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November 10, 2023

Brad Gross
Executive Director, Richardson Bay Regional Agency
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 308
San Rafael, CA 94903

Re: Report to the RBRA Board of Directors regarding habitat and wildlife monitoring efforts

Dear Executive Director Gross,

It is my pleasure to submit the attached presentation, which describes wildlife and habitat monitoring performed in Richardson Bay over the past year to implement RBRA's 2021 Eelgrass Protection and Management Plan (EPMP). The presentation describes what monitoring activities have occurred and the key takeaways from those monitoring efforts.

To provide a short summary here:

The last presentation to the RBRA Board of Directors occurred in September 2022. Since that time, subcontractors Audubon California and Merkel & Associates have completed the 2022/2023 waterbird monitoring (Audubon), the 2022 sidescan sonar survey of Richardson Bay (Merkel), and the 2022 and 2023 eelgrass damage assessments (Audubon). All reports from these monitoring efforts are included as Attachments 1-4 to this presentation. The results from these efforts paint a nuanced picture of eelgrass health in Richardson Bay. However, broadly speaking, the main takeaways are as follows:

- Damage to eelgrass from anchor scour in Richardson Bay appears to have plateaued for now and we continue to see evidence of some eelgrass recovery in anchor scars as vessels are removed from the eelgrass bed.
- Additional environmental stressors, many of which are exacerbated by the impacts of climate change (e.g., thermal stress, eelgrass wasting disease, harmful algal blooms, etc.), may be negatively impacting the health of the bed. While the total bed size may be increasing, the density and health of the bed may not be improving.
- As the impacts of climate change are expected to continue and worsen, it is important to reduce other negative impacts to the eelgrass bed and support eelgrass recovery wherever possible.

I look forward to speaking to the RBRA Board of Directors on the evening of November 16 to share this presentation and answer any questions from the Board, staff, or public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rebecca", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rebecca Schwartz Lesberg
President
Coastal Policy Solutions