

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

**INITIAL STUDY AND
MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
SCH # 2010072045**

**ARAMBURU ISLAND SHORELINE PROTECTION AND ECOLOGICAL
ENHANCEMENT PROJECT**

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide decision-makers with a summary of comments received on the Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the Aramburu Island Shoreline Protection and Ecological Enhancement Project and describe changes made to the Draft IS/MND in response to comments. This document is organized in the following sections:

- Section I: Summary of Comments Received
- Section II: Response to Comments
- Section III: Comment letters

In response to comments, the Final IS/MND was modified from the Draft IS/MND to improve accuracy, clarify aspects of the project description, provide more information on California clapper rail surveys, and to refine marine vessel emission estimates. A Final IS/MND that incorporates changes made to the Draft IS/MND was prepared and accompanies this Response to Comments document.

While minor corrections, additions, and text deletions were made to the Draft IS/MND, no “substantial revisions” (as defined in CEQA) were made as no new significant impacts were identified and no mitigation measures to reduce impacts to a less than significant level were added.

In addition to this Responses to Comments document and the Final IS/MND, a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) was developed for the Project (December 2010) in accordance with CEQA Section 15097 to ensure that mitigation measures, imposed on the Project to avoid significant environmental effects, are properly implemented. The MMRP identifies the entity responsible for implementing mitigation, mitigation timing, and monitoring and enforcement responsibilities. The MMRP accompanies the Final IS/MND and will be provided to the public and decision-makers prior to consideration of project approval.

Project approval by the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) entails approval of the Section 401 Water Quality Certification by the Water Board or its delegate, the Executive Officer. Other federal, State, and local agencies will have discretionary authority, as outlined in the IS/MND, over aspects of the Project.

I. Summary of Comments Received

The Draft IS/MND for the Aramburu Island Shoreline Protection and Ecological Enhancement Project (Project) was made available to the public beginning July 16, 2010. In compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), environmental documents and electronic files were submitted to the State Clearinghouse (SCH # 2010072045) and posted on the Water Board's internet website. Hard copies were available for public review at the Water Board's Oakland office. Environmental documents were also available for review at the Richardson Bay Audubon Sanctuary (Applicant) administrative offices in Tiburon and the County of Marin offices in San Rafael.

The Draft IS/MND was circulated for a 31 day public review, from July 16 to August 16, 2010. During that time the Water Board received 20 comment letters, submitted via e-mail and U.S. mail. Comment letters contained historical information related to the Project site, statements of support, concerns about the project, and statements of opposition to the Project.

The comment letters received are listed in Table 1, below, and consisted of:

- 2 letters expressing concerns about the Project;
- 16 letters expressing support for the Project (several letters also contained relevant historical information about the project site);
- A letter from the Department of Fish and Game stating that the IS/MND adequately portrays impacts to fish and wildlife resources and habitats associated with the Project and concurring with the mitigation measures described in the IS/MND; and
- A letter from the State Clearinghouse acknowledging compliance with the State Clearinghouse review requirements for draft environmental documents pursuant to CEQA.

Table 1 provides a list of comment letters, date received, summary of comments and response. While all comments were considered, not all comments required written responses or resulted in changes to the Draft IS/MND.

Comments that express support for the Project, the public process and the adequacy of the CEQA document are noted, and no response is provided. Likewise, no written responses are provided for comments that solely express opinions about the Project or raise non-CEQA related issues. Comments that raise issues about potential adverse environmental impacts are responded to in the Response to Comments section (Section II), below. Comment letters are included in the last portion (Section III) of this document.

Table 1. Summary of Comments Received and Responses

Commenter	Date Received	Summary of Comments	Summary Response
Margaret Fawcett	7/21/10	Support	None Required
Anne Howson	7/22/10	Support	None Required
Lynn Rashkis	7/23/10	Support	None Required
Sally Van Ingen	7/23/10	Support	None Required
Albert Aramburu	7/30/10	Support and historical information	None Required
Frank & Elizabeth Gerber	8/2/10	Support	None Required
Linda Trocki, PhD	8/2/10	Support	None Required
Diane Lynch	8/2/10	Support	None Required
Jacob F. Schutt	8/2/10	Support	None Required
Holly Scheetz	8/3/10	Support	None Required
Juliet Grable	8/9/10	Support	None Required
Meryl Sundove	8/12/10	Support	None Required
Elizabeth Schriock	8/12/10	Support	None Required
Burton Richardson	8/12/10	Support	None Required
Marin Audubon Society	8/13/10	Concerns about public access, project design, revegetation, & maintenance	See responses below
Robert Hinz	8/14/10	Support	None Required
Dr & Mrs Newton Harband	8/14/10	Support	None Required
Strawberry Recreation District Zone IV	8/16/10	Concerns about inaccuracies, biological resource impacts & mitigation measures, recreational boater impacts, & other issues	See responses below
State Clearinghouse	8/18/10	Compliance with State requirements	None Required
California Department of Fish and game	12/16/10	Project concurrence	None Required

In addition to the comment letters received on the Draft IS/MND, the Applicant engaged in early consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). USFWS concurs that the Project is not likely to adversely affect the California clapper rail.

NMFS reviewed the Project's potential to adversely impact listed aquatic species and concluded that excavation of the seal access channel is expected to result in low contaminant levels, which NMFS anticipates will have insignificant effects on listed fish. Based upon the best available information, NMFS concurs that the Project is not likely to adversely affect listed anadromous salmonids, threatened green sturgeon, or designated critical habitat.

II. Response to Comments

Of the 20 comment letters received, two letters, one from the Marin Audubon Society and one from the Strawberry Recreation District Zone IV raised issues that warranted written responses (as discussed above, not all comment letters or comments required a written response). These two letters included comments that called for clarification, explanation, or changes to the Draft IS/MND text. Changes made in response to these comments are shown in underline/~~strike-out~~ font in responses, below. These changes have been incorporated into a Final IS/MND that accompanies this document. Early consultation with the USFWS resulted in the addition of California clapper rail survey information. In addition, refinements to the project description since the time of publication of the Draft IS/MND resulted in one staff-initiated change to the air quality analysis, as discussed below.

This section of the document is organized in three parts:

- 1) Staff-initiated changes related to marine vessel travel and emissions;
- 2) Supplemental Clapper Rail survey information;
- 3) Responses to Marin Audubon Society comment letter; and
- 4) Responses to the Strawberry Recreation District Zone IV comment letter.

1. Revisions to Marine Vessel Travel and Emissions

Since publication of the Draft IS/MND, the method of transporting equipment and material to the project site has been refined. The project description in the Draft IS/MND has been revised to accurately indicate the capacity of the large barge as 1,000 to 2,000 cubic yards (CY) and the small barge as having a capacity of about 65 CY. This change increases the maximum number of daily barge trips from what was previously estimated. In order to evaluate project impacts, the marine vessel calculations and greenhouse gas emissions were updated to reflect these changes. The change in the number and size of barge trips resulted in minor changes in the construction criteria pollutant emissions that were reported in Table 6 (page 45) in the air quality analysis of the Draft IS/MND. These changes are shown in the text in the main body of the Final IS/MND and in the revised calculations in Appendix A: Air Quality Calculation (Marine Vessel Calculations and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Calculations).

Revised air quality calculations demonstrate that the Project would still result in less than significant air quality and greenhouse gas emission impacts and that the Project would not result in any violation of air quality standards or adverse impacts to sensitive receptors.

2. Supplemental Clapper Rail Survey Information

Ongoing concerns about the possible occurrence of California clapper rail (clapper rail) at Aramburu Island prompted more detailed evaluation of past clapper rail surveys. In addition, early consultation with USFWS suggested that that an updated survey be conducted to confirm the absence of clapper rail. In response the text on page 55 (following the first paragraph under “Wildlife”) of the Draft IS/MND has been supplemented with the following text and new Figure R-1:

A single California Clapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris obsoletus*) was detected on Pickleweed Island (Figure R-1) by an Audubon staff ornithologist (Kerry Wilcox, person. comm., 2010) on September 7, 2006. The bird was observed again on September 8 and 15, but not at any point thereafter. It is likely that the individual bird was a dispersing clapper rail, as it was detected outside the breeding season (February through August). Protocol level clapper rail surveys conducted for the Invasive Spartina Project confirm that no clapper rails were observed during the breeding season on Pickleweed Island (J. McBroom, 2008). No clapper rails have been detected on Pickleweed Island since the individual sighting in 2006.

Clapper rails have not been observed on Aramburu Island, located approximately 600 feet south of Pickleweed Island. No clapper rails were detected on Aramburu Island during surveys conducted in 2007 (Evens, 2007). The 2007 habitat evaluation indicated that “the south end of Strawberry Point (AKA, Strawberry Spit) supports no viable habitat. The habitat on Strawberry Island (AKA Aramburu Island) supports possible, but not ideal, clapper rail habitat. The site’s isolation from other occupied marshes and the limited extent of habitat available diminish its suitability (Evens, 2007, p. 34).”

To confirm that clapper rails do not occur on Aramburu Island and to confirm that the proposed enhancement plan on Aramburu Island is not likely to adversely affect clapper rails, protocol level surveys would be conducted between January 15 and April 15, prior to construction and habitat enhancement activities. All surveys will be conducted by a certified professional in accordance with requirements set by UFSWS (J. Terry, 2010). Survey results to confirm the absence of clapper rail will be submitted to USFWS prior to construction.



Figure R-1. Location of the California Clapper Rail sighting in September 2006 on Pickleweed Island in Richardson Bay.

3. Marin Audubon Society Comments and Responses

Comment: Public Access

Marin Audubon Society (MAS) discusses the history of the Island as mitigation for past development and states that the channel between Strawberry Spit and Aramburu Island was created to protect the Island from the impacts of people. At the time the Island was created, public access was provided on Strawberry Spit. MAS believe that encouraging public access to the Island would adversely affect wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Response:

The Richardson Bay Audubon Sanctuary has initiated early consultation with the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) and has refined the public access requirements for the Project in response.

This Project would not alter the County's generally neutral approach to public access to Aramburu Island. The placement of two landing rocks for 'boaters' would provide minimal additional public access. These rocks would be located away from sensitive restoration areas and would be installed only after restoration plantings are established. Therefore, the proposed public access features would not have an adverse effect on the proposed restoration effort.

The text on page 23 of the Draft IS/MND has been amended as follows:

Public Access Features. ~~The main primary purpose of the Island enhancements undertaking the enhancements to the Island~~ is to provide habitat for targeted native wildlife species. ~~Currently,~~ public access does occasionally occur on Aramburu Island, and ~~as structured,~~ the project would not result in any substantial increase in public access to or use of the Island. However, features would be installed to ~~encourage allow for~~ responsible public access and to avoid impacts to sensitive resources. Public access design features will include (1) placement of two large flat rocks near the northeastern cove to serve as focal sitting points for non-motorized watercraft landing; these rocks would be approximately 2 to 6 feet across, placed above the high tide line and outside existing or restored wetlands; and (2) installation of two new signs that indicate the presence of sensitive habitats and wildlife ~~as well as areas and~~ that direct users to leave certain parts of the Island undisturbed. The rocks would be installed only after restoration plantings have been established. ~~One of these signs will~~ Signs would be placed near the landing rocks near the northern cove and the other will be placed near the southern cove in the northern cove, and in the southern cove near the proposed seal haul out area. These signs would be similar in size, material, and color as other Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space signs and would be maintained by the Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space.

