



111 SW Columbia Street, Suite 200  
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[pewtrusts.org](http://pewtrusts.org)

November 10, 2020

Mark Gold, Executive Director  
Ocean Protection Council  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Gold:

We are writing to express our strong support for the grant application submitted by Audubon California to the Ocean Protection Council's Prop 68 Coastal Resilience Grants program for the "Eelgrass Habitat Suitability Model Update for Targeted, Climate-Smart Eelgrass Restoration in San Francisco Bay".

The Pew Charitable Trusts works to advance the protection and restoration of ecologically important coastal habitat, including submerged aquatic vegetation such as eelgrass. Healthy subtidal eelgrass beds are a keystone of functioning, resilient estuaries in California. Eelgrass beds produce oxygen, store carbon, and ameliorate impacts of ocean acidification; provide habitat for young fish, shellfish, and larvae; absorb excess nutrients; anchor shoreline soils and sediments and dampen waves; increase water clarity by filtering sediments; and—through its leaves and the many life forms that grow on them—are a critical foundation of a food web supporting countless birds and aquatic animals.

Because of growing threats to this essential habitat, numerous groups in California are engaged in efforts to protect, conserve, and restore eelgrass. However, experience has shown that the existing data and tools being used to guide these efforts are insufficient.

The project proposed by Audubon brings together qualified technical experts to revise a 17-year-old eelgrass habitat suitability model with updated and climate-relevant data in order to identify those protection, restoration, and mitigation strategies and locations most likely to have the greatest lasting benefits in San Francisco Bay. It is a project that advances prudent spending of public funds and applies the best available science to ensuring the resilience of our coastal ecosystems in a changing climate using living, nature-based approaches.

Additionally, while the model focuses on San Francisco Bay, the project team intends to leverage the work done on this updated model to develop similar models for four other California estuaries: Humboldt Bay, Tomales Bay, Mission Bay, and San Diego Bay. The information provided by the updated models will be used by resource managers and regulators, such as NOAA and CDFW, local land use planners and restoration practitioners, and policy makers to avoid and mitigate impacts to eelgrass beds.

The proposed project directly supports two of the OPC Strategic Plan's eelgrass-specific targets and actions (3.1.4 and 1.1.1) and is a strong match for this funding. We enthusiastically support this proposal and urge the Ocean Protection Council to approve Audubon's request for funding.

Thank you for considering this important project.

Sincerely,

Steve Marx  
Officer, The Pew Charitable Trusts  
[smarx@pewtrusts.org](mailto:smarx@pewtrusts.org)



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November 12, 2020

Mark Gold, Ph.D. Executive Director  
Ocean Protection Council  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: OPC Prop 68 Coastal Resilience Grant Application for the “Eelgrass Habitat Suitability Model Update to Advance Targeted, Climate-Smart Eelgrass Restoration in San Francisco Bay” project

Dear Dr. Gold:

I write to express my strong support for the grant application submitted by Audubon California to the Ocean Protection Council’s Prop 68 Coastal Resilience Grants program for the “Eelgrass Habitat Suitability Model Update for Targeted, Climate-Smart Eelgrass Restoration in San Francisco Bay” project.

Healthy subtidal eelgrass beds are a keystone of climate resilient bays in California. Eelgrass beds produce oxygen, store carbon, and ameliorate impacts of ocean acidification; provide habitat for young fish, shellfish, and larvae; absorb excess nutrients; anchor shoreline soils and sediments and damp waves; increase water clarity by promoting sediment settlement; and—through its leaves and the many life forms that grow on them—are a critical foundation of a food web supporting countless birds and aquatic animals.

Because of growing threats to this essential workhorse of a habitat, numerous groups in California are engaged in efforts to protect, conserve, and restore eelgrass. However, experience has shown that the existing data and tools being used to guide these efforts are insufficient. The project proposed by Audubon brings together the most qualified technical experts to work together to revise a 17-year-old eelgrass habitat suitability model with updated and climate-relevant data in order to identify those protection, restoration, and mitigation strategies and locations most likely to have the greatest lasting benefits in San Francisco Bay. It is a project that advances prudent spending of public funds and applies the best of our science to the task of maximizing the resilience of our coastal ecosystems in a changing climate using living, nature-based approaches.

