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**MEDIA CONTACT:**

[will.reisman@progress-pa.com](mailto:will.reisman@progress-pa.com)

415-420-0905

**RICHARDSON BAY REGIONAL AGENCY RECOGNIZES BANNER  
YEAR FOR PROTECTING LOCAL ENVIRONMENT AND COMPLYING  
WITH STATE MANDATES**

*With help from state and federal funding, RBRA purchased eight vessels, relocated four individuals into homes, helped avert further erosion of eelgrass and reduced the number of boats illegally anchored in Richardson Bay from 59 to 43 in 2023*

**Sausalito, CA**—The Richardson Bay Regional Agency (RBRA) was able to celebrate several major milestones in 2023, as its collaborative and compassionate approach to its mission helped protect the local environment and comply with state mandates and federal laws to remove vessels and floating homes from its anchorage.

With the help of \$3 million in state funds, the RBRA was able to establish an innovative housing voucher program this year, allowing four boaters previously living on the water to move into safe, secure housing on land. Another 11 individuals are participating in the program, and at the time of this writing, six have vouchers in hand and are actively seeking new housing, all of which is funded through a grant secured by State Senator Mike McGuire.

Additionally, eight vessels were purchased by the RBRA in 2023 through its Vessel Buyback Program, which offers eligible participants money based on the length of their boat, or floating home (\$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.

Those initiatives have helped reduce the number of vessels and floating homes illegally anchored on the environmentally sensitive waters of Richardson Bay from 59 to 43 over the past year.

“I’m extremely pleased with the progress we have made in 2023,” said RBRA Board Chair Jim Lynch. “Our goal is to make sure that Richardson Bay is a safe, thriving place for everyone in the community. By investing in environmental initiatives to protect our ecosystem and working closely with our partners, we continue to achieve many of our goals while striving to set the standard for how maritime agencies like the RBRA should operate.”

Along with launching its groundbreaking housing program in 2023, the RBRA secured a \$2.8 million grant from the Environment Protection Agency to support ongoing eelgrass restoration and protection efforts.

Eelgrass is a critical component of a healthy and vibrant Richardson Bay. It supports herring runs, reduces erosion, sequesters carbon and is a crucial ecological resource for harbor porpoises and sea lions. In addition, tens of thousands of migratory shorebirds rely on the eelgrass of Richardson Bay for feeding and resting during migration along the Pacific Flyway.

However, when anchors, chains, and other ground tackle from vessels 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.

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 one floating home anchored in the EPZ, the RBRA and its partners are making great progress to reduce those numbers. In Richardson Bay, there is an area four times the size of Alcatraz where eelgrass has been destroyed by anchor scour, but that expanse is no longer increasing, because of various efforts to protect the EPZ.

As part of an agreement with the Bay Conservation and Development Commission, which has jurisdiction over regional coastal policies, all vessels must relocate from the EPZ and will only be allowed to anchor for up to 72 hours in the designated anchorage, effective October 15, 2024. That same agreement stipulates that a small number of vessels that participated in the Safe and Seaworthy program will be allowed to remain in the anchorage after that deadline. However, by October 26, 2026, the anchorage will convert to a 72-hour anchorage for all vessels.

The RBRA’s right to enforce those laws was recently validated by a federal court judge. In December, Judge William Orrick of the U.S. District Court for Northern California dismissed a lawsuit claiming that the RBRA did not have jurisdiction to enforce the anchorage rules.

In his ruling, Judge Orrick stated, regarding C.F.R. 110.126(a), that Richardson Bay is a “special anchorage area” and the code directs mariners to comply with the RBRA’s Permit Scheme. The Judge concluded that the United States Constitution did not create a right in the claimant to anchor indefinitely in Richardson’s Bay.

“We know that our job is not done here, but we can be encouraged by a number of positive developments in 2023,” said RBRA Executive Director Brad Gross. “And this has truly been a group effort. We are working closely with our local, state and federal partners on initiatives that will help Richardson Bay be a healthy, safe and welcoming environment for all. We’re grateful for that support and we look forward to another productive year in 2024.”

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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.*