The Applicant will continue to engage the Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space Volunteer Program so that volunteers are provided with an opportunity to visit the Island while also contributing to the restoration project.

Comment: Project Habitat Design

MAS asked “What species are the various habitat segments designed to serve and how is the design serving them?”

Response:

In response to this comment the following text is added at the top of page 20 of the Draft IS/MND:

Shoreline Enhancement. Shoreline and tidal flat enhancement is expected to increase foraging and roosting sites for shorebirds and wading birds as a result of the creation and expansion of existing sand-gravel beaches and sand-mud foreshore along the eastern shoreline of Aramburu. Sand-mud foreshore would provide additional foraging habitat for shorebird species of conservation concern such as the Dunlin, Sanderling, Western Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, and short-billed Dowitcher (Andres et al. 2006). These species and other shorebird species rely on healthy tidal mudflats to fuel their migration. Gravel beach berms and rocky cobble along the spit are expected to provide foraging habitat for Black Oystercatchers, and Black Turnstone. Tidal mud flats will also provide essential roosting habitat for Elegant Tern, Forster’s Tern, and Caspian Tern.

In response to this comment the following text is added to page 25 of the Draft IS/MND:

As discussed above, the Project would create or enhance a variety of wetland, grassland, and backshore habitats. These habitats will serve a number of species, as described below.

High tidal marsh.—Enhancement of pickleweed and high tidal marsh habitat is expected to provide habitat for regionally rare salt-marsh annual plants such as salt marsh owl’s clover and smooth goldfields. High tidal marsh is also expected to provide breeding and/or wintering habitat for San Pablo Song Sparrows and Salt Marsh Common Yellowthroat.

Seasonal wetlands.—Enhancement of seasonal wetlands (vernal pools and marshes) is expected to provide additional roosting and foraging sites for wading birds and overwintering waterfowl. In addition this habitat feature is expected to provide foraging opportunities for Black Phoebe San Pablo Song Sparrows, and Salt Marsh Common Yellowthroat.

Saline pan/flats.—Enhancement of saline pan/flats is expected to provide high-tide roosting areas for shorebirds and wading birds. This area is also expected to

seasonally retain water that would provide additional foraging and roosting areas for waterbirds.

Terrestrial grasslands. —Enhancement of the terrestrial grasslands is expected to provide habitat for native grasses as well as provide high-tide roost sites for wading birds.

Salt grass meadow. —Salt grass meadows are expected to provide habitat for native salt grass vegetation and high-tide roosting sites for wading birds and shorebirds.

Backshore sand flats. —Creation of backshore sand flats is expected to provide a sparsely vegetated platform for harbor seals to use as a haul-out area. This area is also expected to provide additional foraging and roosting areas for shorebirds.

Comment: Seal habitat

MAS asked about the potential for the seal channel to silt in and inquires as to why the original seal haul-out area was abandoned. They also question the decision to locate the channel along the southeastern island shoreline.

Response: The proposed channel location along the southeastern shoreline was selected because of its proximity to the deep water navigational channel. The location of the new channel would allow seals to move safely from deep water to Aramburu Island. Reasons for the seal haul-out abandonment are stated in the Conceptual Enhancement Plan on pages 3 through 5 and the design rationale for the new access channel is presented on pages 29 and 30 of that document.

Although there is a potential for the seal channel to silt in over time, the seal channel could be dredged in conjunction with maintenance dredging of the deep water channel adjacent to the Island by Strawberry Recreation District Zone IV. The channel will only be maintained if seals begin using it and hauling out on Aramburu Island within the maintenance cycle following project construction (approximately 5 to 10 years).

Comment: Revegetation/Maintenance

MAS express concern about the long-term management and maintenance of the Project, and specifically about the replanting scheme and the proposed freshwater irrigation system.

Response: The revegetation plan and irrigation schedule described in the Draft IS/MND assumed the driest conditions and therefore the maximum amount of vegetation watering. This scenario is considered worst-case and most appropriate for evaluating potential environmental impacts from irrigation (noise, etc.). It is likely that less watering will be needed in the years following project implementation.

All restoration permitting will include adaptive management practices, and permitting agencies will require maintenance of approved restoration features in such a way as to ensure the long-term function and intended goals of the Project. The Richardson Bay Audubon would be responsible for implementing any long-term permit requirements.

4. Strawberry Recreation District Zone IV Comments

Comment: Project objectives

Zone IV questions the consistency of the stated need and objectives of the Project.

Response: Project objectives are stated in the Draft IS/MND on page 18 and 19. The Project is designed to both increase tidal-marsh habitat and reduce erosion on the eastern shore. These goals can both be achieved by implementation of the Project because gradual inundation in a low energy tidal area will not result in erosion. Erosion is a problem on the eastern shore of Aramburu Island where the beach is steep, vegetation is absent, and the beach environment is highly erosive. The Project includes measures to reduce erosive forces along the eastern shoreline (reduced beach slope, increased beach protection, and importing stable beach material).

Comment: Cause of Erosion

Zone IV questions the link between erosion on the Island and the erosion of the mainland and request documentation regarding the speed and severity of the erosion. The comment also questions whether the Project protects waterfront homeowners from an actual threat.

Response: The eastern shore of Aramburu Island intercepts incident wave energy predominately from the southeasterly winds and prevailing currents and eddies on Richardson Bay. Along the steep eastern shore of Aramburu Island this energy is absorbed through erosion of the Island (as evidenced by the erosional scarp or small cliff). If the Island did not exist, this wave energy would be absorbed by the first land encountered by the waves as they approached shore, which would be residential areas of the mainland. Therefore, Aramburu Island functions as a breakwater for the mainland.

The speed and severity of erosion on Aramburu Island are documented in the Draft Enhancement Plan in the Erosion and Sediment Transport Section (Section 2.4.4 beginning on page 9). Time sequential aerial photographs documenting shoreline retreat over the 34 year from 1970 to 2004 are presented in Figure 10. In addition, Global Positioning System (GPS) data is used to document the extent that the boulder lag field has eroded over time, indicating permanent erosion of the shoreline.

Comment: Inaccuracies and omissions

Zone IV identified four inaccuracies and omissions in the Draft IS/MND. One of these comments, pertaining to page 49, did not result in text changes because the Project

would not affect the navigational channel (see response to comments regarding recreation, below).

Response:

Inaccuracies and omissions identified in the Zone IV comment letter have been corrected and the Draft IS/MND text has been edited as follows:

- Page 1 and 33, the text has been corrected to refer to “The Cove Apartments.”
- Page 50, the extent of the deep water channel is noted to extend along the spit to Strawberry Point and around the Point, continuing west to connect with the Sausalito Channel.
- Page 55, the text has been corrected to indicate that California clapper rail surveys occurred in 2005.

Comment: Need for a performance bond

Zone IV inquires about the need for a performance bond to ensure successful implementation of this project.

Response: No performance bond is needed for the Project. The project site is currently used for open space and the proposed Project would not result in any land use changes. In addition, existing habitat conditions are degraded at the project site and proposed habitat enhancement activities would improve these conditions. If project components “fail,” both adaptive management measures required by agency permits and provisions of the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program will result in implementation of remedial action.

Comment: Peer review

Zone IV inquires about public review of the project peer review.

Response: Peer review of the Project was conducted and is described on page 6 and page 19 of the Draft IS/MND. Following completion of the peer review in June 2010, peer review documents were posted on the Audubon internet website for public viewing.

Comment: Mitigation Monitoring

Zone IV suggests semi-annual mitigation reporting.

Response: A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) has been prepared for the Project in accordance with CEQA Section 15097 (December, 2010). The MMRP identifies the entity responsible for implementing mitigation, mitigation timing, and monitoring and enforcement responsibilities. The MMRP accompanies the

Final IS/MND and will be provided to the public and decision-makers prior to consideration of project approval.

Comment: *Mitigation Measure IV-1*

Zone IV asserts that the mitigation measure for nesting birds is unclear.

Response: The text on page 9 of the Draft IS/MND summarizing Mitigation Measure IV-1 has been revised in response to this comment to read as follows:

Mitigation Measure IV-1

~~The applicant shall have surveys conducted by a qualified biologist within two weeks of the commencement of construction activities. If nesting birds are detected during surveys, construction shall be halted until appropriate resource agencies (CDFG, USFWS) have been contacted and appropriate avoidance measures are taken, such as establishing disturbance buffers or halting construction until nests have been vacated. If ground disturbance activities are delayed, then additional pre-construction surveys shall be conducted such that no more than one week will have elapsed between the last survey and the commencement of ground disturbance activities.~~

To reduce impact to nesting birds, in accordance with Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Fish and Game Code, Richardson Bay Audubon Center shall have surveys conducted by a qualified biologist within two weeks of the commencement of construction activities to identify bird nests in the area. If bird nests are detected then construction activities shall be halted until either the CDFG or USFWS are contacted and their guidance on appropriate measures is provided. Typical mitigation would require that construction be halted within 300 feet of the nest to avoid disturbing nesting birds. A qualified biologist would monitor the status of the nest and would determine when the offspring have left the nest. Once the offspring have left the nest construction activities would resume in accordance with CDFG and USFWS consultation and regulation. A qualified biologist shall be on site during construction and shall continue to monitor the site for nesting birds. In the event that additional nests are detected during construction, construction shall be halted within 300 feet of the active nest until the offspring have fledged. All bird surveys, monitoring, and construction timing shall be conducted in accordance with CDFG or USFWS protocol and requirements.

In addition, in response to this comment, the text on page 57 of the Draft IS/MND (Mitigation Measure IV-1) has also been revised (consistent with the text change shown above).

The Applicant's responsibility for implementing mitigation measures, and the timing and regulatory reporting requirements for these mitigation measures are further discussed in the MMRP (December, 2010).

Comment: Impacts to shellfish beds

Referring to text on page 16 of the Draft IS/MND, Zone IV questions potential impacts to shellfish beds.

Response: The text on page 16 of the Draft IS/MND refers to potential impacts on eelgrass beds, a plant community. The Project would not result in impacts to shellfish beds.

Comment: Impacts to recreational boating

Zone IV asserts that the Draft IS/MND does not adequately discuss recreational boat use. The comment requests that the IS/MND specifically mention that Strawberry Channel is maintained and funded by Zone IV.

Response: The commentor is correct that Zone IV funds maintenance dredging of the deep water Strawberry Channel. As indicated on page 19 of the Draft IS/MND, the Project would not affect maintenance dredging of this channel. The following text has been added at the top of page 19 to include additional information about the Strawberry Channel:

Strawberry Channel, constructed in the 1950s, provides navigational access to Richardson Bay to residents of Strawberry and the Cove Apartments in Tiburon. Maintenance of the channel is funded by the Strawberry Recreation District Zone IV.

