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San Francisco Bay Chapter
Serving Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin and San Francisco Counties

April 28, 2015

President Whitney Dotson &
Board Members
East Bay Regional Park District
Box 5381
Oakland, CA 94605

Re: Reauthorization of Measure CC and Issues of Concern

Dear President Dotson and Members of the Board:

The Sierra Club played a major and key role in the creation of Measure CC and the projects for which money would be spent. It also was instrumental in getting the measure passed. As Chair of the East Bay Public Lands Committee, I was also Vice-Chair of the Yes on Measure CC campaign.

The Park District is now contemplating going to the voters in 2016 for a reauthorization of the measure. The Sierra Club believes that it is essential that the Park District work with the key environmental groups on the development of the Measure CC reauthorization. Support from the environmental community was essential for the passage of Measure CC. It will be critical for the success of any campaign on a measure continuing the tax.

When Measure CC was in its development stage, the Sierra Club insisted that the measure identify the projects and activities that it would fund. Many projects were designated in the original measure. The Sierra Club assumes the same detail will be in the renewal measure.

The Sierra Club expresses in this letter its position on issues that it considers key for the Sierra Club for the renewal. This is an initial list which may be amended as discussions take place regarding the renewal. The Sierra Club recognizes that the Park District is in the early stages of drafting the renewal. Hence, it understands that Park District may amend or change allocations that are discussed in these early stages during the discussion about the

renewal before it a final measure is approved to send to the voters. This letter is intended to give focus to the Park District as to the issues that are very important to the Sierra Club. They are not in rank order. All of these are considered equally important.

Vegetation Management Funding

Measure CC funded the beginnings of a vegetation management program to protect the wildland-urban interface from another catastrophic fire similar worse to the one we experienced in 1991. The four years of drought make this an even more important concern. The Sierra Club has always supported a program that provided protection from fire hazard along with promoting the restoration of native habitat. Native habitat has a lower fire hazard than non-natives. For a maintenance program to reduce the fire hazard, it must be carried out annually in perpetuity. Deferred maintenance is not an option if the goal is to provide fire protection. Vegetation management that restores native habitat is less costly than programs that merely thin non-natives. Native habitat that is restored in the fire prone areas that are currently eucalyptus plantations is less costly to maintain on an annual basis than a program of thinning non-native eucalyptus and other non-native trees.

Hence, the Sierra Club believes it is critical that in any renewal of Measure CC funding for vegetation management should be increased for the removal of non-natives such as eucalyptus and their replacement with restored native habitat. If the Park District wants to continue with a program that merely thins the non-native eucalyptus and other non-native trees, then it must find other funds for those purposes. Future tax money from a renewal of Measure CC funds should not be used to thin eucalyptus but must be allocated to the restoration of native habitat.

Increased Funding for Stewardship Work

The CC renewal should increase the funding for stewardship programs and positions in the Park District. This aspect of the Park District's mission still remains underfunded. In particular, the Park District needs more staff directly involved with conservation, restoration, and habitat enhancement programs. The Sierra Club believes that there is a great need for hiring the necessary personnel for actual "boots on the ground" work.

Increased Funding for McLaughlin East Shore Park Projects

The funding for the McLaughlin Eastshore State should be increased to provide for the operation and maintenance of the Albany Bulb, the Brickyard, and other portions of the park. This park is one of the premier urban State Parks in California. It is named after one of the founders of Save the Bay because Save the Bay began when the three founders saw the filling of the Berkeley waterfront that is now part of this park. Much work still needs to be done to make it even better. The Park District is in a special position to make that happen.

In addition, funding should provide the flexibility to pay for some of the costs of potential acquisitions such as the Albany race track site. It is anticipated that large portions of the track will be incorporated into the McLaughlin Eastshore State Park in the next 20 years. It is well known that the race track is a money losing operation and that the Stronach interests that own the track will probably try again to redevelop the site requiring major portions of the site to be acquired for inclusion in the McLaughlin Eastshore State Park.

It is important to remember that each time the owner of the race track has proposed development of the site, the people of Albany and the East Bay have defeated those proposals. Since 1985 with Santa Fe Railroad, then the largest single provide landowner in the State, through Rick Caruso, the wealthy Southern California developer of shopping malls that he calls Leisure Centers, there have been four attempts. Each one has lost. Albany's vision for the site is as an open space resource with responsible development. The Park District needs to be prepared for the next attempt and the inclusion of large portions of the site into McLaughlin East Shore Park with money in the renewal for that purpose.

Funding is Needed for the Park Developments in the City of Alameda

The renewal should include funding for the Triangle Park at Alameda Point, the Northwest Territories at Alameda Point, conservation work at the Alameda Wildlife refuge, and operational funds for when the Crab Cove property becomes part of Crown Beach. The Park District should be in a position of leadership on developing and operating these key park resources, especially because the residents of Alameda have consistently demonstrated their support for these park projects.

Funding is Needed for Point Molate as a Park and Open Space Resource

Point Molate is an important open space resource. This is considered a jewel of a park and open space resource in Richmond. As in the case of Alameda, the residents of Richmond have demonstrated over and over that they want Point Molate protected as a park and open space resource. The renewal should provide funding for the operations and maintenance of a nature preserve park at Point Molate.

Funding for the Zoo Must Not Be in the Renewal

Measure CC provides \$100,000 a year for the Oakland Zoo. The Sierra Club opposes further taxpayer subsidy of the Zoo. The Oakland Zoo has demonstrated an ability to fund operations from private sources. For example, when the Zoo sought approval from Oakland for the new California Exhibit, it claimed it had the private funding for both the capital and operational budget for that new exhibit. At the same time the Zoo has developed an entire

elephant preserve in the Sierras that it claims will be funded from private sources. Hence, Zoo has demonstrated that it does not need taxpayer funding.

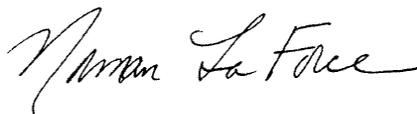
No Money Can Go to Mitigation or Remediation Work at the Chabot Gun Club Site

No money should be allocated in the renewal to fund any mitigation measures such as noise mitigation, lead remediation, or other mitigation or remediation work that should be done at the Chabot Gun Range if the lease is extended for its operation.

The Park District Needs to Work in Partnership with the Environmental Community on the Renewal of Measure CC

The Sierra Club expects to work with the Park District on these key issues and in fleshing out the details of the projects or types of activities that will be funded. Measure CC was a success because from the beginning the Park District worked closely with the environmental community in developing the conceptual framework for CC and then fleshing out the details before it went to the voters. The same successful approach needs to be taken for the renewal.

Sincerely yours,



Norman La Force, Chair
East Bay Public Lands Committee