While the model focuses on San Francisco Bay, the project team has a larger vision. Their intention is to leverage the work done on this first updated model to develop similar models for four other eelgrass strongholds in California: Humboldt Bay, Tomales Bay, Mission Bay, and San Diego Bay.

The information provided by the updated models will be used by resource managers and regulators such as NOAA, CDFW, and local land use planners to avoid and mitigate impacts to eelgrass beds; as well as by restoration practitioners, grantors, land conservancies, and policy makers.

San Francisco State University faculty, staff, and students based at the Estuary & Ocean Science (EOS) Center have played a strong role in using science to guide, and more importantly learn from, eelgrass restoration projects to improve their success in the future, because of the scientific leadership of Dr. Katharyn Boyer. Dr. Boyer's involvement in this project will further support engagement with training students and junior professionals in the latest science and best practices of restoration ecology. It will also contribute to the EOS Center's ongoing student and professional training and public engagement on the many co-benefits of carbon storage and habitat conservation provided by aquatic vegetation (also known as "blue carbon"). The proposed project directly supports two of the OPC Strategic Plan's eelgrass-specific targets and actions (3.1.4 and 1.1.1) and is a strong match for this funding. I enthusiastically support this proposal and urge the Ocean Protection Council to approve Audubon's request for funding.

Thank you for considering this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karina J. Nielsen', written in a cursive style.

Karina J. Nielsen Ph.D.  
Executive Director and Professor of Biology  
Estuary & Ocean Science Center

# San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

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November 12, 2020

Dr. Mark Gold  
California Ocean Protection Council  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

## **SUBJECT: Support for Audubon California’s Proposition 68 Grant Proposal**

Dear Dr. Gold:

On behalf of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), I want to express support for the grant application submitted by Audubon California to the Ocean Protection Council’s Prop 68 Coastal Resilience Grants program for the *“Eelgrass Habitat Suitability Model Update for Targeted, Climate-Smart Eelgrass Restoration in San Francisco Bay”* project.

BCDC, the nation’s first coastal zone management agency, continues to lead the Bay Area’s development of a regional strategy to protect people, habitat, and commerce in light of rising sea level. Healthy subtidal eelgrass beds are a keystone of climate resilient bays in California. Within San Francisco Estuary, Richardson Bay stands out as a particularly unique location for eelgrass restoration. It harbors the second largest extant eelgrass bed in the estuary, and plants with the most genetic diversity of six beds sampled. Richardson Bay is within BCDC’s jurisdiction and has eelgrass restoration plot test sites that will be planted within the coming year to determine the best way to restore subtidal habitat damage. These sites are anticipated to be developed to address subtidal habitat damage resulting from unpermitted activity on the bay. The work supported by this grant will help inform best practices for eelgrass restoration throughout the bay including in Richardson Bay which will be of long-term benefit to BCDC in its work to protect people, habitat, and commerce in light of rising sea level.

The project proposed by Audubon brings together the most qualified technical experts to revise a 17-year-old eelgrass habitat suitability model with updated and climate-relevant data in order to identify those protection, restoration, and mitigation strategies and locations most likely to have the greatest lasting benefits in San Francisco Bay. It is a project that advances prudent spending of public funds and applies the best of our science to the task of maximizing the resilience of our coastal ecosystems in a changing climate using living, nature-base approaches.

While the model focuses on San Francisco Bay, the project team has a larger vision. Their intention is to leverage the work done on this first updated model to develop similar models



for four other eelgrass strongholds in California: Humboldt Bay, Tomales Bay, Mission Bay, and San Diego Bay. The information provided by the updated models will be used by resource managers and regulators such as NOAA, CDFW, and local land use planners to avoid and mitigate impacts to eelgrass beds; as well as by restoration practitioners, grantors, land conservancies, and policy makers.

BCDC recognizes Audubon California's efforts are critical for achieving climate and community resilience goals while also supporting local community-based organizations to continue important resilience work. We look forward to your review of this application and are optimistic about the opportunity to participate in this project.