Similar text has been added to page 94, to provide background for the recreation impact analysis.

Comment: Saline irrigation.

This comment indicates that the Draft IS/MND is the first time that Zone IV has been made aware of the saline irrigation and pump system. The comment also indicates that Zone IV would like to see citations/descriptions of other instances of saline irrigation being used for weed control.

Response: The saline irrigation system and pump setup are described on page 42 of the Draft Enhancement Plan and have been included in the project description under the Saline Irrigation Alternative since April 2010. The Draft Enhancement Plan has been available to the public throughout the project development process and has been the subject of numerous public meetings (as summarized in the IS/MND on page 6). As described in the Draft IS/MND and in the Draft Enhancement Plan, the saline irrigation system may be used periodically (about 15 to 20 days per year) for a period of up to 3 years post-construction.

The comment also indicates that Zone IV would like to see citations/descriptions of other instances of saline irrigation being used for weed control. This information can be found on pages 41 and 42 in the Draft Enhancement Plan.

In response to this comment, the text on page 31 of the Draft IS/MND has been supplemented to clarify details of the proposed pump. The text, added to the Final IS/MND includes the following:

The salinization of soil would be accomplished by an array of sprinklers installed on the Island, which are fed water from saline Bay water from the adjacent, deep-water navigational channel via a land-based pump. The pump, as described in the Draft Enhancement Plan, would be either a quiet electric pump or if a diesel pump is used, would be shielded in a self-contained enclosure to reduce noise to the same level as the quiet pump. The final specifications for the pump would be determined after the final design on the irrigation system has been completed; however, it would not exceed the following specifications:

- Max engine size = 6 horse power
- Max intake diameter = 2 inches
- Max flow rate = 150 gallons per minute

A pump of this capacity would measure approximately 2 feet by 2 feet by 2 feet. The pump would be positioned as far east on the Island as the intake hose will allow. The pump will be placed near the center of the north-south island axis in a noise-dampening structure that would be painted to blend in with the local landscape. The intake hose for the pump would be located on the perimeter of the deep-water navigational channel. This hose would be anchored in place to ensure that it does not move and clearly marked with a buoy so as not to interfere with navigation.

The environmental analysis of noise, aesthetics, and air emissions in the Draft IS/MND included use of a saline irrigation pump as described above and in the Draft Enhancement Plan (Option 2), which would require the greatest amount of saline water pumping.

Comment: *Revegetation irrigation*

This comment asks how long the freshwater irrigation system would be present on the Island.

Response: Page 31 of the Draft IS/MND indicates that the freshwater irrigation system would be deployed for a maximum of 2 years. To clarify the operation of the irrigation system, the following text will augment the description of the freshwater irrigation system in the “Revegetation” section on page 31 of the Draft IS/MND.

The details of the freshwater irrigation system would be determined during final design following completion of the revegetation plan. The water storage container itself would be centrally located on the Island and would be painted to blend in with the surroundings. The water storage container would be refilled occasionally via a fire hose connected to a fire hydrant on the mainland. The hose would pass through a willing property owner's land. Where the hose crosses the navigational channel it would be weighted down so that the hose rests on the channel bottom and does not interfere with navigation.

In addition, in response to this comment, the following text describing irrigation has been added to the Utilities and Service System analysis (Section XVII, under item b):

If irrigation of native plants is required following planting, freshwater would be provided by one of two methods: (1) a tank or bladder system on the Island that would periodically be filled via a hose from a fire hydrant on the mainland, or (2) via tanks refilled by Audubon Sanctuary staff and transported to the Island by boat. Alternatively, if only small-scale watering (scattered individual plants) is required, then use of time-released gel packs may be employed that provide water to seedlings without the need of a water pump. An example of such a small-scale water system is DriWater® time-release water.

Comment: *Securing large woody debris*

Zone IV asks how large woody debris used to stabilize the beach will be secured.

Response: As described in the Draft Enhancement Plan on pages 33 and 34, large woody debris will be anchored in place with wooden cross-braces driven into the substrate where necessary for stabilization.

Comment: *New proposed signs*

This comment requests details about the two proposed signs that would be placed on the Island.

Response: The proposed signs will be similar in size, design, and color as existing signs. Appropriate colors and sizes will be selected to ensure that signs are visible and that they harmonize with the surrounding landscape. BCDC may include specific conditions for proposed signs during its review of the Project. Please refer to text changes made in the "Public Access Features" section of the Draft IS/MND on page 23 in response to MAS's comments regarding public access, above.

Comment: *Construction boat traffic impacts on recreational boating*

Zone IV suggests that project construction could interfere with recreational boat use of the navigational channel.

Response: As described on pages 26, 30, and 31 of the Draft IS/MND, construction equipment and materials will be moved from a barge to Aramburu Island. As indicated

in the Draft IS/MND, this process would involve one roundtrip for each piece of heavy equipment listed on page 25, over the life of the Project. Additional barge trips would be needed to transport materials to the Island.

Since publication of the Draft IS/MND, the barge size and construction phasing has been refined. The Draft IS/MND indicated that a large “transport” barge could be used to bring material to the Island. However, the Project has been revised to clarify that smaller capacity barges (capacity of about 65 CY) would be used to transport materials. This would result in a maximum of 300 boat trips over the three-month construction period, or a maximum of six round trips per day. Material transport would occur between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM and the timing and frequency would depend on tides, weather, and construction needs. It is likely that fewer than six daily barge trips would occur. Barges would be managed in a manner to minimize time in and around the navigational channel. Vessel movement would be in conformance with standard Coast Guard rules and regulations and channel markers would be deployed. If minor obstruction of the channel occurs, a navigational pathway will be established to allow recreational boaters to pass. No adverse impacts to recreational boat users would result.

The text on pages 30 and 31 of the Draft IS/NDN has been edited as follows:

The material transport would likely utilize two barges – a larger “transport” barge bringing the material near the Island and a smaller “ferry” barge to bring the material through the shallow water to the Island. The larger barge (~~2,000—5,000~~ 1,000 – 2,000 CY capacity) containing the shoreline materials would be anchored in the deepwater area of Richardson Bay. Material would be transferred from this barge onto ~~the~~ a smaller barge with an estimated capacity of 65 CY, which would then ferry the material to the Island where the material would be offloaded by wheel loader. The smaller ferry barges would pull up to the southeast corner of the Island, which is adjacent to the deep-water navigation channel. The shoreline in this area is armored by rock rip-rap material, which would be temporarily removed during the material import period so that barges could pull up to the Island without being damaged. A barge would be ~~docked~~ beached at the Island for approximately 30 – 90 minutes during each trip while unloading. The Project would result in a maximum of 300 boat trips over the three-month construction period, or a maximum of six round trips per day. Material transport would occur between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM and the timing and frequency would depend on tides, weather, and construction needs. It is likely that fewer than six daily barge trips would occur. Barges would be managed in a manner to minimize time in and around the navigational channel. Vessel movement would be in conformance with standard Coast Guard rules and regulations and channel markers would be deployed. If minor obstruction of the channel occurs, a navigational pathway will be established to allow recreational boaters to pass. The final specifications for material transport to the Island in terms of ferry barge size, method of loading, and unloading would be determined during consultation with selected contractor, but these specifications would not deviate significantly from those described above.

Materials would be stockpiled on the Island in upland areas and transported by tracked truck or loader to their placement destinations. Erosion control devices (straw wattles, silt

fences, etc.) would be installed around all stockpile locations to prevent sediment from moving off site. To avoid impacts to aquatic species, all shoreline materials would be placed at low tide when no water is present on the work area. Should excavation occur in the Bay, a turbidity curtain would be installed during low tide prior to construction activities and all in-water work would occur in this isolated area. Boats and barges bringing equipment, materials, and personnel to the project site would only navigate in deep-water areas that are known to be devoid of eelgrass. Boats and barges would be moored in areas where they will not shade eelgrass.

Comment: *Biological surveys*

Zone IV poses questions about the number and timing of project-specific biological surveys to identify sensitive plants.

Response: As indicated on page 49 of the Draft IS/MND, one floristic survey was conducted in spring 2009. In addition, project biologists also searched for sensitive plants and wildlife during all other surveys at the project site.

Comment: *Special status wildlife species*

Zone IV states that the text on page 55 through page 59 is unclear regarding breeding habitat for special status birds. In addition, the discussion of special status fish on page 55 is confusing.

Response: To clarify that the discussion on page 55 of the Draft IS/MND addresses the occurrence of birds on Aramburu Island, the header “Wildlife” as been deleted and replaced with the header “Birds.” In addition, the text in the Draft IS/MND in the first paragraph on page 55, following Table 7 has been deleted and replaced with the following text:

Aramburu Island does not provide breeding habitat for any of the six special status bird species¹ identified as potentially occurring in the project vicinity based on review of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) and investigations of the site. A complete list of all special status species within the project vicinity and their potential to occur on site can be found in Appendix B. Although song sparrows have been observed on Aramburu Island (Table 7), the subspecies of song sparrows found on the Island is uncertain (Appendix B). San Pablo song sparrows, a California Species of Concern, prefer to nest in areas containing dense patches of gumplant and coyote brush, two plants that are not abundant on the Island. Thus, Aramburu Island provides little suitable habitat for the San Pablo song sparrow.

¹ California clapper rail (*Rallus longirostris*), California least tern (*Sternula antillarum browni*), Northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), double-crested cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*), White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*), and San Pablo song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia samuelis*).

Mitigation Measure IV-1 (see page 57 of the Draft IS/MND) would be implemented to ensure that project construction does not displace or negatively affect any San Pablo song sparrows that may be breeding on the Island.

In response to comments regarding potential impacts to fish, the header “Fish” has been added to page 55, to clarify that the following paragraph discusses the occurrence of fish species in the vicinity of the Island. The header “Marin Mammals” has been added to the bottom of page 55 and a new paragraph created as follows:

Marine Mammals

Harbor seals (protected under the Marin Mammals Act) occur seasonally in the adjacent navigational channel, but have not hauled out on the Island since the 1980s (Allen 1991).

Comment: *San Pablo Song Sparrows*

Response: See response to comment about special status wildlife species, above.

Comment: *Longfin smelt*

Response: The text in Table 7 on page 55 of the Draft IS/MND has been revised to include Longfin Smelt (*Spirinchus thaleichthys*) as a fish species observed on or adjacent to the project site. The Project includes measures to reduce impacts to fish. In addition, Mitigation Measure IX-1 would be implemented to reduce erosion and sedimentation to prevent adverse water quality impacts and would reduce potential impacts to fish to a less than significant level.

Comment: *Loss of wetlands*

The comment states that the discussion of impacts to wetlands on page 60 is unclear.

Response: The Project would not result in a loss of wetlands. As indicated in Table 1, the Project would increase the amount of jurisdictional wetlands. The comment indicates that there would be a loss of “waters of the State/US;” however, the Initial Study question that is addressed on page 60 specifically relates to impacts to “federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.” The Project would result in a net gain of wetlands and a net gain in waters of the State. The new wetland and open water acreage is created by a loss of uplands only. It is likely that waves will rework added beach materials along the shoreline, resulting in beach berms that rise above MHHW (Mean Higher High Water²), thus resulting in a small loss of open waters. This quantity of loss cannot be estimated as the beach configuration will constantly change in response to wave conditions; however, based on the proposed beach geometry, any net changes to open water are expected to be

² Tidal datum that is the average of the higher high water height of each tidal day observed over time.

minor. The Project would not result in any planned, permanent loss of open water or wetlands.

