

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

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Statement of Chair Zack Wasserman

Commission Approval of the Environmental Justice and Social Equity Bay Plan Amendment

October 17, 2019

I would like to take a minute to express my thanks to the Commissioners, our public participants, and our staff for what BCDC just accomplished.

In 2015 BCDC initiated its NOAA-funded *Policies for a Rising Bay* study and the Commission's workshops on rising sea level. Our Commissioners found that BCDC's policies inadequately addressed environmental justice and social equity issues, especially in light of the challenges faced by disadvantaged communities due to climate change. Therefore, the Commission voted two years ago to begin this *San Francisco Bay Plan* amendment process, and we created the Environmental Justice Commissioner Working Group. I want to thank Commissioners Ahn, Pemberton, Showalter, Vasquez, and former Commissioner Alvarado for their leadership and active participation.

During the last nineteen months the Commissioners, our partners and collaborators, various interest groups, and the staff have analyzed the potential intersections among environmental justice, social equity, public access, shoreline protection, adaptation, and mitigation. As a result of this amendment, the *Bay Plan* will acknowledge, for the first time, the history of environmental justice in the Bay Area. The Bay must be shared and enjoyed by all, public access must reflect the needs and desires of shoreline and adjacent communities and diverse users of the Bay, and adapting to rising seas will pose huge challenges to all communities, especially those with fewer resources. This amendment will help us strive to ensure that all of our policy decisions incorporate the results of meaningful and robust community involvement to lessen disproportionate impacts. And, internally, BCDC will create an implementation plan to make the Commission, per se, more accessible to the public. Simply put, the Commission will fulfill its responsibilities by looking through additional and important lenses.

It is important to note that BCDC and the *San Francisco Bay Plan* emerged from a grassroots movement started almost sixty years ago by community members who, themselves, viewed the Bay through different lenses than the establishment. Our new policies would not be as strong as they are without the participation and contributions we received from those



types of grassroots organizations that exist now, including those on the Environmental Justice Review Team, which was funded by the generous support of the Resources Legacy Fund. Those organizations include Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice, Breakthrough Communities, Shore Up Marin City, Nuestra Casa, and EcoEquity.

Like we did two weeks ago, BCDC broke ground today. Like the Bay Fill for Habitat amendment, the Environmental Justice and Social Equity amendment will require BCDC to think critically about the Bay's resources – both natural and human— in an uncertain future. I urge all of us to use the guiding principles we adopted today as a north star to shape our work going forward.