-Apprentices will plan and lead monthly volunteer days both at LEJ's native plant nurseries and at restoration sites. Outreach and planning for these volunteer days and major events will be supported by program partners: the Bayview Hunters Point Environmental Justice Task Force, Bayview Hunters Point Mobilization for Adolescent Growth in our Communities, Alice Griffith Housing Development, San Francisco State University, San Francisco City College, and local high schools. About 750 volunteers are expected to be engaged over the course of the project.

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 Sunrise Point. The master agreement was the product of a series of organized community workshops to obtain Bayview and Hunters Point residents' input and selection of the best restoration alternative. In addition, LEJ assessed potential inundation of the targeted restoration areas within Sunrise Point using the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission's Adapting to Rising Tides Bay Shoreline Flood Explorer Tool. They have found that Sunrise Point is at very low risk of inundation in the next 100 years.

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 24 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 the project area, and plantings at Pier 94. Cumulatively, LEJ has removed an estimated 30,000 pounds of debris from the shoreline, abated invasive species, propagated and planted approximately 80,000 native plants and engaged over 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.

Site Description: The project area is in southeast San Francisco, along the bay shoreline. The project area was historically a thriving ecosystem which encompassed tidal wetlands and

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adjacent upland habitats, including native coastal sage scrub and coastal grasslands. It continues to be a major stopover for migratory birds such as the western snowy plover. The tidal wetlands, a sandy beach, and open bay waters provide key habitat for protected species such as the salt marsh harvest mouse, Ridgway’s rail, and double-crested cormorants that nest along the shoreline. The adjacent upland habitats (coastal sage scrub and perennial grassland) support other wildlife such as the federally listed Western burrowing owl, as well as the California ground squirrel, gopher snake, and jackrabbit.

The shoreline experienced years of heavy industrial development from the early 1900s-2000s, such as the establishment of shipyards, powerplants, landfill, and illegal dumping that left the site badly polluted. The residents of the Bayview and Hunters Point neighborhoods, adjacent to the project area, have suffered from the long-term 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 project area include the recently established hike, bike, and boat-in campsite at Sunrise Point, the 6-acre peninsula of the project area. LEJ, in partnership with State Parks has overseen projects at Sunrise Point and has stewarded the area since the restoration and public access developments. LEJ has been actively programming community activities such as hiking, kayaking, camping, as well as volunteer and paid opportunities (Eco-Apprentice program) for stewardship. The site is one of the most prominent locations in the project area for Bayview Hunter’s Point residents to engage in various outdoor recreational activities.

PROJECT FINANCING

San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority	\$200,000
Others	\$0
Project Total	\$200,000

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 in the City and County of San Francisco.

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 invasive plants, and planting native

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plants and trees in order to enhance the habitat for wildlife, and inhibit the spread of invasive plants.

Consistent with Section 66704.5(e) the recommended grant is for the construction phase of the project.

CONSISTENCY WITH MEASURE AA PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES:

The proposed project is consistent with the *Vital Fish, Bird and Wildlife Habitat Program* because the removal of 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 to protect the Bay's health and encourage community engagement.

CONSISTENCY WITH MEASURE AA PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA:

1. **Greatest positive impact.** The community involvement in the ongoing transformation of the polluted and neglected shoreline area into a valuable wildlife habitat and recreation area is a significant positive impact on the San Francisco Bay shoreline. Residents are already using the area for recreation and outdoor education. Continued community stewardship of the natural resources will discourage the dumping and littering that continues to occur in the project area. In addition, the project will improve the degraded habitat previously overrun by invasive plants. The native coastal scrub and coastal perennial grassland habitat will support wildlife such as the federally listed Western burrowing owl as well as the California ground squirrel, gopher snake, and jackrabbit.
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-aged 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. The restored native habitats will be more resilient to a warming climate. They will be less prone to wildfires that have recently affected other non-native grass areas of the park. In addition, the trees that will be planted will provide valuable habitat and shade to wildlife. The shade the trees provide will also support visitor's continued use of the public facilities (campsites, trails, pier) located at Sunrise Point.
3. **Leveraging resources and partnerships.** LEJ has maintained an ongoing partnership with State Parks to provide programming, restoration, and community stewardship at Candlestick Point State Recreation Area. State Parks has a 20-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from 2014-2034 with LEJ, and they are in the process of extending the MOU to 2040. LEJ coordinates with State Parks' maintenance team to ensure the success of

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restoration and community stewardship projects (see “Monitoring, maintenance, and stewardship” below).