Potential construction-related impacts to existing and new wetlands are discussed in the Draft IS/MND. Erosion and sediment control measures incorporated into the Project are described in the Draft IS/MND (Mitigation Measure IX-1 in the Hydrology and Water Quality section), and would reduce these impacts to a less than significant level.

Comment: Mitigation Measure IX-1

Zone IV asks who will train contractors to implement hydrology best management practices.

Response: The Applicant, Richardson Bay Audubon Sanctuary, would be responsible for training all contractors and reporting to the Water Board as indicated in the MMRP.

Comment: Dredging of Strawberry channel

Zone IV reiterates concerns about dredging of the Strawberry navigational channel. The comment requests that a statement be added to the Public Services analysis to clarify that the project would not result in restricted access to the dredged channel from the Strawberry Recreation District's public dock and that the Recreation analysis include a note that the Project would not result in restricted dredging of the channel.

Response: As discussed above in response to concerns about recreational boating, the Project would not result in impacts to Strawberry Channel. The Project would not result in changes to Aramburu Island that would result in restricted dredging or use of the Strawberry Channel. To clarify, the following text is added to the discussion of potential impacts to recreational facilities on page 94 of the Draft IS/MND:

Project activities are limited to transporting materials to the Island and to proposed physical changes on the Island and near shore environment, as described in the Project Description. These actions would not result in substantial physical deterioration to Strawberry Channel itself nor would they create any significant adverse impacts for recreational boating use of the Channel. The project would not result in restricted dredging or use of Strawberry Channel.

Comment: Habitat value and potential for project failure

Zone IV asserts that the Island is currently used by many species, as indicated on page 51 of the Draft IS/MND.

Response: The text on page 51 refers to the use of Aramburu Island by common species. Many of these species are non-native or invasive species. The purpose of the Project is to promote the use of Aramburu Island for native birds and wildlife that have few remaining suitable habitat opportunities in the Bay. The Project would

improve habitat for these species as described in the Draft IS/MND, and would not result in adverse impacts to the population of common species. In addition, enhancement actions would only improve environmental conditions on Aramburu Island. Any setbacks in project success could result in portions of the Island reverting to existing conditions; therefore, no adverse impacts would result.

Comment: *Habitat value and maintenance dredging of Strawberry Channel*

Zone IV states that the deep water navigation channel provides habitat for seals and birds. The Strawberry Recreation District Zone IV provides funding to conduct maintenance dredging of the channel.

Response: As indicated on page 49 of the Draft IS/MND, the navigational channel provides habitat for birds, harbor seals, and other wildlife. The Project would not adversely affect the deep navigational channel. After project completion, birds and seals will continue to use this area as well as Aramburu Island.

The text in the last paragraph on page 49 has been modified to add the following sentence:

The channel requires routine maintenance dredging, funded by the Strawberry Recreation District Zone IV.

Additional References added to the Draft IS/MND in Section E. (References, Persons Contacted, and Report Preparers, page 101):

Andres, B., R. Clay and C. Duncan, 2006. Shorebird Species of Conservation Concern in the Western Hemisphere. Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. Available on-line at www.whsrn.org/shorebirds/status.html.

McBroom, J. 2008. California Clapper Rail Surveys for the San Francisco Estuary Invasive Spartina Project. Olofson Environmental. Report available online. http://www.spartina.org/project_documents/clapper_rails/project-clra2008.htm

Evens, J. 2007. Surveys of selected marshlands in the San Francisco Estuary California Clapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris obsoletus*) for the Invasive Spartina Project and Olofson Environmental. Avocet Research Associates. Report available online. http://www.spartina.org/project_documents/clapper_rails/project-clra2007.htm

Wilcox, Kerry, Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary, personal communication, 2010.

III. Comment Letters

Margaret Fawcett
Anne Howson
Lynn Rashkis
Sally Van Ingen
Albert Aramburu
Frank & Elizabeth Gerber
Linda Trocki, PhD
Diane Lynch
Jacob F. Schutt
Holly Scheetz
Juliet Grable
Meryl Sundove
Elizabeth Schriock
Burton Richardson
Marin Audubon Society (Barbara Salzman)
Robert Hinz
Dr & Mrs Newton Harband
Strawberry Recreation District Zone IV (Tirrell B. Graham)
California Department of Fish and Game

Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612

July 21, 2010

Re: Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for Aramburu Island, Richardson Bay

Dear Ms. Potter,

I am writing to express my support for the Aramburu Island Enhancement Project, currently being developed by the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary and The Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space. As a resident of Sausalito who spends a great deal of time on and around Richardson Bay, I'm a keen observer of its animals and of the need for added habitat especially for breeding and migratory birds.

Unfortunately Aramburu Island has been neglected, in my opinion, over the years. It has been badly impacted by non-native plants that are unattractive to birds. It badly needs restorative work to attract shore birds and harbor seals once again, among other animals. In that regard, I fully support the current plan to remove non-native plants, increase cover of native plants, and expand seasonal wetlands and tidal marsh that will ultimately improve habitat for resident and migratory birds and marine mammals.

In addition, this project will reduce the rate of erosion on the eastern side of Aramburu Island that currently contributes to increased sedimentation in Richardson Bay. By firming up the eastern shoreline the project will mitigate the effects of sea level rise and increasing storm events.

The potential impacts of the project discussed in the Initial Study Mitigated Negative Declaration were very thorough.. I feel that the mitigation measures proposed are more than adequate and potential short-term impacts are worth the benefits that will result following enhancement of the Island. Moreover, the mitigation measures proposed follow standardized and accepted protocols successful in reducing impacts in other projects.

Audubon and Marin County have done an excellent job keeping the community informed and I have been given ample opportunity to learn more about this project, and provide input. They held four public meetings during which they answered questions and addressed many concerns. Audubon also posted work days and opportunities to assist with the project on their website to fully engage the community.

Additionally, looking at Audubon's track record of collaborative restoration and research projects around the Bay gives me confidence that they are taking this project seriously, and will be thoughtful and thorough in its execution. Nationally recognized organizations such as PRBO Conservation Science, SFSU, and NOAA repeatedly partner with Audubon, which indicates that

they are a valuable and reputable partner. In fact, Audubon successfully restored tidal marsh habitat in San Pablo Bay in partnership with the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

In conclusion, I believe this project will greatly benefit the wildlife, habitats, and people of Richardson Bay and contribute to a healthier bay. I hope it is approved as presented.

Sincerely,

Margaret Fawcett
72 Cypress Place
Sausalito, CA 94965

Anne Howson
3258 Lyon Street
San Francisco Ca. 94123

Tel: 415-409-1112
Fax: 415-409-1113
E/mail: akhowson@gmail.com

Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612



July 21, 2010

Re: Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for **Aramburu Island**

Dear Ms. Potter,

I am writing to express my support for the Aramburu Island Enhancement Project, currently being developed by the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary and The Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space. I have worked as a volunteer educator at Richardson Bay Audubon Center for more than 25 years and find their leadership to be intelligent, thoughtful and careful in every endeavor. I value our natural resources and feel it is critical that we do our best to protect areas that provide natural habitat for wildlife, while protecting valuable coastlines.

I fully support the current plan to remove non-native plants, increase cover of native plants, and expand seasonal wetlands and tidal marsh. Urban and industrial development around the entire San Francisco Bay, and the Marin Coastline in particular, has greatly limited habitat for native birds and wildlife. The habitat within Richardson Bay is important for the large numbers of waterbirds that visit the site each year. This project is a step towards restoring the types of habitat that were once common on Richardson Bay more than a century ago.

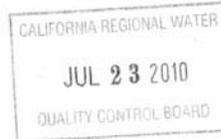
Audubon and Marin County have done a good job keeping the community informed. They have held several public meetings during which they answered questions and addressed many concerns. Audubon also posted work days and opportunities to assist with the project on their website to fully engage the community.

Audubon has a good track record of collaborative restoration and research projects around the Bay. This gives me confidence that they are taking this project seriously, and will be thoughtful and thorough in its execution. Nationally recognized organizations such as PRBO Conservation Science, SFSU, and NOAA repeatedly partner with Audubon, which indicates that they are a valuable and reputable partner. In fact, Audubon successfully restored tidal marsh habitat in San Pablo Bay in partnership with the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

I support the work of Audubon and Marin County, and believe this project will greatly benefit the wildlife, habitats of Richardson Bay and contribute to a healthier San Francisco Bay. I am happy to see this project move forward.

Sincerely,

Ms. Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612



July 21, 2010

Re: Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for Aramburu Island

Dear Ms. Potter,

I am writing to express my support for the Aramburu Island Enhancement Project, currently being developed by the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary and The Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space. As a resident of Strawberry in Marin County, I value our natural resources and feel it is critical that we do our best to ensure our protected areas provide the best possible habitat for wildlife, while protecting valuable coastlines.

I fully support the current plan to remove non-native plants, increase cover of native plants, and expand seasonal wetlands and tidal marsh that will ultimately improve habitat for resident and migratory birds and marine mammals. Urban and industrial development around the entire San Francisco Bay, and the Marin Coastline in particular, has greatly limited habitat for native birds and wildlife. Enhancing habitat within Richardson Bay is critical for the large numbers of waterbirds that visit the site each year, earning Richardson Bay the designation of an Important Bird Area. This project is an important step in creating the types of habitat that were once common on Richardson Bay more than a century ago.

In addition, this project will reduce the rate of erosion on the eastern side of Aramburu Island that currently contributes to increased sedimentation in Richardson Bay. By firming up the eastern shoreline the project will mitigate the effects of sea level rise and increasing storm events.

The potential impacts of the project discussed in the Initial Study Mitigated Negative Declaration were very thorough. The report discusses in great length the potential impacts of noise, erosion, air emissions, and other aspects as a result of the project. Although the project could result in temporary increase in noise, erosion, or air emissions, the mitigation measures will substantially reduce or eliminate temporary project impacts. I feel that the mitigation measures proposed are more than adequate and these potential short-term impacts are worth the benefits that will result following enhancement of the Island. The mitigation measures proposed follow standardized and accepted protocols that have been successful in reducing impacts in other projects.

Audubon and Marin County have done an excellent job keeping the community informed and I feel that I have been given ample opportunity to learn more about this project, and

provide input when appropriate. They held four public meetings during which they answered questions and addressed many concerns. Audubon also posted work days and opportunities to assist with the project on their website to fully engage the community.