Sincerely,



LAWRENCE J. GOLDZBAND  
Executive Director  
San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission  
Bay Area Metro Center  
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MANAGEMENT BOARD:

*Bay Area Audubon Council  
Bay Area Open Space Council  
Bay Planning Coalition  
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California Department of  
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National Marine Fisheries  
Service  
Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
San Francisco Estuary Project  
SF Bay Regional Water Quality  
Control Board  
State Coastal Conservancy  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
U.S. Environmental  
Protection Agency  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
U.S. Geological Survey  
Wildlife Conservation Board*

November 10, 2020

Mr. Mark Gold, Executive Director  
Ocean Protection Council, California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth street, suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: OPC Prop 68 Coastal Resilience Grant Application for the “Eelgrass Habitat Suitability Model Update to Advance Targeted, Climate-Smart Eelgrass Restoration in San Francisco Bay” project**

Dear Mr. Gold:

On behalf of the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture (SFBJV), I am writing in support of the grant application submitted by Audubon California to the Ocean Protection Council’s Prop 68 Coastal Resilience Grants program for the “Eelgrass Habitat Suitability Model Update for Targeted, Climate-Smart Eelgrass Restoration in San Francisco Bay” project.

The SFBJV is a partnership of non-governmental organizations, utilities, landowners, and non-voting agencies with a goal to protect, restore and enhance wetlands that provide benefits to birds, fish, and other wildlife in the San Francisco Bay Area and outer coast. The SFBJV is one of the twenty two federally-sponsored habitat Joint Ventures to implement the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and federal bird conservation plans. The SFBJV Implementation Plan, *Restoring the Estuary* targets nearly 200,000 acres of wetlands, subtidal habitats, seasonal wetlands, and riparian habitats for protection, restoration, or enhancement. The SFBJV Management Board consists of 26 agencies and private organizations whose members agree to promote the goals and objectives of SFBJV and who represent the diversity of wetland interests found in the San Francisco Bay region. Audubon California has been an important partner on many habitat projects within the region and regularly participates in the Conservation Delivery Committee of the SFBJV, where partners develop collaborative approaches to the region’s most pressing conservation challenges.

Healthy subtidal eelgrass beds are a keystone of climate resilient bays in California and are a target habitat for SFBJV conservation action. Eelgrass beds produce oxygen, store carbon, and ameliorate impacts of ocean acidification; provide habitat for young fish, shellfish, and larvae; absorb excess nutrients; anchor shoreline soils and sediments and damp waves; increase water clarity by filtering sediments; and—through its leaves and the many life forms that grow on them—are a critical foundation of a food web supporting countless birds and aquatic animals.

Because of growing threats to this essential habitat, numerous groups in California are engaged in efforts to protect, conserve, and restore eelgrass.

However, experience has shown that the existing data and tools being used to guide these efforts are insufficient.

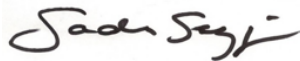
The project proposed by Audubon brings together the most qualified technical experts to revise a 17-year-old eelgrass habitat suitability model with updated and climate-relevant data in order to identify those protection, restoration, and mitigation strategies and locations most likely to have the greatest lasting benefits in San Francisco Bay. It is a project that advances applies the best of our science to the task of maximizing the resilience of our coastal ecosystems in a changing climate using living, nature-based approaches. The information generated from this project will be invaluable in advancing the SFBJV habitat goals for this critical habitat.

While the model focuses on San Francisco Bay, the project team has a larger vision. Their intention is to leverage the work done on this first updated model to develop similar models for four other eelgrass strongholds in California: Humboldt Bay, Tomales Bay, Mission Bay, and San Diego Bay. While the SFBJV focuses primarily on the habitats within the region, the partnership also works at the Pacific Flyway scale to advance coordinated conservation action at larger landscape scales. We believe this project will help advance efforts to understand and approach conservation action throughout the flyway.

Audubon California has a well-established reputation and track record of implementing successful projects. Their participation within collaborative forums such as those hosted by the SFBJV that include conservation practitioners, scientists, regulators and policy makers also ensures that the critical knowledge gained through these projects are shared, thus multiplying the impact of their projects.

