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# BCDC

San Francisco Bay Conservation & Development Commission

## 2013-2016 STRATEGIC PLAN

*“San Francisco Bay is an irreplaceable gift of nature that man can either abuse and ultimately destroy – or improve and protect for future generations.”*

*--The San Francisco Bay Plan, January 1969*

MAY 16, 2013

**The San Francisco Bay and its planning and regulatory agency, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, face transitions and challenges. Rising sea level, a growing economy, sustaining a high quality life, and maximizing public access challenge the Bay’s dynamic system.**

Having adopted its groundbreaking Bay Plan amendments to address rising sea level, BCDC must learn how to develop and apply its knowledge to a changing Bay, how to better use technology on behalf of its many stakeholders, how to ensure efficiency, integration, transparency, and consistency across its wide range of operations, and how to grow and capture its intellectual capital, among other tests.

## VALUE OF THE BAY

The Bay is enormous. As the largest estuary on the west coast, it covers approximately 550 square miles. The Bay is biologically diverse and includes unparalleled marshes and mudflats along the shoreline that provide food and shelter to fish and wildlife and account for 77% of California's remaining perennial estuarine wetlands. It is home to over 1,000 species of animals, including endemic, threatened, and endangered species. As a critical stopover on the Pacific Flyway, it hosts more wintering shorebirds than any other estuary on the west coast outside of Alaska. Its diversity of key habitats and production of environmental benefits such as flood protection, water quality maintenance, nutrient filtration and cycling, and carbon sequestration compelled the international community to designate San Francisco Bay in late 2012 as a "Wetland of International Importance."

The Bay also helps provide a high quality of life for residents. It supports the world's 19<sup>th</sup> largest economy. The Bay shoreline hosts two major international airports and 40% of California's petroleum refinery capacity. The Oakland seaport is the nation's fifth largest and moves a startlingly large portion of California's crops to market. Considerable commerce takes place on the water and in the shoreline band on a daily basis. The diversity of watercraft that appears on the Bay at any one time – and especially during Summer 2013 when the America's Cup will take place in the Bay – rivals that of any port.

With unparalleled recreational opportunities and beautiful scenery, San Francisco Bay is one of the world's greatest tourist destinations. Its beauty and its contributions to such a high quality of life help make the Bay Area one of the country's most desirable places in which to live. The Bay is inextricably woven into each resident's sense of place, culture, and community.

**From all this and more, it is clear that the Bay is a dynamic and interconnected system whose value is crucial to the region's environmental, economic, and social prosperity.**

And the world is changing. The Bay of tomorrow will be different. We are only beginning to anticipate the forces that will shape the Bay in the future, how to measure their impact, and how to plan for their consequences. BCDC must lead the region's efforts to develop and apply a better understanding of the forces acting on the Bay today, and safeguard the Bay's value by envisioning how those and other forces may affect the Bay of tomorrow. Fortunately, this is not a new task. BCDC always has been a visionary agency. It was created to stop the Bay from shrinking and has a successful track record of maximizing public access and minimizing Bay fill. Now, BCDC will use its expertise, experience, and resources to link with others to protect and enhance the Bay and encourage its responsible and productive use in an era of new challenges. The BCDC Strategic Plan for 2013-2016 will renew BCDC's commitment to accomplish its mission now and into the future.

## **BCDC MISSION**

**TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AND TO ENCOURAGE THE BAY'S RESPONSIBLE AND PRODUCTIVE USE FOR THIS AND FUTURE GENERATIONS**

## **JURISDICTION AND AUTHORITY**

In 1965, California enacted the McAteer-Petris Act to establish BCDC. The agency's two primary functions as it conserves Bay resources and regulates proposed development within its jurisdiction are to ensure maximum feasible public access to the Bay and to prevent unnecessary Bay fill. The Act continues to serve as the key legal provision in California state law to prevent indiscriminate Bay fill. Concurrently, BCDC has

permitting responsibility to ensure that appropriate and environmentally sound development provides public benefits and economic development for the entire region. BCDC was not created to obviate the authority of cities, counties, and special districts that are located along the Bay and its shoreline. Instead, its role is to view the Bay as an entire system – something almost impossible for the more narrowly focused governmental bodies to accomplish. As the State’s first regional agency, BCDC has learned that its most notable successes are produced by coordinating, collaborating, and/or partnering with governments at all levels and with a wide variety of other stakeholders.

**BAY AND SHORELINE:** BCDC’s initial San Francisco Bay Plan was approved in 1969 and is updated regularly to ensure the responsible use of the Bay and its shoreline and address new issues as the Bay Area changes. The Plan includes policies on issues critical to the Bay, ranging from port activities and public access to urban development and transportation. The Bay Plan maps the entire Bay and designates areas for water-related purposes such as ports, industry, public recreation, airports, and wildlife refuges.

**SUISUN MARSH:** In 1977 California expanded the Commission's authority to provide special protection for the Suisun Marsh, the largest contiguous brackish marsh on the west coast of North America. More than 10% of California’s remaining wetlands and more than 300 species, including 80% of the State’s commercial salmon fishery, are found in the marsh. The marsh is the “mixing zone” that connects the Bay with the Delta. This provides BCDC with a great incentive to work closely with the organizations and interests that are associated with the current Bay Delta Conservation Plan. The environmental, economic, and social connections between and among the Bay, the Suisun Marsh, and the Delta should be understood as assets to all residents of the greater Bay Area and California.

