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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

May 20, 2015

Jaime Michaels
San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission
455 Golden Gate Avenue, suite 10600
San Francisco, CA 949102

SUBJECT: Bon Air Bridge Replacement Project: Response to Comments from Marin Audubon Society (BCDC Permit Application No. 2013.010.00)

Dear Ms. Michaels:

The City of Larkspur has prepared responses to the written comments provided by the Marin Audubon Society in a letter addressed to your attention on May 20, 2015.

Response to Comment 1: Adequacy of Tidal Marsh Impacts. The Commenter raises concerns that the plan for restoring Piper Park tidal marsh habitat needs to include a wide transition zone with gumplum and other species to provide cover. As identified in the *Mitigation and Monitoring Plan for the Bon Air Bridge Replacement Project* permit applications (Appendix D of the Permit Applications), the City will relocate the existing dog park within Piper Park and restore a portion of the existing dog park to tidal marsh and transition zones. The plan also calls for planting gumplum (*Grindelia stricta* var. *angustifolium*), as identified in *Table 5. Species Occurring on Site That May be Used in Seeding or Planting*. The Commenter also raises concerns regarding using a specified amount of funding for enhancing habitat at Creekside Park. The Creekside Park mitigation was developed in consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service (Biological Opinion #81420-2010-F-0216-1, 4-12-2012) to provide habitat enhancement for federally protected species. The City has entered into an agreement with Friends of Corte Madera Creek as a condition of the CEQA/NEPA compliance. The Commenter also asks how shading impacts are addressed. Temporary and permanent shading effects and restoration are discussed in the USACE, RWQCB, and DFW permits. Specifically, *Figure 5c, Temporary and Permanent Shading Effects*, and *Figure 5d, Onsite Restoration Areas* identify the type and location of shading and restoration areas. The Commenter also expressed concerns that the City should commit to implementing the tidal marsh mitigation sooner than identified in the permits. As described in the *Mitigation and Monitoring Plan for the Bon Air Bridge Replacement Project*, the City has developed a timeframe that will meet US Army Corps of Engineers, California Regional Water

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Quality Control Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife mitigation requirements. The City has completed the consultant selection process for design and permit processing of the Tidal Marsh restoration area. Contract authorization is anticipated for the June 3, 2015 City Council meeting and the City is committed to moving forward immediately with the design and permit processing. Construction will be initiated as soon as permitting is complete, the current dog park is relocated and the environmental windows for the work allow it.

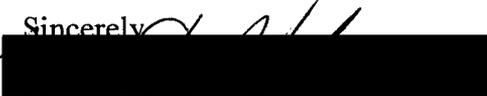
Response to Comment 2: Potential for Increased Sedimentation. The Commenter indicates that it is unclear whether the new pilings could cause increased sedimentation or erosion over time. The Location Hydraulic Study Report prepared for the bridge replacement project concludes that bridge design features and Best Management Practices (BMPs) adopted by the City would reduce the potential long-term effects including increases to velocity and volume of downstream flows and added impervious areas and would help reduce erosion and sedimentation.

Response to Comment 3: Dock Upgrades. The Commenter expresses concern that improving the docks and providing ADA-access to the docks would not offset the minor reduction (i.e., approximately 1 foot) in clearance under the new bridge and requests that the dock upgrades do not cause further loss of dwindling shoreline fringe marsh, mudflats, or open water. With respect to navigation, the US Coast Guard determined that the Corte Madera Creek is considered navigable but not actually navigated by other than logs, log rafts, rowboats, canoes, etc and determined the proposed bridge clearance at high-water is considered adequate to meet the reasonable needs of navigation. With respect to upgrading the docks, improving ADA accessibility to the waterway meets the goal set by BCDC to improve access to the waterway. Currently there are no ADA accessible docks in Larkspur. ADA upgrades are not anticipated require any change in the footprint of the dock within the habitat area

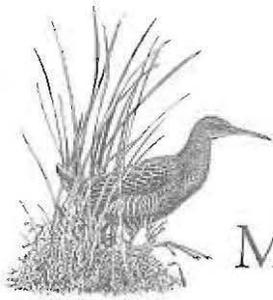
Response to Comment 4: Sea Level Rise. The Commenter expresses concerns that the City intends to construct a floodwall along the shoreline as a way to address sea level rise effects in the City. The City has acknowledged that the issue with respect to sea level rise will need to be addressed regionally. The City is committed to working with the neighboring agencies and Flood Control in Marin and throughout the Bay area to address options to managing sea level rise. It is understood and respected that managing the flow into Corte Madera Creek at the mouth of the creek is a potential solution to control of this issue throughout Corte Madera Creek.