4. **Economically disadvantaged communities.** The Bayview and Hunters Point neighborhoods are predominantly Black, Asian, and Latinx. The area is considered a high poverty area according to the 2020 census data and is characterized by medium to high density residential and industrial development, including a former powerplant site and former Navy shipyard. The residents continue to suffer from legacy pollution from the former Navy shipyard, now a superfund site. There is ongoing litigation over the clean-up of the site. The stewardship efforts supported by this project will be led by community-based staff and Eco-Apprentices. Their efforts will help make the project area a cleaner and safer place to recreate.
5. **Benefits to economy.** 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.
6. **Engage youth and young adults.** The grantee has estimated over 2,000 volunteers have been engaged in the stewardship of Sunrise Point alone over the previous phases of the restoration (2012-15 and 2021-23). The proposed project will leverage support from other community groups, schools, and organizations (see PROJECT SUMMARY section above) to recruit and engage the community and local volunteers in the stewardship of the project area.
7. **Monitoring, maintenance, and stewardship.** This project will occur over three years during which an adaptive management strategy will be based on site monitoring and evaluation. LEJ will assess progress at Sunrise Point with basic photo monitoring 3-4 times per month, which they have been doing for several years now. State Parks’ maintenance team is responsible for clearing and moving fallen trees because of storms and tree death. LEJ also coordinates with State Parks on invasive plant management at Sunrise Point. State Parks conducts the large-scale mowing and LEJ completes the small scale, sensitive habitat work, completed mostly by hand with help from volunteers and Eco-Apprentices. LEJ and its community stewards often serve as the on-the-ground eyes and ears reporting destructive or dangerous activities to State Parks. Recently, State Parks has hired a private security firm, which has helped cut down on those activities in the park.
8. **Coastal Conservancy’s San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.**
See the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Strategic Plan” section below.
 - a. **Project is a good investment of state resources:** The project will serve an underserved community by supporting their stewardship of a California State Park visited by the residents and people around the San Francisco Bay Area. The project can be implemented as soon as the funds become available, and it must be implemented soon to protect the prior investment in restoration from fast-growing

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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 project is feasible to implement because it has a strong landowner partnership with State Parks, strong community engagement and input, and experienced field staff who have worked on the project through multiple phases of the project.

The project is supported by local and regional plans including the 2013 Candlestick Point State Recreation Area General Plan and others listed below:

- i. **State Coastal Conservancy’s 2023-2028 Strategic Plan:** The project is consistent with
 - o Goals 1.1 Commit funding to benefit systemically excluded communities, 1.3 Support meaningful engagement by systemically excluded communities, and 1.4 Incorporate workforce development in our projects.
 - o Goal 3.2 Restore or enhance habitat.
 - o Goal 4.3 Multi-benefit nature-based climate adaptation.
- ii. **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.
- iii. **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.
- b. **Project benefits will be sustainable or resilient over the project lifespan:** See “Greatest long-term impact” and “Project Summary” above for details on how the project will continue to provide benefits over time and how the project helps adapt to climate change impacts such as heat and drought. The project has also taken sea level rise into consideration by using the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission’s Adapting to Rising Tides Bay Shoreline Flood Explorer Tool. They have found that Sunrise Point is at very low risk of inundation in the next 100 years.
- c. **Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact:** See “Greatest positive impact” and “Benefits to economy” above for details on the multi-benefits of this project to wildlife and underserved communities.
- d. **Project planned with meaningful community engagement and broad community support:** See “Project Summary” and “Engage youth and young adults” above for details on how the community is engaged with the project.

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9. **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:
- Water Quality Policy 1: Bay water pollution should be prevented to the greatest extent feasible.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.
10. **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 that may disturbed or moved 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 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.