**COASTAL MANAGEMENT:** BCDC is the federally-designated state coastal management agency for the San Francisco Bay segment of the California coastal zone. In this role, BCDC ensures that federal projects and activities are consistent with the State statutes and regulations.

**REGIONAL COORDINATION:** In 2004, the Legislature created the Joint Policy Committee (JPC), which consists of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Association of Bay Area Governments, and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. BCDC was added in 2007. The role of the JPC is to “coordinate and improve the quality of land use, transportation, and air quality planning in the Bay Area” by “coordinating the development and drafting of major planning documents prepared by” member agencies. Specifically, this statutory responsibility includes “reviewing and commenting on major interim work products and the final draft comments prior to action by” JPC members. The JPC is designed to ensure that the four agencies act in concert on issues – especially adapting to rising sea level and promoting a diverse and growing regional economy – that cut across jurisdictional and/or policy bounds while respecting policymaking autonomy.

## STRATEGIC PLAN PURPOSE

Strategic planning is a management activity designed to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that employees and other stakeholders work toward common goals, establish agreement around intended outcomes, and assess and adjust the organization's direction in response to a changing environment. It is a disciplined effort that produces fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, who it serves, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the near-term future.

The Commission will be asked to approve this Strategic Plan’s Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures. With Executive Director and Senior Staff oversight, staff are developing both broad and specific action

plans to realize the Goals and Objectives. These will be tied to division and individual work plans so that progress toward realizing the Goals and Objectives can be measured and reported to the Commission.

BCDC's legal mandate and mission include accomplishing regulatory and planning duties and major initiatives that emanate from those duties. A major result of BCDC's strategic planning will be to establish priorities for BCDC's discretionary activities.

**The goals and objectives support all of BCDC's fundamental work activities and its major discretionary initiatives, including, but not limited to:**

1. Lead efforts to help the Bay Area adapt to rising sea level, in concert with the Joint Policy Committee, local governments, and others;
2. Expand the variety of public access and activate existing and future public access required through BCDC's regulatory process;
3. Build a new technological platform and improve information technology systems that assist both stakeholders and staff; and,
4. Increase transparency and consistency in BCDC policy, planning, permitting, and enforcement proceedings.

## **GUIDING RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Fulfill all responsibilities under the law, including providing maximum feasible public access to the Bay and shoreline to all, and protecting the Bay from unnecessary fill.**

**Lead the region in determining how to best conserve and develop the Bay as a system in an appropriate, responsible, and environmentally sound manner.**

**Serve all stakeholders in a responsive and effective manner.**

**Respect and support the roles of local governments.**

## CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

The Bay is a complex and dynamic system with myriad connections that are sensitive to external factors and emerging challenges, including climate change, rising sea level, fresh water inflow, sediment supply, and emergencies and disasters.

**BCDC** policies must reflect the current understanding of the Bay system, which requires BCDC to understand the region's evolving and dynamic environmental, economic, and social systems and their impacts on the Bay.

**BCDC** must take advantage of its innovative policy record by retaining its successful policies and practices and learning how to capture and use those accomplishments in the future.

**BCDC** must carry on and build upon the success of the largest marsh restoration project in the nation – the South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration Project – and smaller restoration projects to promote the high level of cooperation necessary to achieve sustainable development and maintain an overall gain in wetlands acreage.

**BCDC** must seek and create opportunities to work with an even wider variety of stakeholders by using the knowledge gained from working cooperatively with other organizations to adapt to rising sea level.

**More** and diverse public access is needed in response to the changing demographics and growing population of the Bay Area.

**A** variety of stressors are increasing the pressure on the natural and built areas of the Bay and its shoreline.

**Economic** volatility influences the pace of development, conservation, and restoration and is a driver of the type and volume of BCDC's work.

**BCDC must obtain stable funding, which is necessary to ensure the continued fulfillment of BCDC's responsibilities.**

**BCDC must stay current with rapidly evolving and innovative new technologies to maintain an efficient and effective workplace.**



## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### **GOAL 1. BE THE NATION'S MODEL COASTAL MANAGEMENT AGENCY TO INCREASE THE BAY'S VALUE AND ENABLE ITS COMMUNITIES TO FLOURISH.**

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#### *Objectives*

1. Pioneer policies and actions that take advantage of, and reduce risks caused by, the changing Bay, including rising sea level.
2. Expand and activate public access.
3. Minimize Bay fill given that rising sea level, changing sediment supply, and changing public needs may require additional Bay fill.
4. Ensure that all policies and activities reflect the region's growing and diversifying population and the area's environmental and economic needs.
5. Apply consistent, yet adaptable, decision-making using the best available information.

### **GOAL 2. LEAD INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS TO MEET THE BAY'S ONGOING CHALLENGES.**

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#### *Objectives*

1. Use BCDC's unique mission and broad representation to advance integrated local, regional, statewide, and national efforts, including those of the Joint Policy Committee.
2. Define and build strong relationships in all sectors to directly advance BCDC's mission.
3. Increase public understanding of the Bay's dynamic social, economic, ecological, and environmental value.

### **GOAL 3. IMPROVE BCDC'S WORK ENVIRONMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE.**

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#### *Objectives*

1. Improve technological capacity to benefit both BCDC internally and stakeholders externally.
2. Increase investment to develop and retain excellent staff and intellectual capital.
3. Document best practices and create better ways to ensure efficiency, integration, transparency, and consistency across regulatory, planning, and administrative operations.
4. Foster the professional, respectful, and cooperative BCDC culture.
5. Secure and expand necessary and stable resources to implement BCDC's mission.