Based on our review of the comments and our responses provided above, we believe that no additional changes to our proposed application is necessary. If you require additional information or have any questions regarding the enclosed table or this request, please contact me at 415-927-5017. Thank you for your continuing assistance with this project.

Sincerely,


Mary Grace Houlahan
City of Larkspur, Director of Public Works

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Marin Audubon Society

P.O. Box 599 | MILL VALLEY, CA 94942-0599 | MARINAUDUBON.ORG

May 20, 2015

Zack Wasserman, Chairman
Bay Conservation and Development commission
455 Golden Gate Avenue, Suite 10600
San Francisco, CA 949102

RE: Bon Air Bridge Replacement Project, Larkspur

ATT: Jamie Michaels

Dear Chairman Wasserman and Commissioners:

The Marin Audubon Society appreciates your consideration of our comments on the City of Larkspur's Bon Air Bridge Replacement and Access Improvement project. The project would result in the permanent placement of approximately 872 cubic yards of new solid fill and a net increase in coverage of approximately 4,807 square feet of Bay and surface coverage total of 6,837 square feet of pile supported fill. While the project, including mitigation, would have many benefits, there are some aspects that are vague and are of concern.

1. Adequacy of Mitigation for Tidal Marsh Impacts - We support mitigating for wetland loss by restoring 11,200 square feet of tidal marsh at the current location of the Piper Park dog park which would expand endangered species habitat. We note that an important component of tidal marsh habitat for the endangered Ridgway's Rail is the adjacent upland which provides essential high tide refugia. We urge that the plan for restoring the area at Piper Park include a wide transition zone vegetated with gumplant (*Grindelia stricta*) and other plant species to provide cover for the rail and other species. Refugia habitat in this area is particularly important because the existing transition zone at Piper Park is lacking in both width and suitable vegetation to provide cover habitat, putting the rails at risk of predation.

Connecting mitigation at Creekside Park to a specified amount of funding (\$45,000) is problematic. This means that the habitat target would ever be reached if the specified funding proves to be insufficient, if even by a small amount. The requirement for enhancing endangered species habitat at Creekside Park should be based on completing a specified habitat plan, not tied to a specified dollar amount.

We see no discussion of shading impacts which will increase because of the increased width of the bridge. How has shading being addressed?

We are also concerned that the wetland mitigation be completed in a timely manner and that the temporal loss not drag on for years. To that end, we recommend a condition that would increase the mitigation acreage if the project is not designed and implemented within one year. Ordinarily we ask for mitigation to be completed before or concurrently with the project impacts. Simply requiring that the permittee develop an "alternative mitigation proposal...no later than four years from the date of project commencement" is far too long. The City has been considering mitigating in this location for years now. We see no reason they can't move forward in a more timely fashion.

2. Potential for increased sedimentation - Placement of additional solid fill in the form of pilings could alter the currents that could result in erosion or sedimentation over time. It is unclear from the discussion whether the placement of the new solid fill in the creek could, over time, increase sedimentation in some areas along the creek or, conversely, cause erosion.

3. Dock upgrades – How the proposal to upgrade local docks to ADA standards would mitigate for restricting bridge clearance, which would limit upstream use by taller boats, is unclear. Further, the nature of the upgrades is not discussed. Considering the already significant loss of historic tidal marsh along Corte Madera Creek, we recommend that proposed upgrades not increase the coverage of the Creek waster, mudflats or shoreline fringe marshes. Proposal for such impacts should trigger the need for additional mitigation. Corte Madera Creek has already lost approximately 90% of its historic marshes.

4. Sea Level Rise - While most of the Bon Air Bridge may be resilient to sea level rise as a result of the project, it is acknowledged that there will be low areas that will leave the community vulnerable. Further, we are disturbed by the suggestion that Larkspur is already headed toward constructing a sea wall along the shoreline as the way to address sea level rise. A floodwall has the potential to result in significant adverse environmental impacts, other impacts and be of limited effectiveness particularly if not coordinated with other Marin communities.

Thank you for considering our comments and recommendations.

Sincerely,


Barbara Salzman
Conservation Committee