Additionally, looking at Audubon's track record of collaborative restoration and research projects around the Bay gives me confidence that they are taking this project seriously, and will be thoughtful and thorough in its execution. Nationally recognized organizations such as PRBO Conservation Science, SFSU, and NOAA repeatedly partner with Audubon, which indicates that they are a valuable and reputable partner. In fact, Audubon successfully restored tidal marsh habitat in San Pablo Bay in partnership with the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

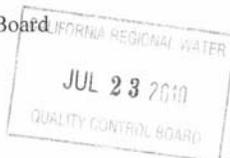
I support the work of Audubon and Marin County, and believe this project will greatly benefit the wildlife, habitats, and people of Richardson Bay and contribute to a healthier bay. Richardson Bay Audubon is a leader in environmental stewardship and habitat restoration in the Bay Area. Audubon continues to ensure the protection of the Bay, from which we will all benefit. I am happy to see this project move forward.

Sincerely,



Lynn Rashkis
114 Belvedere Dr.
Mill Valley, CA 94941

Ms. Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612



July 21, 2010

Re: Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for Aramburu Island

Dear Ms. Potter,

I am writing to express my support for the Aramburu Island Enhancement Project, currently being developed by the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary and The Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space. As a resident of Mill Valley, I value our natural resources and feel it is critical that we do our best to ensure our protected areas provide the best possible habitat for wildlife, while protecting valuable coastlines.

I fully support the current plan to remove non-native plants, increase cover of native plants, and expand seasonal wetlands and tidal marsh that will ultimately improve habitat for resident and migratory birds and marine mammals. Urban and industrial development around the entire San Francisco Bay, and the Marin Coastline in particular, has greatly limited habitat for native birds and wildlife. Enhancing habitat within Richardson Bay is critical for the large numbers of waterbirds that visit the site each year, earning Richardson Bay the designation of an Important Bird Area. This project is an important step in creating the types of habitat that were once common on Richardson Bay more than a century ago.

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Audubon and Marin County have done an excellent job keeping the community informed and I feel that I have been given ample opportunity to learn more about this project, and provide input when appropriate. They held four public meetings during which they

answered questions and addressed many concerns. Audubon also posted work days and opportunities to assist with the project on their website to fully engage the community.

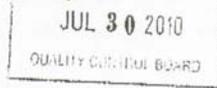
Additionally, looking at Audubon's track record of collaborative restoration and research projects around the Bay gives me confidence that they are taking this project seriously, and will be thoughtful and thorough in its execution. Nationally recognized organizations such as PRBO Conservation Science, SFSU, and NOAA repeatedly partner with Audubon, an indication that they are a valuable and reputable partner. In fact, Audubon successfully restored tidal marsh habitat in San Pablo Bay in partnership with the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

I support the work of Audubon and Marin County, and believe this project will greatly benefit the wildlife, habitats, and people of Richardson Bay and contribute to a healthier Bay. Richardson Bay Audubon is a leader in environmental stewardship and habitat restoration in the Bay Area. Audubon continues to ensure the protection of the Bay, from which we will all benefit. I am happy to see this project move forward.

Sincerely,


Sally Van Ingen
18 Heather Way
Mill Valley, CA 94941

Albert Aramburu
1975 Seascape Blvd.
Aptos, CA 95003
831-689-9217 (Home) 831-251-8429 (Cell)
basque16@comcast.net



Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612

July 29, 2010

Re: Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for Aramburu Island

Dear Ms. Potter,

I am writing to express my support for the Aramburu Island Enhancement Project, currently being developed by the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary and The Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space. As a former 3rd District Marin County Supervisor, I played a major role in all aspects of the creation, development and dedication of the Island. I participated not only as a County Supervisor, but also as a Commissioner on the Bay Conservation and Development Commission upon which I served for sixteen years.

The creation of the 10 acre "island" was part of a lawsuit settlement with American Savings and Loan in the early 1980's. The original plan was to provide a "haul out area" for Harbor Seals. Unfortunately, the seals did not return. Aramburu Island, however, remains as a valuable habitat area for wildlife in Richardson Bay. The designation of Richardson Bay as an "Important Bird Area" underscores the necessity to provide a wildlife refuge in the midst of a very busy bay.

I fully support the current plan to remove non-native plants, increase cover of native plants, and expand seasonal wetlands and tidal marsh that will ultimately improve habitat for resident and migratory birds and marine mammals. This project is an important step in creating the types of habitat that were once common on Richardson Bay more than a century ago.

In addition, this project will reduce the rate of erosion on the eastern side of Aramburu Island that currently contributes to increased sedimentation in Richardson Bay. By firming up the eastern shoreline the project will mitigate the effects of sea level rise and increasing storm events.

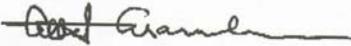
Post-it® Fax Note	7671	Date	8/19/10	# of pages	2
To	Kathi Borgmann		From	Sandi Potter	
Co./Dept.			Co.		
Phone #			Phone #	510-622-2426	
Fax #	415-388-0717		Fax #		

Audubon and Marin County have done an excellent job keeping the community informed and I feel that I have been given ample opportunity to learn more about this project, and provide input when appropriate. They held four public meetings during which they answered questions and addressed many concerns. Audubon also posted work days and opportunities to assist with the project on their website to fully engage the community.

Additionally, looking at Audubon's track record of collaborative restoration and research projects around the Bay gives me confidence that they are taking this project seriously, and will be thoughtful and thorough in its execution. Nationally recognized organizations such as PRBO Conservation Science, SFSU, and NOAA repeatedly partner with Audubon, which indicates that they are a valuable and reputable partner. In fact, Audubon successfully restored tidal marsh habitat in San Pablo Bay in partnership with the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

I support the work of Audubon and Marin County, and believe this project will greatly benefit the wildlife, habitats, and people of Richardson Bay and contribute to a healthier bay. Richardson Bay Audubon is a leader in environmental stewardship and habitat restoration in the Bay Area. Audubon continues to ensure the protection of the Bay, from which we will all benefit. I am happy to see this project move forward.

Sincerely,



Albert Aramburu

From: Frank@gerbersf.com
To: SMPotter@waterboards.ca.gov
CC: Elizabeth@gerbersf.com
Date: 8/2/2010 10:50 AM
Subject: Letter in Support of Aramburu Island Enhancement Project

Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Ms. Potter,

We are Tiburon residents and are writing you to voice our support for the Aramburu Island Enhancement Project. The plan to remove non-native plants and return the island to its natural state would provide a great habitat for migrating birds and possibly even encourage the harbor seals to return to a place that once belonged to them.

We understand that several Aramburu Island neighbors are opposed to the project. We have listened to many of their concerns but do not find them to be compelling. As you know, Aramburu Island was created as part of the development of Strawberry Point. And the northern half of the Strawberry Spit was converted into an island as part of the mitigation for the residential development in Strawberry. It seems to me that the right thing to do is to all work together to ensure the best possible habitat on Aramburu for the benefit of the original inhabitants (birds and seals) and the enjoyment of the new residents (the neighbors).

We would also add that we believe the concerns about the construction noise are a bit overblown. We believe that the noise issues are adequately addressed in the CEQA document. We all have to tolerate construction noise around our homes from time to time – it's part of living in an urban area. We live within sight and sound of Aramburu and are more than willing to tolerate any minor and temporary inconvenience in order to enjoy the longer term benefits of the restore island.

In closing we strongly support the Aramburu Island Enhancement Project and believe it will enhance the beauty and enjoyment of the Richardson Bay bay for everyone involved – people, birds, and seals!

Sincerely,
Frank and Elizabeth Gerber

4 Mariposa Ct.
Tiburon, CA 94920
29 July 2010



Ms. Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612

Re: Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for Aramburu Island

Dear Ms. Potter,

I am writing to express my **strong** support for the Aramburu Island Enhancement Project, being developed by the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary and The Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space. As a resident of Tiburon, I value our natural animal habitats and feel we should do our best to restore and maintain them, as well as protect valuable coastlines.

I fully support the current plan to remove non-native plants, increase cover of native plants, and expand seasonal wetlands and tidal marsh that will ultimately improve habitat for resident and migratory birds and marine mammals. This project is an important step in creating the types of habitat that were once common on Richardson Bay more than a century ago. It will also contribute to the health of the Bay by reducing shoreline erosion and resulting sediment build-up. By firming up the eastern shoreline the project will mitigate the effects of sea level rise and increasing storm events.

The potential impacts of the project are minor and short-term, and their mitigation is totally satisfactory. The mitigation measures proposed follow standardized and accepted protocols that have been successful in reducing impacts in other projects. Audubon and the County have kept me informed and appropriately engaged. Audubon has a proven track record on restoring tidal marsh in San Pablo bay, in partnership with the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge, .

I support the work of Audubon and Marin County, and believe this project will greatly benefit the wildlife, habitats, and people of Richardson Bay and will contribute to a healthier bay. I am **eager** to see this project move forward.

Sincerely,

Linda Trocki, Ph.D.

Diane Lynch • 171 Solano Street • Tiburon, California 94920

July 29, 2010

Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612



Re: Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for Aramburu Island

Dear Ms. Potter,

I am writing to express my support for the Aramburu Island Enhancement Project, currently being developed by the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary and The Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space. As a resident of Tiburon, I value our natural resources and feel it is critical that we do our best to ensure our protected areas provide the best possible habitat for wildlife, while protecting valuable coastlines.

I have been a volunteer at the Richardson Bay Audubon Center since 1983 and feel that they have done an excellent job of providing education to our community about the natural world and am certain that they always land on the side of what's best for the environment, so I trust implicitly their judgment about what needs to be done to enhance wildlife habitat on Aramburu Island.

I fully support the current plan to remove non-native plants, increase cover of native plants, and expand seasonal wetlands and tidal marsh that will ultimately improve habitat for resident and migratory birds and marine mammals. Urban and industrial development around the entire San Francisco Bay, and the Marin Coastline in particular, has greatly limited habitat for native birds and wildlife. Enhancing habitat within Richardson Bay is critical for the large numbers of waterbirds that visit the site each year, earning Richardson Bay the designation of an Important Bird Area.

I feel that the mitigation measures proposed are more than adequate and these potential short-term impacts are worth the benefits that will result following enhancement of the Island. The mitigation measures proposed follow standardized and accepted protocols that have been successful in reducing impacts in other projects. Audubon and Marin County have done an excellent job keeping the community informed and I feel that I have been given ample opportunity to learn more about this project, and provide input when appropriate.

I support the work of Audubon and Marin County, and believe this project will greatly benefit the wildlife, habitats, and people of Richardson Bay and contribute to a healthier bay. Richardson Bay Audubon is a leader in environmental stewardship and habitat restoration in the Bay Area. Audubon continues to ensure the protection of the Bay, from which we will all benefit. I am happy to see this project move forward.

Sincerely, Diane Lynch

Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612

August 2, 2010

Re: Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for Aramburu Island

Dear Ms. Potter,

I am writing to express my support for the Aramburu Island Enhancement Project, currently being developed by the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary and The Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space. As a resident of Mill Valley, I value our natural resources and feel it is critical that we do our best to ensure our protected areas provide the best possible habitat for wildlife, while protecting valuable coastlines.

