

## Measure AA Examination

### What is Measure AA?

Measure AA, on the June ballot in all nine Bay Area counties, is a **\$12 parcel tax dedicated to protecting and restoring San Francisco Bay**. It will create a stable revenue source for reducing trash and pollution, enhancing wetlands and wildlife habitat, increasing public access and recreational areas, and protecting communities from flooding. The tax will raise \$25 million annually for 20 years and is expected to leverage significant additional state and federal resources for wetland enhancement and water quality improvement.

In order to pass, the tax needs approval from 2/3 of all nine counties' voters. This is a high hurdle, but polling suggests it can win if there's strong voter turnout in June. It's our generation's chance to save the Bay — while there's still time.

Although federal and state funding has made these acquisitions possible, restoration work — which consists of planning and permitting; breaching, repairing and building levees; assessing and monitoring tidal flows and habitat needs; transporting material; creating walking and biking paths and more — has been underfunded. Thousands of acres of publicly owned former tidal areas could be restored today if funding were available. According to Save the Bay, the backlog of restoration work on existing acquired lands is decades long.

### Details of the Measure

Measure AA was put on the ballot by a joint powers authority, the Bay Restoration Authority, established in 2008 for the sole purpose of raising local resources for the restoration, enhancement and protection of the Bay. The authority is made up of local elected officials and chaired by the State Coastal Conservancy. It will allocate revenue raised from the parcel tax in four main program areas:

1. **Safe, Clean Water and Pollution Prevention Program** to remove pollution, trash and toxins from the Bay, and to restore wetlands which naturally filter pollutants
2. **Vital Fish, Bird and Wildlife Habitat Program** to improve habitat for wildlife
3. **Integrated Flood Protection Program** to use natural habitats to protect communities along the Bay from flooding
4. **Shoreline Public Access and Education Program** to provide safer public access and educational opportunities compatible with Bay restoration

The measure requires revenues to be spent in all nine counties over the 20-year life of the tax and includes a requirement that 50 percent of revenues be spent on a population-weighted basis in the four subregions of the Bay (North, South, East and West).

The measure requires public meetings of the Bay Restoration Authority, requires an annual audit and report, establishes an advisory committee and an independent citizen oversight committee, and limits the amount of revenues that can be spent on program administration to 5 percent.

### What does it mean for Sonoma County/City of SR?

## **The Press Democrat Editorial: Yes on Measure AA for the bay**

By Guest Blogger | March 7, 2016

*The following editorial endorsing Measure AA was originally published by The Press Democrat on March 6th.*

It should go without saying that there would be no Bay Area without the San Francisco Bay. But the nine Bay Area counties have had a spotty history when it comes to recognizing the value of this precious natural resource.

Consider that by the 1960s, nearly 90 percent of the wetlands that had once surrounded San Francisco Bay were gone. Thanks in large part to the environmental awakening that occurred shortly after that, the filling-in of the bay came to a halt and thousands of wetlands have since been preserved. But it has been slow-going. The tidal marsh area, which once totaled nearly 200,000 acres, is only at about 44,000 acres today.

Bay Area voters will soon have an opportunity to accelerate these efforts in a significant way. Measure AA on the June 7 ballot calls for approval of a \$12-per-parcel annual tax for enhancing wetlands and wildlife habitat, for the expansion of public access and recreational opportunities and for the protection of public infrastructure — from highways to wastewater treatment plants to schools — from the threat of rising sea levels.

The tax would raise \$500 million over 20 years. Half would be distributed to each Bay Area county based on population. The other half would be available through competitive grants, **But the North Bay stands to benefit significantly as restoration projects have already been identified and public-private partnerships are in place to make them happen.**

**The kind of work involved was on display in October when crews broke through a 140-year-old levee at Sears Point, allowing saltwater to reclaim more than 1,000 acres at the southern tip of Sonoma County, land that had been used for hayfields.** Another 35,000 acres of land has been acquired around the Bay Area, the largest estuary on the West Coast. But money is needed for restoration of those lands.

**Officials from the Sonoma County Water Agency say the North Bay stands to receive at least \$45 million, which would be used to leverage state and federal dollars for restoration projects along Sonoma Creek, the Petaluma River and in San Pablo Bay.**

Tax funds also will be used to help protect infrastructure threatened by rising sea levels. According to the National Academy of Sciences, bay water levels are expected to rise by at least

two feet by 2050 and as much as five feet by 2100. Studies by the Bay Area Council have found that such a rise would put an estimated 1,780 miles of roads and highways and 89 schools and health care facilities at risk of flooding. Flooding also would occur at the Oakland and San Francisco airports. Restoring wetlands would help provide protection from these storm surges.

The tax would be administered by the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority, which was created by state law in 2008 to restore wetlands in the Bay and along the shoreline.

As David Lewis, executive director of Save the Bay, said, “The sooner we start, the sooner they can provide benefits.” But it won’t be easy. The tax requires a two-thirds majority vote of residents in the nine Bay Area counties. It’s an ambitious goal. Yet, it’s a modest sum — \$1 a month — for the cumulative benefit involved. Other regions — such as the Puget Sound area, Chesapeake Bay and the Great Lakes areas — receive significantly more federal dollars than the Bay Area for habitat and water protection. Measure AA would, once and for all, provide a stable revenue source that would allow Bay Area residents to ensure we get our share of those dollars while protecting this natural resource that binds us all.

We encourage a yes vote on Measure AA on June 7.