In recognition of these valuable benefits and contributions to existing collaborative efforts, we encourage your strong consideration of this proposal. If you have any questions about the project or SFBJV support, please contact me at [sscoggin@sfbayjv.org](mailto:sscoggin@sfbayjv.org) or 415-699-3586.

Sincerely,



Sandra Scoggin  
SFBJV Coordinator  
415-699-3586  
[sscoggin@sfbayjv.org](mailto:sscoggin@sfbayjv.org)

# RICHARDSON'S BAY REGIONAL AGENCY

November 2, 2020

Mark Gold, Executive Director  
Ocean Protection Council  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: OPC Prop 68 Coastal Resilience Grant Application for the "Eelgrass Habitat Suitability Model Update to Advance Targeted, Climate-Smart Eelgrass Restoration in San Francisco Bay" project

Dear Mr. Gold:

I am writing to express my support for the grant application submitted by Audubon California to the Ocean Protection Council's Prop 68 Coastal Resilience Grants program for the "Eelgrass Habitat Suitability Model Update for Targeted, Climate-Smart Eelgrass Restoration in San Francisco Bay" project.

As you know, healthy subtidal eelgrass beds are a keystone of climate resilient bays in California. Eelgrass beds produce oxygen, store carbon, and ameliorate impacts of ocean acidification; provide habitat for young fish, shellfish, and larvae; absorb excess nutrients; anchor shoreline soils and sediments and damp waves; increase water clarity by filtering sediments; and—through its leaves and the many life forms that grow on them—are a critical foundation of a food web supporting countless birds and aquatic animals.

Numerous groups in California are engaged in efforts to protect, conserve, and restore eelgrass because of its high habitat value and growing threats to the survival of this essential workhorse. However, experience has shown that the existing data and tools being used to guide these efforts are insufficient and could be improved.

The project proposed by Audubon brings together the most qualified technical experts to improve a 17-year-old eelgrass habitat suitability model with updated and climate-relevant data in order to identify those protection, restoration, and mitigation strategies and locations most likely to have the greatest lasting benefits in San Francisco Bay. It is a project that advances prudent spending of public funds and applies the best of our science to the task of maximizing the resilience of our coastal ecosystems in a changing climate using living, nature-based approaches.

While the model focuses on San Francisco Bay, the project team has a larger vision. Their intention is to leverage the work done on this first updated model to develop similar models for four other eelgrass strongholds in California: Humboldt Bay, Tomales Bay, Mission Bay, and San Diego Bay.

The information provided by the updated models will be used by resource managers and regulators such as NOAA, CDFW, and local land use planners to avoid and mitigate impacts to eelgrass beds; as well as by restoration practitioners, grantors, land conservancies, and policy makers.

This project hits particularly close to home for me. I serve as the Harbormaster for the Richardson's Bay Regional Agency and am regularly on the water, observing firsthand all the life that the eelgrass supports. My agency works closely with the Richardson Bay Audubon Center and Sanctuary. We are hoping that our combined efforts will improve habitat conditions within Richardson's Bay. The approach is diverse,



comprehensive and dynamic, and I'm excited to continue working with Audubon because I think we can make a difference.

The proposed project directly supports two of the OPC Strategic Plan's eelgrass-specific targets and actions (3.1.4 and 1.1.1) and is a strong match for this funding. I enthusiastically support this proposal and urge the Ocean Protection Council to approve Audubon's request for funding.

Thank you for considering this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Curtis Havel', with a large, stylized initial 'C'.

Curtis Havel  
Harbormaster  
Richardson's Bay Regional Agency  
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 308  
San Rafael, CA 94903  
[chavel@marincounty.org](mailto:chavel@marincounty.org)  
(415) 971-3919  
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The Richardson's Bay Regional Agency (RBRA) is a local government agency serving Belvedere, Mill Valley, Tiburon, and unincorporated Southern Marin. RBRA is dedicated to maintaining and improving the navigational waterways, open waters, and shoreline of Richardson's Bay.