I fully support the current plan to remove non-native plants, increase cover of native plants, and expand seasonal wetlands and tidal marsh that will ultimately improve habitat for resident and migratory birds and marine mammals. Urban and industrial development around the entire San Francisco Bay, and the Marin Coastline in particular, has greatly limited habitat for native birds and wildlife. Enhancing habitat within Richardson Bay is critical for the large numbers of waterbirds that visit the site each year, earning Richardson Bay the designation of an Important Bird Area. This project is an important step in creating the types of habitat that were once common on Richardson Bay more than a century ago.

In addition, this project will reduce the rate of erosion on the eastern side of Aramburu Island that currently contributes to increased sedimentation in Richardson Bay. By firming up the eastern shoreline the project will mitigate the effects of sea level rise and increasing storm events.

The potential impacts of the project discussed in the Initial Study Mitigated Negative Declaration were very thorough. The report discusses in great length the potential impacts of noise, erosion, air emissions, and other aspects as a result of the project. Although the project could result in temporary increase in noise, erosion, or air emissions, the mitigation measures will substantially reduce or eliminate temporary project impacts. I feel that the mitigation measures proposed are more than adequate and these potential short-term impacts are worth the benefits that will result following enhancement of the Island. The mitigation measures proposed follow standardized and accepted protocols that have been successful in reducing impacts in other projects.

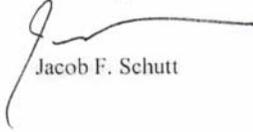
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answered questions and addressed many concerns. Audubon also posted work days and opportunities to assist with the project on their website to fully engage the community.

Additionally, looking at Audubon's track record of collaborative restoration and research projects around the Bay gives me confidence that they are taking this project seriously, and will be thoughtful and thorough in its execution. Nationally recognized organizations such as PRBO Conservation Science, SFSU, and NOAA repeatedly partner with Audubon, which indicates that they are a valuable and reputable partner. In fact, Audubon successfully restored tidal marsh habitat in San Pablo Bay in partnership with the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

I support the work of Audubon and Marin County, and believe this project will greatly benefit the wildlife, habitats, and people of Richardson Bay and contribute to a healthier bay. Richardson Bay Audubon is a leader in environmental stewardship and habitat restoration in the Bay Area. Audubon continues to ensure the protection of the Bay, from which we will all benefit. I am happy to see this project move forward.

Sincerely,



Jacob F. Schutt

Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612

July 31, 2010

Re: Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for Aramburu Island

Dear Ms. Potter,

I am writing to express my support for the Aramburu Island Enhancement Project, currently being developed by the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary and The Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space. As a resident of Marin, I value our natural resources and feel it is critical that we do our best to ensure our protected areas provide the best possible habitat for wildlife, while protecting valuable coastlines.

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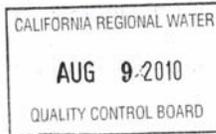
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Sincerely,

HollyScheetz
22 Seafirth Place
Tiburon, CA. 94920

Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612



August 4, 2010

Re: Aramburu Island Shoreline Protection and Ecological Enhancement Draft
Enhancement Plan

Dear Ms. Potter,

I am writing to comment on the proposed restoration and enhancement project on Aramburu Island near the Strawberry Point in Richardson Bay. As a resident of Marin County who lives on the western shore of Richardson Bay, I strongly support this project and believe it will be an asset to everyone who enjoys the Bay, including the residents of Strawberry Peninsula.

As the map (Figure 2) provided in the Report so clearly shows, extensive tidal marshes once rimmed the shores of Richardson Bay. Most of these marshes have been lost to development, and much of the shoreline has been replaced with rip-rap, marinas and the like. Consequently, Richardson Bay cannot support the abundance of wildlife, wintering waterbirds and shorebirds in particular, that it could in the days before the Gold Rush. Thankfully, one large segment of tidal marsh has been preserved in the Bothin Marsh Open Space Preserve, and restoration projects in recent years have encouraged the return of small fragments of marsh around the Bay. Aramburu Island itself is owned and managed by the County as an Open Space Preserve and Wildlife Refuge; however, the island is not currently fulfilling its potential as a wildlife preserve. It is overrun by non-native vegetation and the current topography and shoreline materials do not support the community of shorebirds that it could.

I have been a regular volunteer at the Richardson Bay Audubon Center for nearly two years. During this time I have participated in the Center's wintering waterbird surveys as well as the year-round shorebird surveys of Aramburu Island and the two islands to the north. Consistently I have observed a greater abundance and diversity of shorebirds on the northernmost island ("Pickleweed") than on the larger Aramburu. Pickleweed has a lower topographic profile and supports more "natural" tidal marsh habitat, including extensive native vegetation (including pickleweed and Spartina) and channelization. Low tides expose wide mudflats which, judging from the foraging activity, provide an abundance of food for the birds. At higher tides I've seen many of those same birds resting or even foraging in the higher-elevation vegetation. Aramburu, on the other hand features steeply

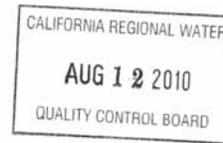
Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Juliet Grable

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Juliet Grable".

Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612



8/9/10

Re: Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for Aramburu Island

Dear Ms. Potter,

I am writing to express my support for the Aramburu Island Enhancement Project, currently being developed by the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary and The Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space. As a resident of Marin, I value our natural resources and feel it is critical that we do our best to ensure our protected areas provide the best possible habitat for wildlife, while protecting valuable coastlines.

It is important we ensure that as much remaining habitat be protected and restored for our native flora and fauna. It is important because as you know, so much of our wildlife habitat has been destroyed or impacted by human activities. Aramburu Island has great potential for establishing good native habitat and is already protected. It is in a key location on the edge of the Bay to be used by native birds and other wildlife. The Bay marshes and shorelines have been especially impacted by human alteration. Humans are the cause of these problems but they can also in act solutions through restoration and protection.

I fully support the current plan to remove non-native plants, increase cover of native plants, and expand seasonal wetlands and tidal marsh that will ultimately improve habitat for resident and migratory birds and marine mammals. Urban and industrial development around the entire San Francisco Bay, and the Marin Coastline in particular, has greatly limited habitat for native birds and wildlife. Enhancing habitat within Richardson Bay is critical for the large numbers of waterbirds that visit the site each year, earning Richardson Bay the designation of an Important Bird Area. This project is an important step in creating the types of habitat that were once common on Richardson Bay more than a century ago.

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921 Valley View Lane
Mill Valley, CA 94941
August 7, 2010

Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612



Re: Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for Aramburu Island

Dear Ms. Potter:

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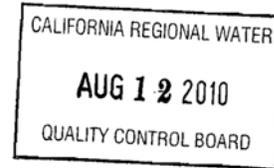
I support the work of Audubon and Marin County, and believe this project will greatly benefit the wildlife, habitats, and people of Richardson Bay and contribute to a healthier bay. Richardson Bay Audubon is a leader in environmental stewardship and habitat restoration in the Bay Area. From personal observation I can attest to the professionalism, knowledge and concern for our wildlife neighbors that the Richardson Bay Audubon staff bring to their endeavors. Through this Aramburu project their efforts will help mitigate some of the negative impact humans have had on the Bay. I am happy to see this project move forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Schriock".

Elizabeth Schriock

Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612



8/9/10

Re: Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for Aramburu Island

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Meryl Sundove".

Meryl Sundove
10 Echo Ave.
Corte Madera, CA 94925



Marin Audubon Society

P.O. Box 599 | MILL VALLEY, CA 94942-0599 | MARINAUDUBON.ORG

August 11, 2010

Sandi Potter
Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street
Oakland, CA 95812

Re: Aramburu Island Habitat Restoration Initial Study/Negative Declaration

Dear Ms Potter:

Marin Audubon strongly supports restoring/creating habitats on Aramburu Island. It is unfortunate that such a project was not implemented years ago when the housing on the Spit was developed. The site went into the ownership of a local businesswoman who created an inactive non-profit organization that did nothing to protect or enhance the habitat. So, while some wetland vegetation may have survived and expanded, many of the habitat conditions declined. In short, implementation of this project is long overdue.

We have a few questions and comments:

1) Public Access.

Aramburu Island was approved and created as mitigation for the Strawberry Spit residential development. The specific reason the island was created, in other words why the channel was cut, was to separate the island and protect it from the impacts of people. Public access for the Strawberry Spit project was required at the time this residential project was constructed. The public access component has already been provided on the Spit. It consists of a path around the Spit and benches so people can view the island and its wildlife.

Requiring public access as a requirement of permits for this restoration is in direct conflict with the habitat goals of for which the island was created, and places a undue burden on this project. Simply because the island habitat was not restored during or immediately after construction of the residential project, does not justify adding on such requirements now.

A landing for boats, rocks for people to sit and signs are being required for public access. The presence of these facilities will allow and encourage people to land and walk on the island. The facilities would simply set-up circumstances for adverse impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat to occur.

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

The potential adverse impacts should be identified, discussed and mitigation should be recommended. The potential impacts include: causing birds that are using marshes and other habitats to flee, increased litter and noise, trampling of vegetation, importing of seeds of invasive plants on shoes and clothing, and possibly direct damage to wildlife and destruction of habitats. What species is the gravel/cove area intended to serve? How would access by the public impact these species? In addition, the effectiveness of signage in discouraging or preventing people from accessing the entire island should be addressed.

By their very presence the proposed facilities would simply set up situations where the island habitat and the wildlife it is intended to serve, will be subjected to disturbances and other adverse impacts. We don't see any effective mitigation for the potential impacts, except avoidance. People in Marin County, in our experience, rarely pay attention to signs. There would be no human presence on the island to discourage access.

We suggest another access alternative: installing heavy-duty scopes along the shoreline, perhaps at the Sanctuary and north end of the Spit, so that people can have visual access to the island. Viewing from a distance is actually the best way to see the most wildlife. Entering their habitat simply causes wildlife to flee. The proposed access would not be the most rewarding experience for people, and would inhibit wildlife from using the habitat.

2) Project Habitat Design -

MAS's approach to restoration projects is usually one of trying to serve the species found in the vicinity or that should be found in the area whose habitats have been destroyed, creating habitats similar to natural habitats and creating habitats that do not require extensive ongoing maintenance. The project includes what appears to be a very complicated mix of habitats. What species are the various habitat segments designed to serve and how is the design serving them?

Of particular interest in restoring this island was that it provided refuge for birds that were affected by recent oil spills. What habitat features will enable birds that may be in similar circumstances in the future, access and use it for refuge?

The island was also intended to provide a haul-out area for harbor seals. The design includes a dredged channel intended to provide harbor seal access to the shoreline on the south end of the island. We wonder if this is the best location to encourage a haul-out because of its proximity to the Spit with its people and pet uses. Also, won't the seal channel silt in relative short period of time? Why was the original haul-out area abandoned?

3) Revegetation/Maintenance

We have some concern that the variety of habitats with lots of imported material will be complicated and expensive to manage and maintain. From our experience, the vegetation will require ongoing attention at least for five or more years. Watering is planned for immediately after installation, for one week and then twice a week from May to October,

with each event lasting four hours. Does that mean each area would be watered for four hours? From our experience this watering regime seems excessive and will certainly be costly.

