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**RICHARDSON BAY REGIONAL AGENCY BOARD OF DIRECTORS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVES CONTRACT FOR VITAL EELGRASS RESTORATION AND PROTECTION WORK**

**Sausalito, CA—**The [Richardson Bay Regional Agency](https://rbra.ca.gov/) (RBRA) Board of Directors unanimously approved a contract with Coastal Policy Solutions to act as Project Manager and help lead its Eelgrass Restoration and Adaptive Management Plan, which will protect and sustain the local ecosystem.

“We understand the urgency of continuing our work to support the eelgrass environment that is so critical to all that we love about Richardson Bay,” said RBRA Board Chair Jim Lynch. “With the award of this contract we can advance our efforts to protect this resource for future generations. It’s an exciting time for Richardson Bay.”

As part of the contract, Coastal Policy Solutions will partner with Merkel and Associates, San Francisco State University and Audubon CA on the eelgrass restoration work.

Eelgrass is a vital component of a healthy and vibrant Richardson Bay. It supports herring runs, reduces erosion, sequesters a significant amount of carbon and is a crucial ecological resource for harbor porpoises and sea lions.

However, when anchors, chains, and other ground tackle scrape along the Bay bottom, they essentially act as a lawn mower for all living plants. This creates “crop circles” or barren areas where no eelgrass can grow. Currently, there is an area four times the size of Alcatraz where eelgrass has been destroyed by anchor scour in Richardson Bay.

To combat those impacts and provide an opportunity for eelgrass to recover, the RBRA created an “Eelgrass Protection Zone” (EPZ) in Richardson Bay where no anchoring is allowed. While there are still vessels and floating homes anchored in the EPZ, the RBRA and its partners are working on initiatives such as a vessel buyback and temporary supporting housing programs to help encourage residents to move off the waters and into safe, secure housing on land. By October 15, 2024, all boats will be barred from the EPZ.

The implementation of the EPZ has created new opportunities for eelgrass restoration, which is particularly urgent in the face of sea level rise, increasing ocean temperatures, and other threats from a changing climate.

Earlier this year, the RBRA was awarded a $2.8 million grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to restore eelgrass in Richardson Bay. That grant will fund the contract with Coastal Policy Solutions, which has a base value of $1.2 million.

“We at Coastal Policy Solutions, working with our colleagues at Merkel and Associates, are honored to partner with the RBRA on this crucial project,” said Rebecca Schwartz Lesberg, President and Founder of Coastal Policy Solutions. “A healthy eelgrass environment means a healthy Richardson Bay for everyone. We are eager to begin this work—the time to act is now.”

The contract with Coastal Policy Solutions will support efforts aimed at restoring at least 15 acres of eelgrass over four years through an innovative public-private partnership. The work will also bolster the continued implementation of the RBRA’s Eelgrass Protection and Management Plan while additionally supporting monitoring efforts, outreach work, marine debris removal and technical advice, among other elements.

While the RBRA has made significant progress to reduce the number of vessels anchored in the EPZ, there are still about 50 boats illegally anchored there. The vessels are currently residing in Richardson Bay in violation of RBRA rules, and are critically damaging the eelgrass ecosystem.

Along with its partners, RBRA has launched a temporary housing support program to help relocate individuals off the water and into secure housing on land. The RBRA recently requested, and was granted a one-year deadline extension from the Bay Conservation and Development Commission requiring the relocation of 14 boaters living on Richardson Bay to allow for more time to coordinate with its partner agencies.

The extension will help ensure that the relocated individuals have the opportunity to avail themselves of housing services and other resources to support their move if they choose this option.

“We are taking the steps now to protect our eelgrass environment while also acting with compassion and being deliberate about our decisions,” said RBRA Executive Director Brad Gross. “This is a collaborative, commonsense move to create a thriving Richardson Bay for everyone to enjoy.”

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***The******Richardson Bay Regional Agency*** *(RBRA) is a local government agency serving Belvedere, Mill Valley, Tiburon, and unincorporated Southern Marin County. RBRA is dedicated to maintaining and improving the navigational waterways, open waters, and shoreline of Richardson Bay.*