



THE RBRA ROUNDUP

Fall 2024

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THE RICHARDSON BAY REGIONAL AGENCY NEWSLETTER, VOLUME 5

Welcome to the fifth edition of our quarterly newsletter, which will provide all the latest news, accomplishments and milestones of the Richardson Bay Regional Agency!

The RBRA is a local government agency serving Belvedere, Mill Valley, Tiburon and unincorporated Southern Marin. The RBRA is dedicated to maintaining and improving the navigational waterways, open waters and shoreline of Richardson Bay.

RBRA CELEBRATES LAUNCH OF EELGRASS PROTECTION ZONE

On Wednesday, October 30, the RBRA and its federal, state and local partners celebrated the launch of a new Eelgrass Protection Zone, an area of the water off-limits to anchoring that will help restore and protect a critical ecological component of the Bay.

Richardson Bay contains the second largest eelgrass meadow in San Francisco Bay and is noted for its high genetic diversity. It supports fisheries, reduces erosion, sequesters carbon and is a crucial ecological resource for harbor porpoises, seals, and sea lions. However, when anchors, chains, and other ground tackle scrape along the Bay bottom, they essentially act as a lawn mower for all living plants. This results in barren areas where no eelgrass can grow.

To combat those impacts and to provide an opportunity for eelgrass to recover, after an extensive public process, the RBRA established an Eelgrass Protection Zone (EPZ) in Richardson Bay where no anchoring is allowed. This new EPZ will safeguard these important habitats from human activity. While a few vessels remain in the EPZ, all boats will eventually be relocated from the area. New signage and buoys delineating the exact parameters of the off-limits area and the new designated anchorage were installed on November 7, 2024.



RBRA RECOGNIZES EFFORTS OF TWO OUTGOING BOARD MEMBERS

The RBRA's Board of Directors will be without two longtime leaders, following decisions by Chair Jim Lynch and Member Jim Wickham not to run for re-election in their respective city councils.

Representing Mill Valley, Wickham has been serving on the RBRA Board for nine years, making him the longest-tenured member on the four-person governing council, which sets policies for the agency. For the past two years, Lynch, a member of the Belvedere City Council, has also served on the Board, including the past 18 months as Chair. The two members will be replaced by fellow representatives of Mill Valley and Belvedere.

Continued on page 2

EPZ event, continued from page 1

“This is such an important day for the environment of Richardson Bay and the entire San Francisco Bay area,” said Representative Jared Huffman, who attended the event on October 30. “Eelgrass acts as the foundation for so much of what we love about the bay — from supporting herring runs and thousands of migratory birds, to helping ward off the impacts of climate change. By taking these measures now, RBRA is protecting Richardson Bay’s amazing natural resources for generations to come, and I’m glad we could help support this work with funding from the Biden-Harris administration.”

“We are proud of all that we have accomplished on Richardson Bay to create a safe, supportive and accessible environment for all,” said Marin County Supervisor Stephanie Moulton-Peters, who also sits on the RBRA Board. “We know that there is still work to be done, but if we keep working together collaboratively with our community, we can help achieve everyone’s goals.”

**BUOYS MARKING EELGRASS PROTECTION ZONE
OFFICIALLY PLACED
IN RICHARDSON BAY**

Following the celebration of the new Eelgrass Protection Zone, the RBRA placed buoys officially marking the new no anchoring area and the new designated anchorage.

The new markers went into the Bay on November 7.

Departing directors, continued from page 1

“I have been honored to take part in the mission of the RBRA,” said Chair Lynch. “From protecting our eelgrass to supporting efforts to relocate boaters off the water and into housing, we have accomplished so much during my tenure here on the RBRA Board. It’s been a pleasure to partner with my fellow board members and work alongside the dedicated staff of the RBRA. I know we are in good hands now under the leadership of RBRA Executive Director Brad Gross and the support of my fellow colleagues on the Board.”

In the past two years with Lynch and Wickham both serving on the RBRA Board, the agency recorded numerous achievements. Those efforts include securing \$3 million in state funds alongside Senator Mike McGuire to launch an innovative housing voucher program. The initiative allowed boaters previously living on the water to move into safe, secure housing on land. Since the program was launched, 17 individuals living on the water have been housed.

The RBRA Board also approved a Vessel Buyback Program, which offers eligible participants money based on the length of their boat (\$150 per foot) if they turn their vessel into the RBRA for proper disposal. Many enrollees in the housing voucher program also participated in the Vessel Buyback initiative, allowing them to have disposable income as they navigate life back on land.

Along with overseeing those initiatives with Lynch, Wickham also sat on the RBRA Board when the body approved a landmark Agreement with the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, stipulating that all vessels and floating homes be removed from the anchorage by October 26, 2026, except those abiding by 72-hour time restrictions.

“It’s been incredibly encouraging to see the positive growth and direction of the RBRA during my time on the Board here,” said Wickham. “We’re really worked hard to establish safe, secure and environmentally sustainable conditions on the Bay that makes it accessible and available for everyone. We’ve done this through a compassionate and understanding approach. I’m really amazed at all we’ve accomplished over the past nine years. I’m sad to leave, but I know I’m departing the Board confident that it’s in a great position right now.”