We now have implemented several projects that have included upland plantings we have maintained, and we have had good success with plant survival. For example, at Triangle Marsh, which several miles from Aramburu Island and which probably had a more problematic soil mix (bay mud, local soil and dumped material of unknown origin) we watered three to four times during the first summer and not at all after that.

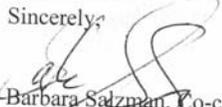
While the survival rate of native plants planted has been good, invasive plants have been problematic. For many years after construction, the project needs to plan to manage and remove invasive plants.

If public access is to be encouraged by placement of a ramp for boat access, there should be provision for protecting the irrigation system from vandalism and theft.

Finally, should any features of the project become dysfunctional, say the rocks or logs be dislodged, moved or washed away, would they need to be replaced? The County has very limited funds, as does Audubon, for such ongoing maintenance.

Thank you all for your work on this project. We look forward to its successful implementation and functioning.

Sincerely,


Barbara Salzman, Co-chair
Conservation Committee

cc: Marin County Open Space District
Richardson Bay Audubon Sanctuary

Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612

212 E. Strawberry Drive
Mill Valley, CA 94941
August 14, 2010

Re: Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for Aramburu Island

Dear Ms. Potter,

I am writing to express my support for the Aramburu Island Enhancement Project. As a resident of Strawberry, I value our natural resources and feel that we must do our best to ensure that protected areas provide the best possible habitat for wildlife, while protecting valuable coastlines.

I have lived in Strawberry for 25 years and have been recording my observations of birds in and near Richardson Bay for the last ten years. It is obvious to me that bird use of Aramburu Island is very light compared to their use of the smaller islands to the north. In its current state Aramburu Island's habitat is unattractive to most wildlife and does not meet the goals for which the island was cut off from the rest of the Strawberry spit.

Because of its relatively large size the potential of Aramburu Island as habitat is great and the type of habitat that it could provide is scarce. Hundreds of shorebirds feed on the mudflats and shallow water of Richardson Bay during the winter. These are not birds that rest on the water like ducks. They require a suitable area above the tide and the only suitable area around Richardson Bay is on the smaller northern-most island, Pickleweed Island. A much smaller number of birds may use the smallest island between Aramburu and Pickleweed.

There are 6 miles of shoreline from southern Belvedere to the tip of Strawberry and 2 more miles of shoreline to the Richardson Bay Bridge. Nowhere from Belvedere to Strawberry Point is there roosting habitat for shorebirds except on these islands. Nor is there nesting habitat for species that would live in uplands at the edge of the bay. The entire shore is lined with manmade structures and riprap beside busy recreational paths. West of Strawberry Point the only roosting area is at Strawberry Cove Park where some willets and yellowlegs rest when they aren't flushed by dogs.

Aramburu Island was intended to be habitat. To now provide facilities for public access is contrary to the purpose of providing habitat. If disturbance by the public ended harbor seals' use of Aramburu Island as a haulout site, the public should not be encouraged to set foot on the

island. The waters of Richardson Bay are closed to boaters during the wintering season for waterbirds and the roosting areas for shorebirds should also be off-limits.

Public access should not be provided for the purpose of observing the wildlife that we hope will find the new habitat attractive. Public access will make this scarce habitat less attractive to wildlife and will not provide a good observation point without disturbing those species people might want to observe. For observation points there are the Richardson Bay Audubon Center across the bay, the Harbor Cove Way shoreline path and the north end of Egret Way on the Strawberry spit. Observing wildlife from a boat will be like observing from a car: get out of the vehicle and the wildlife often flees.

I fully support the current plan to remove non-native plants, increase cover of native plants, and expand seasonal wetlands and tidal marsh that will ultimately improve habitat for resident and migratory birds and marine mammals. This project is an important step in creating the types of habitat that were once common on Richardson Bay more than a century ago.

In addition, this project will reduce the rate of erosion on the eastern side of Aramburu Island that currently contributes to increased sedimentation in Richardson Bay. Sedimentation and associated turbidity are deleterious to organisms such as oysters and eelgrass, organisms which could once again be important in the ecology of Richardson Bay.

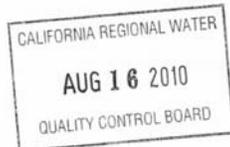
The potential impacts of the project discussed in the Initial Study Mitigated Negative Declaration were very thorough. Although the project could result in temporary increase in noise, erosion, or air emissions, the mitigation measures will substantially reduce or eliminate temporary project impacts. Dredging the navigation channel creates some of these same impacts. I feel that the mitigation measures proposed are more than adequate and these potential short-term impacts are worth the benefits that will result following enhancement of the Island.

I support the work of Audubon and Marin County, and believe this project will greatly benefit the wildlife, habitats, and people of Richardson Bay and contribute to a healthier bay. Richardson Bay Audubon is a leader in environmental stewardship and habitat restoration in the Bay Area. Audubon continues to ensure the protection of the Bay, from which we will all benefit.

While there are no guarantees of success for each and every goal of the project, it is guaranteed that without this project the habitat of Aramburu Island and perhaps of Richardson Bay will continue to deteriorate. After years of neglect for Aramburu Island I am happy to see this project move forward.

Sincerely,

Robert Hinz
rbrthnz@comcast.net



Sandi Potter
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612

August 13, 2010

Re: Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for Aramburu Island

Dear Ms. Potter,

I am writing to express my support for the Aramburu Island Enhancement Project, currently being developed by the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary and The Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space. As a resident of Marin, I value our natural resources and feel it is critical that we do our best to ensure our protected areas provide the best possible habitat for wildlife, while protecting valuable coastlines.

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Sincerely,



Dr. & Mrs. Newton Harband
50 Rhinestone Ter
San Rafael, CA 94903

Strawberry Recreation District Zone IV

Tirrell B. Graham, Chair
P.O. Box 1186
Tiburon, CA 94920

August 12, 2010

Sandi Potter
San Francisco Bay Water Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612

RE: Comments on Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for Aramburu Island Modification Project

Dear Sandi:

Below are our comments on the Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Aramburu Island Modification Project dated July 2010.

A general concern is the underlying rationale for this project. The *Need for the Project* states that this project is necessary because Aramburu Island's eastern shoreline is eroding, leading to reduced water quality and eventual erosion of the mainland west of the island (page 18). We have two issues with this logic.

First, this is a 180 degree shift in reasoning since the project's conception in the fall of 2008. A December 8, 2008 article in the Marin Independent Journal quotes an Audubon representative: "During very high tides the two lower islands are inundated, which is good because only the native plants, which are salt tolerant, survive. But on Aramburu there is not that inundation, so the non-natives do well." At one of the first public meetings, held on March 4, 2009, we were told that Aramburu Island needed to be modified to make it more attractive to various birds. Because it was higher than the other two Strawberry islands, it was not inundated by high tides as the other two were. Now we are told that inundation is bad because it causes erosion. Perhaps the island should be allowed to erode so that there would be natural saline irrigation. In any case, the CEQA document needs to provide a clear rationale for the project *Need* that is consistent with all past statements. Any inconsistencies need to be analyzed and explained.

Second, we question the causal link between the erosion of Aramburu Island and the erosion of the mainland. The idea of a causal relationship was first introduced to us at the April 27, 2010 meeting. To date we have seen no documentation regarding the speed or severity of the erosion. We question whether this project protects waterfront homeowners from an actual threat. The CEQA document must provide some data supporting these statements.

The Mitigated Negative Declaration contains some inaccuracies and omissions.

- On page 1 and page 33 the MND refers to the Harbor Cove Apartment Complex. There is no such entity. The Cove Apartments, located off Greenwood Beach Road in Tiburon,

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have apartments and boat docks. They use the Strawberry navigational Channel and participate in our dredging permit process. The Harbor Point Tennis Club, located on East Strawberry Drive, is near the channel but has no docks.

- Page 49 states “Aramburu Island is bordered to the south and west by a deep-water navigational channel that serves the local boating community. Harbor seals, pelicans, egrets, grebes, cormorants and other wildlife are commonly present in this dredged channel. These species are also common in the Richardson Bay Sanctuary waters, and in other parts of Richardson Bay.” This paragraph omits one important point. Because the Strawberry Channel is dredged, it provides at least 6 feet of water, 24 hours per day. In the channel birds can fish and seals can swim around the clock. In the undredged Richardson Bay Sanctuary waters, mudflats are exposed several hours a day. Seals do not use the shallow upper reaches of the Richardson Bay Sanctuary. There is a qualitative and quantitative difference between subtidal and shallow subtidal habitats, such as the dredged channel, and mudflats, respectively. This distinction and its implications should be discussed in the MND.
- Page 50, Figure 12, (*Surrounding Habitats and Sensitive Resources*) shows part of the deep water navigation channel with the comment “channel extends further south, extent unknown.” This channel extends south along the spit to the Strawberry Point and then proceeds around the Point and continues west to connect with the Sausalito Channel.
- Page 55 states that the California clapper rail survey performed by Strawberry Recreation District, Zone IV, occurred approximately 10 years ago. The survey was conducted in 2005.

We feel that several specific issues also need to be addressed.

- There is no mention of a requirement for a performance bond. Page 6 (*Community Participation*) contains a list of key issues identified during the project scoping but neither a performance bond nor reserve funds to correct adverse impacts is among them. This issue was raised both at the April 27, 2010 public meeting and in my letter of May 21, 2010. A performance bond and reserve funds should be part of the mitigation requirements. As noted in our earlier comments, performance bonds are common in connection with modification projects. The proposed project could have a significant impact if the modification work fails in some aspect. A bond would mitigate this possibility.
- On page 6, the MND states that a peer review of the draft Plan was completed. The review should be included in the document as an appendix so that the public can see the full content of the review.
- The *Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures* (page 8) states that mitigation monitoring can be delegated by the Regional Water Board to a public agency (e.g., Marin County) or a private entity (e.g., Audubon.) Given that the two sponsoring agencies could be monitoring their own project, they should prepare a semi-annual report of mitigation status that is available to the public. This should be required as a mitigation measure in the CEQA document.

- In *Table S-4: Summary of Potentially Significant Impacts and Required Mitigation Measures (page 9)*, the mitigation measure for nesting birds is ambiguous and should be reworded. First, the agencies that will be contacted should be specified. The measure should be reworded to simply state that, "construction shall be halted until either the CDFG or FWS are contacted and their guidance on appropriate measures provided." The measure should then describe how that guidance will be followed. Second, under CEQA, mitigation measures cannot simply rely on agency review. The measures must provide for actions that the lead agency will carry out that will mitigate for the impact. Accordingly, the elements in this measure that would be carried out independent of agency review (e.g. "establishing disturbance buffers") need to be described in enough detail to ensure their implementation.
- On page 16, the text states that erosion of the scarp on the east side is degrading local waters and may be harming local shellfish beds. This is unsubstantiated and requires support as it forms the basis for the project need (see above also).
- The *Summary* does not adequately discuss recreational boat use, which is an important part of the Strawberry neighborhood character. There is a minor reference on page 19 ("The project would also not interfere with maintenance dredging of adjacent navigation routes.") At a minimum, this should specifically mention the Strawberry Channel maintained and funded by Zone IV. This channel has existed since the 1950s and borders approximately 65 homes in Strawberry as well as the Cove Apartments in Tiburon. Navigational use should also be fully described in the CEQA document and some quantification of that use provided so that decision-makers can understand the project context.
- We are learning for the first time of the plan to put a floating or submersible pump in the Strawberry navigation channel to support the *Saline Irrigation system* and perhaps a second pump for the *Revegetation System* (page 31). We need specific information about this plan for each pump (proposed location in our channel, proposed markings, type of pump, type of generator, anticipated noise, location of generator enclosure, size and color of enclosure. We also need to know the anticipated length of time the pumps will be required (3 years?) We are very concerned about this potential navigational hazard in the Strawberry Channel. This is a potentially significant impact and its late introduction as a project element is problematic. A full discussion is needed in the CEQA document.

