

MEMORANDUM

May 23, 2006

TO: Bolinas Lagoon Technical Advisory Committee

FROM: Sharon McNamee, General Manager
Ronald Miska, Assistant General Manager

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION THAT THE BOLINAS LAGOON TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FORWARD TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MARIN COUNTY OPEN SPACE DISTRICT FOR ACCEPTANCE THE REPORT ENTITLED "PROJECTING THE FUTURE EVOLUTION OF BOLINAS LAGOON" AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

RECOMMENDATION:

Forward a recommendation to the Board of Directors of the Marin County Open Space District (MCOSD) that it accept the report entitled "Projecting the Future Evolution of Bolinas Lagoon" and its supporting documents.

SUMMARY:

The subject report has undergone scientific peer review by a Technical Review Group (TRG) and a Project Reformulation Advisory Group (PRAG). It has also been subject to a 45 day public comment period and was the subject of a public meeting sponsored by the Open Space District on May 2, 2006. As a consequence of its rigorous scientific and public review, there is consensus that the report:

- Gives a scientifically valid projection of the lagoon's evolution over the next 50 years
- Provides a sound basis for an informed public discussion regarding the future of Bolinas Lagoon
- Provides a sound basis for describing a no action alternative should the Open Space District move forward to complete the Bolinas Lagoon Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study.

The report that was distributed for public review February 2006 already incorporated comments from the Technical Review Group. The report that would be forwarded to the MCOSD Board of Directors would include an executive

summary and would also reflect minor corrections and clarifications based on comments from the public, the PRAG and, if warranted, your Committee.

The MCOSD Board of Directors is scheduled to consider your Committee's recommendation on June 6.

DISCUSSION: In 1997, the Open Space District partnered with the United States Army Corps of Engineers to study sediment accumulation in Bolinas Lagoon and its consequences for the lagoon's ecosystem. In 2002, the Corps issued a report, the "Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Report and Draft Feasibility Report – Bolinas Lagoon Ecosystem Restoration Project", that set forth two alternative projects to restore Bolinas Lagoon's ecosystems, plus an assessment of the lagoon's evolution if no action were taken to address sediment accumulation in the lagoon. Both alternatives involved dredging to remove 1.4 million cubic yards of sediment and upland fill from selected areas of the lagoon at a cost of more than \$100 million. The Feasibility Report was challenged from a number of perspectives after it was released for public comment.

As a consequence of the public response to the Corps report, the Open Space District initiated an effort to develop a scientifically sound projection of how Bolinas Lagoon will change in physical form and as habitat over the next 50 years. This undertaking, begun in 2003, would permit the District and the public to reassess the purpose and need for an ecosystem restoration project at Bolinas Lagoon. In the parlance of environmental review requirements set forth by state and federal law, the resulting report, prepared by Philip Williams and Associates (PWA), describes the consequences of a "no action alternative" against which possible intervention alternatives could be compared.

The PWA report was prepared pursuant to a process recommended by the Bolinas Lagoon Technical Advisory Committee. This process subjected PWA's work to rigorous scientific peer review by a Technical Review Group (TRG) and a Project Reformulation Advisory Group (PRAG). During project planning, data gathering, and analyses, the TRG provided PWA with advice and comments that contributed greatly to the scientific soundness of the PWA report. These comments were assembled and summarized by Dr. Josh Collins of the San Francisco Estuary Institute, who coordinated the TRG.

Public meetings were also an integral part of report development. The Open Space District kept the public informed of the report preparation process by posting all reports generated by PWA and the TRG on its website, www.marinopenspace.org. The Open Space District also sponsored seven public meetings at various project milestones. All comments from the recent public comment period, together with a summary of PWA's responses to them, were posted on www.marinopenspace.org. In general, public comments resulted in a few corrections and statements to clarify the PWA Report. Many who submitted comments expressed a position regarding whether the District should take action to address the consequences of sediment accumulation in the lagoon.