



San Francisco Bay Water Quality Improvement Fund – Grantee Report

Project name: Collaboratively Restoring Eelgrass in Richardson Bay to Improve Water Quality and Climate Resilience

Report type: Quarterly Report

Reporting period: October 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023

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Activities conducted during the previous quarter:

Task 1: Continue implementation of the Richardson Bay Eelgrass Protection and Management Plan (EPMP)

Activities:

1. Signage
 - Coordination continues with the U.S. Coast Guard Waterways Management Division and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) for installation of signage demarcating the eelgrass protection zone (EPZ). We are still on track to install signage by the end of summer 2024.
2. Annual habitat and waterbird monitoring
 - The 2023/2024 waterbird monitoring season is underway, with drone surveys conducted approximately every two weeks to track spatial distribution of migratory waterbirds in Richardson Bay. The surveys will continue until March, after which the data will be analyzed.
 - Developed and delivered the 2023 wildlife and habitat monitoring report (provided annually in the fall) to members of the public and the RBRA Board of Directors on November 16. The full report is available on the RBRA website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONpwTL0hwEE&t=21m21s>

Task 2. Develop Restoration and Adaptive Management Plan (RAMP)

Activities:

1. A draft and final RAMP was developed by project partner Merkel & Associates during this period and submitted to BCDC on December 15, 2023 (the final RAMP is included with this report as Attachment A). The RAMP is a technical document outlining a 10-year plan to restore, monitor, and manage eelgrass in Richardson Bay, and was based on extensive existing data sets (e.g., eelgrass density and spatial distribution), as well as the 2022 sidescan sonar bathymetric survey of Richardson Bay. The RAMP includes

details on pilot restoration, planting methods, site selection (for donor and restoration sites), monitoring, success criteria, and recommended non-planting restoration actions.

While the RAMP does not require BCDC approval, the document is designed such that it may be amended as needed if substantive feedback is received from BCDC staff or other stakeholders (now or in the future). However, the work proposed under the RAMP does require authorization by the California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW), which regulates the harvest and planting of aquatic plants. It is anticipated that the work will be conducted under an annual amendment to the Scientific Collecting Permit (SCP) for the San Francisco Bay Eelgrass Restoration Program (S-190240006-21100-002) held by Merkel & Associates.

Task 3. Marine Debris Removal – no activities during this reporting period.

Task 4. Restoration, Monitoring, and Adaptive Management – no activities during this reporting period.

Task 5: Community Engagement and Support

Activities:

1. Outreach and Education Plan – a draft plan is in development
2. Vessel buyback program
 - Eight illegally anchored vessels were removed from the anchorage in 2023 as part of the RBRA Vessel Buyback Program, which offers eligible participants money based on the length of their boat (\$150 per foot) if they turn their vessel into RBRA for proper disposal. Nearly \$40,000 was disbursed to boat owners as part of the program in 2023.
3. Other community support
 - RBRA's Housing Support Program (supported by matching funds) was initiated on 5/1/23 with a \$3 million allocation from the state of California. Since its start, four individuals formerly living on the anchorage in illegally anchored vessels have been housed, with twelve people now participating (including those already housed), and five more in the queue to participate. The Housing Team meets every two weeks for program review, and RBRA staff have weekly meetings with South Marin case workers.
4. RBRA staff and project consultants meet weekly with RBRA's public affairs team, Progress Public Affairs, to coordinate on social and earned media highlighting the importance of eelgrass to wildlife and communities. Earned media from this quarter include:
 - Interviewed by the Marin Independent Journal regarding results from the 2023 wildlife and habitat monitoring report. Article available here: <https://www.marinij.com/2023/11/28/richardson-bay-monitors-cite-signs-of-eelgrass-recovery/>

- Interviewed by students from Mt. Tam High School as part of their senior video project focused on Richardson Bay.

Task 6: Project management

Activities:

1. Contracting/subawards:
 - Coastal Policy Solutions executed a subcontract (signed October 24) with Merkel & Associates for \$730,000.00 to implement restoration-related activities of the EPA project.
 - Initiated development of subawards for Audubon CA and SFSU's Estuary and Ocean Science Center.
2. Civil Rights
 - Finalized Civil Rights Policies and associated documents (e.g., staff report and board resolution) for adoption by the RBRA Board of Directors (adopted on November 16). Confirmed with EPA staff that all requirements to address deficiencies on *Form 4700-4: Preaward Compliance Review Report for All Applicants and Recipients Requesting EPA Financial Assistance* have been met.
3. Other administration
 - Regular partner check ins

Progress towards milestones:

<u>Task</u>	<u>Deliverable Name</u>	<u>Progress</u>
Task 1: Continue implementation of the Richardson Bay Eelgrass Protection and Management Plan (EPMP)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Signage demarcating boundaries of the Eelgrass Protection Zone (EPZ)2. Annual habitat and waterbird monitoring	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ongoing2. Ongoing
Task 2: Restoration and Adaptive Management Plan (RAMP) development	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Restoration and Adaptive Management Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Complete, although the RAMP may be periodically updated
Task 3: Marine debris removal	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Invoices and quarterly reports describing marine debris removal activities during the previous quarter	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Not yet initiated
Task 4: Restoration implementation (including adaptive management and monitoring)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 15 acres of restored eelgrass	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Not yet initiated
Task 5: Community engagement and support	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Outreach and Education Plan2. Stakeholder Workshop Reports3. Student Testimonials4. List of vessels acquired via Vessel Buyback Program and description of disposal efforts	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Initiated2. Not yet initiated3. Not yet initiated4. Ongoing
Task 6: Project management	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Quarterly Reports2. Final Report containing an assessment of how effective the project was in achieving the stated objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. In process2. Not yet initiated

Problems encountered with achieving outputs and outcomes:

- None.

Activities planned for the next quarter:

- Continue 2023/2024 waterbird monitoring activities
- Continue coordination for installation of EPZ signage
- Begin planning for 2024 restoration season (the season generally runs May-August)
- Finalize Outreach and Education Plan

- Continue community support efforts (e.g., Vessel Buyback, Housing Support)
- Execute subawards with San Francisco State University and Audubon California

Costs incurred during the reporting period and cumulative project costs since the beginning of the project, by task:

<u>Task</u>	<u>Costs Incurred This Period</u>	<u>Cumulative Project Costs</u>	<u>Funds Budgeted</u>	<u>Funds Remaining</u>
Task 1: EPMP implementation	\$ 6,158.28	\$ 8,686.56	\$ 92,952.50	\$ 84,265.94
Task 2: RAMP development	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 85,452.50	\$ 85,452.50
Task 3: Marine debris removal	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 90,000.00	\$ 90,000.00
Task 4: Restoration implementation	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,532,224.00	\$ 1,532,224.00
Task 5: Community engagement	\$ 48,620.00	\$ 48,620.00	\$ 677,233.00	\$ 628,613.00
Task 6: Project management	\$ 12,295.25	\$ 16,340.50	\$ 304,724.00	\$ 288,383.50
Total	\$ 67,073.53	\$ 73,647.06	\$ 2,782,586.00	\$ 2,708,938.94

Assistance needed from EPA:

- None at this time.