On July 29 I e-mailed a request for additional information about the proposed pumping system to the County, Audubon, and the Water Board. On August 5 I received a telephone response from an Audubon representative attempting to answer some of my questions. I received some information about the generator and the pump (although I couldn't find the specific pump model on the internet) but also learned that the pump's location in the navigation channel will not be determined until the modification of the Aramburu Island is underway. This is unacceptable. The specifics (as mentioned above) about the pump and generator should be available for public review and comment prior to the start of this project.

Additionally, saline irrigation is a relatively untried technique and its probability of success is unknown. Pumping from the Bay is problematic because the large amount of

suspended material in the Bay constantly clogs the filters. The large numbers of small aquatic organisms in the Bay will also seek to colonize the pump filters and adjacent substrate. The irrigation itself has not been shown to appreciably reduce noxious exotic growth. Examples should be provided of its use and performance to allow a full review of the potential impacts.

- We have several questions regarding the *Revegetation System* (page 31). The MND mentions a “freshwater tank or bladder system.” However, there is no detail regarding: storage capacity, dimensions, color, or location of the tank; what “hydrant” is planned to be used from shore; storage location of the hose when not connected from hydrant to tank; length of time the navigation channel will be blocked by the hose; length of time the tank is planned to remain on the island; who will remove it, etc..

Moreover, the freshwater irrigation plan described on page 31 contradicts the comment on page 98, *XVII. Utilities and Service Systems, paragraph b* which states: “If irrigation were required, water would be provided via tanks refilled by Audubon Society staff and transported to the Island by boat.” This contradiction needs explanation.

- The MND proposes increasing the use of “large woody debris” (LWD) to help retain beach materials (pages 6, 19, 20, and 22). However, no mention is made as to how the LWD will be secured to prevent it from floating away and becoming a navigational hazard.
- The MND proposes adding two signs to the Island (page 20) identifying it as sensitive wildlife habitat with access restrictions. No detail is given regarding: size, color, mounting, enforcement, etc.
- Pages 26, 30 and 31 describe transportation of materials to Aramburu Island. However, no reference is made to the possible impact on recreational boating. There should be discussion about plans not to interfere with use of the channel by recreational boaters during mobilization, demobilization, and delivery or removal of materials used in the project or removed from the island in what will be the prime boating season. Page 30 states that a larger barge will be anchored in the deepwater area of Richardson Bay but does not specify location. Page 31 states that a smaller barge will be used to transport materials and will be “docked” (there is no dock on Aramburu, so we assume the MND means “beached”) for 30 – 90 minutes to unload. No location is specified and no indication is given as to whether the entire channel will be blocked during that time.
- The description of “Project specific biological surveys” states that the floristic survey was done in spring 2009 (*IV. Biological Resources, Background, page 49*). However, page 53 states that no sensitive plants have been seen during the “numerous” fall, winter, summer and spring surveys. The latter implies that the page 49 statement is inaccurate. If so, that statement should be changed and data sheets from these additional surveys included in an Appendix. If special status plants were currently on-site, this would be an issue because disturbance of these plants could be a significant impact. If the surveys did not review the site during the appropriate time to find these plants, that would be an issue as well. In any case, the CEQA document should clarify when the floristic surveys were done and whether the surveys were done at the appropriate time for the likely species.

- The special status wildlife (SSW) section (*IV. Biological Resources*, page 55 – page 59) seems especially ambiguous and requires additional discussion. For example, the first sentence states that there is no breeding habitat for the 6 SSW known from the region. However, fish, which are a type of wildlife, are apparently excluded from the list, which is contained in footnote 1 and includes only birds. Perhaps the MND should state that there is no breeding habitat for the 6 special status birds known from the region. However, this is contradicted by the presence of breeding habitat for at least one of these birds—the San Pablo song sparrow—as noted in the comment below. In any case, the next paragraph on page 55 goes on to describe the special status fish known from the region so this should be clarified.
- As noted above, while page 55 states there is no breeding habitat for the San Pablo song sparrow, Appendix B is ambiguous with regard to the status of the San Pablo song sparrow. From the description in the Appendix, the song sparrow is a likely inhabitant. Given the habitat requirements for this species, it should be considered a likely inhabitant of the Island.
- The list of fish that were assessed on page 55 does not include the longfin smelt (State listed), which is known to be in this area. Potential impacts to this species should be examined.
- The description of wetlands and waters loss on page 60 is unclear. It appears that the project will result in the addition of wetland acreage but may result in the loss of non-wetland "waters of the State/U.S." acreage. This needs to be clarified and explained. Additionally, such a loss is typically considered a significant impact. Moreover, reliance solely on erosion control measures or permitting by the regulatory agencies as mitigation for this loss is not appropriate. The CEQA document should spell out how mitigation for these impacts will be completed.
- *Mitigation Measure IX-1 (IX. Hydrology and Water Quality*, page 74) mentions that training will be required for all contractors working on the site to insure best management practices (BMPs) in the implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan. However, there is no mention of who will conduct or monitor the training or what the training will include. Also, who will residents contact if they observe the contractor failing to comply with the BMPs?
- The *Environmental Checklist* ignored several comments in my letter of May 21, 2010 and omits any reference to the possible impact of this project on the dredged Strawberry Channel. The *Public Services* checklist should include a comment that changes to Aramburu Island will not result in restricted access to the dredged Channel from the Strawberry Recreation District's public dock. The community uses this dock for swimming and as a launching point for small boats. In addition, the *Recreation* checklist should include a comment that no changes on Aramburu Island will result in restricted dredging or use of the Strawberry Channel.
- There is a contradiction in the assessment of Aramburu Island's value as a habitat. Page 60 of the *Biological Resources* section states that Aramburu Island provides "only

marginal habitat for native wildlife species.” Yet page 51 states that “many species of wildlife, birds and fish use Aramburu Island and the surrounding subtidal habitats of Richardson Bay.” Table 7 (page 54) lists several birds and animals found on the Island. Also, there is no contingency plan for an unsuccessful island modification. There is a possibility that the Island will have less functional value than it does now. The impacts resulting from project failure need to be addressed and mitigation, such as the bond noted above, defined.

We find it interesting, if somewhat disappointing, that the lengthy MND gives no credit to the homeowners comprising Zone IV for maintaining the navigable channel for several decades. Without our financial support, the Strawberry Channel would not be dredged. This would not only affect the seals, birds and fish that can use the channel around the clock. It would also prevent or severely curtail the movement of material-laden barges needed for this project.

We look forward to receiving additional information about the irrigation system and the erosion rates as soon as possible. In addition, we have raised a number of substantial questions about gaps in the information provided in the Mitigated Negative Declaration. We request that the MND be revised, the additional information provided, and the MND then re-circulated for comment.

Sincerely,

Tirrell B. Graham
Chair

cc: Brooke Langston, Richardson Bay Audubon Society
Elise Holland, County of Marin, Department of Parks and Open Space
✓ Supervisor, Charles McGlashan, County of Marin Board of Supervisors



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DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
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Santa Barbara, California 93109

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, Governor
John McCamman, Director



December 11, 2010

Sandi Potter
San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, California 94612

Dear Ms. Potter:

The Department of Fish and Game (Department) has reviewed the Initial Study and Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Aramburu Island Shoreline Protection and Habitat Enhancement Project in Richardson Bay, California. Aramburu Island is bordered to the east by the 911-acre Richardson Bay Audubon Sanctuary, to the north by two smaller islands supporting tidal marsh habitat and to the south and west by a deep-water navigation channel that serves local boaters and private docks along Strawberry Spit and Strawberry Point. The site is designated in the Marin Countywide Plan as Open Space and is owned by the County of Marin and maintained by the Department of Parks and Open Space as a wildlife preserve. Habitat on Aramburu Island has been degraded significantly over time limiting the capacity for the island to fully serve its intended purpose as a wildlife preserve.

The proposed project includes the following components:

- Beach stabilization features of sand, gravel, and shell;
- Beach retention features (micro-groins /spits);
- Large woody debris;
- Oyster habitat (subtidal reefs);
- Habitat features for harbor seals (subtidal channel immediately offshore of the southeastern corner of the island)

As trustee for the State's fish and wildlife resources, the Department has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species. In this capacity, the Department administers the California Endangered Species Act, the Native Plant Protection Act, and other provisions of the California Fish and Game Code and the California Code of Regulations, Title 14 that afford protection to the State's fish and wildlife trust resources.

Conserving California's Wildlife Since 1870

Sandi Potter
December 11, 2010
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Proposed shoreline enhancement actions would occur only on the eastern shoreline of the island. Various shoreline enhancement features will result in a variety of shoreline and intertidal habitats. The project will involve the construction of a subtidal channel that could cause an impact to marine resources in the area through direct physical harm or disruption in feeding/movement behavior. Increased water column turbidity from construction activities could also cause a disturbance to these animals through a reduction in visibility that may inhibit feeding ability. In addition, fish and marine mammals could be impacted by the runoff of sediment and petroleum products from the island terrace during construction. All materials used for creating habitat (large woody debris, subtidal reef material) should be contaminant free and not render itself to be deleterious to fish and wildlife. To reduce impacts, construction of the subtidal channel will be performed between June 1 and either October 31 or November 30 to conform with established work windows. Silt fences or straw wattles will be installed along the toes of slopes and designated staging areas and erosion control netting will be used on sloped areas to minimize soil erosion and prevent sediment from entering adjacent waters of the Bay. All construction activities shall occur at low tides when no water is present to reduce impact. The applicant shall have biological surveys conducted by a qualified biologist within two weeks of the commencement of construction activities.

The Department believes that the MND is adequate in its portrayal of impacts to fish and wildlife resources and habitats associated with the project. We concur with the mitigation measures described in the MND to reduce potential impacts to fish and wildlife. Therefore, the Department does not object to the project provided the described mitigation measures are implemented. ~~Additionally, we would like to receive copies of any reports, surveys, or protocols associated with this project.~~

As always, Department personnel are available to discuss our comments, concerns, and recommendations in greater detail. To arrange for a discussion please contact George Isaac, Environmental Scientist, California Department of Fish and Game, 20 Lower Ragsdale Drive, Monterey, CA 94306 by telephone (831) 649-2813 or e-mail at gisaac@dfg.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Becky Ota Acting for Marija Vojkovich
Regional Manager, Marine Region

cc: See Page Two

