

January 19, 2022

Zack Wasserman, Chair
San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission
375 Beale St., Suite 510
San Francisco, CA 94105

Re: Support for Bay Adapt: Regional Strategy for a Rising Bay

Dear Chair Wasserman:

I am pleased to let you know that SPUR endorses “Bay Adapt: Regional Strategy for a Rising Bay.” The Bay Adapt Joint Platform is the result of a stakeholder-led process to determine the best ways for the Bay Area to become regionally resilient to rising sea levels.

While the Bay’s shoreline constitutes one-third of the California coastline, the Bay Area will likely experience two-thirds of the negative economic impacts due to the flooding caused by rising sea levels absent adequate measures to adapt and protect people, places, and habitat. Higher sea levels exacerbated by more intense winter storms and higher runoff will increase the frequency and duration of shoreline flooding. Flood events already occur during severe winter storms, especially when they co-occur with high tides. Pushed even higher by rising sea levels, these once-rare events will become increasingly common.

The Joint Platform shares a common vision with the views articulated by SPUR and San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI) in the *San Francisco Bay Shoreline Adaptation Atlas*. In the *Adaptation Atlas*, SFEI and SPUR argued that the Bay Area needs a locally adaptable, regional framework for sea level rise planning. The overriding goal should be to create a Bay that is more resilient to sea level rise through investments in nature-based solutions. Local planning processes must be driven by the needs of the local ecosystems and communities, especially frontline communities who are disproportionately exposed to the risks of a rising Bay.

In the face of this challenge, the Bay Area must protect and energize vulnerable and historically marginalized frontline communities, enhance and restore an ecosystem that is already deeply affected by human activities, and reduce flood risks for existing built infrastructure along the vast bay shoreline. Yet, the increasingly frequent and severe impacts of climate change in the Bay Area do not conform to our governments’ jurisdictional boundaries or the planning and regulatory authorities of any one agency or organization. Bay Adapt begins to address these challenges by laying out a set of guiding principles, priority actions, and vital tasks that public, private, and nonprofit organizations, including local governments with land use authorities, can voluntarily implement in a coordinated and collaborative manner to adapt faster, better, and more equitably to a rising San Francisco Bay.

It will take tremendous efforts and investments to adapt the San Francisco Bay Area to a constantly changing shoreline and continue to improve its vibrant, diverse, ecologically unique,

innovative, and pioneering quality of life. Implementing Bay Adapt will reduce flood risks for communities, businesses, infrastructure, and habitat, increase technical assistance for local governments and funding for adaptation, protect natural areas and wildlife, recognize and equitably support low-income, frontline communities, robustly integrate adaptation into community-focused local plans, and accelerate permitting and project construction of local adaptation projects.

While SPUR strongly endorses the Bay Adapt Joint Platform, we urge all endorsing parties to view the Joint Platform as a starting point. The important work of implementation lies ahead. We urge BCDC to take a leadership role in describing and carrying out a Bay Adapt implementation roadmap that includes a timeline, delineation of responsibilities, and funding needs and sources. As always, equity must be infused through the implementation process. We strongly urge BCDC and its government partners not to just “consult” with community partners, but to give non-government organizations a leadership role in program implementation.

We look forward to working with BCDC and all of Bay Adapt’s stakeholders to ensure that the entire Bay Area thrives in the face of rising sea levels.

Sincerely,

Alicia John-Baptiste
President and CEO
SPUR