



THE RBRA ROUNDUP

Winter 2024

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Photo Credit: Liz Lewis

RBRA RECOGNIZES BANNER YEAR FOR PROTECTING LOCAL ENVIRONMENT AND COMPLYING WITH STATE MANDATES

The RBRA celebrated several major milestones in 2023, as its collaborative and compassionate approach to its mission helped protect the environment and comply with state and federal laws to remove illegally anchored vessels from Richardson Bay.

With the help of \$3 million in state funds, the RBRA was able to establish an innovative housing voucher program in 2023, allowing eight boaters previously living on the water to move into safe, secure housing on land. Another six individuals are participating in the program at the time of this writing. Three have vouchers in hand and are actively seeking new housing and three have begun the process, all of which is funded through a one-time allocation secured by State Senator Mike McGuire.

Additionally, 12 vessels have been purchased by the RBRA at the time of this writing, through its Vessel Buyback Program, which offers eligible participants money based on the length of their boat, or floating home (\$150 per foot) if they turn their vessel into RBRA for proper disposal. Since the program was reinstated in April 2023, over \$60,000 has been disbursed to boat owners.

THE RICHARDSON BAY REGIONAL AGENCY NEWSLETTER, VOLUME 2

Welcome to the second 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.



JUDGE AFFIRMS RBRA'S RIGHT TO MANAGE RICHARDSON BAY

A federal judge recently affirmed the RBRA's right to patrol and manage the waters of Richardson Bay.

In December, Judge William Orrick of the U.S. District Court for Northern California dismissed a lawsuit claiming that the RBRA did not have jurisdiction to enforce the anchorage rules.

In citing legal code, Judge Orrick noted federal "regulations...establish Richardson's Bay as a "special anchorage area" and direct mariners to comply with the RBRA's Permit Scheme."

RBRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPROVES EELGRASS RESTORATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

At its January meeting, the RBRA Board of Directors unanimously approved the Richardson Bay Eelgrass Restoration and Adaptive Management Plan (RAMP), an extensive effort to safeguard the local ecosystem.

Eelgrass is a critical component of a healthy and vibrant Richardson Bay. It supports Pacific herring, harbor seals, and tens of thousands of migratory birds every year. Eelgrass also helps shoreline cities adapt to the impacts of climate change. Unfortunately, when anchors, chains, and other ground tackle scrape along the Bay bottom, they create barren areas where no eelgrass can grow. In recent decades, as much as 80 acres of eelgrass in Richardson Bay has been destroyed by anchor scour.

However, thanks to RBRA's new Eelgrass Protection Zone, damage has plateaued and scientists have an opportunity to help eelgrass recover through active restoration. To guide the restoration, RBRA and its partners developed the RAMP in late 2023, which was submitted to the Bay Conservation and Development Commission on December 15 and sets a goal of recovering 75 acres of eelgrass over the next ten years.

Development of the RAMP was funded as part of a \$2.8 million federal grant RBRA received from the US Environmental Protection Agency, which also includes funding to restore the first 15 acres of eelgrass within four years and provide training for early career conservationists from disadvantaged communities.



Photo Credit: Melissa Ward

Marin Independent Journal

MARIN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL PRAISES PROGRESS OF THE RBRA IN EDITORIAL

The Marin Independent Journal, the paper of record for the North Bay, wrote a laudatory editorial of the RBRA in January, praising the agency for its efforts protecting Richardson Bay.

The op-ed, titled "Anchor-outs must abide by Richardson Bay rules," and written by the paper's editorial board, detailed the significant progress the RBRA has made in recent years.

The editorial showed how boats illegally anchored in Richardson Bay have dropped from a high of 240 to just over 40 now, due to a combination of collaborative RBRA policies--such as its housing voucher and vessel buyback programs-- and its enforcement efforts.

The editorial noted that, "the RBRA, marshaling state funding, has even offered a boat buyback initiative that, together with enforcement, has reduced the number of boats to 40. That is significant progress."

The editorial also detailed how a recent ruling by a federal judge affirmed the RBRA's ability to patrol and enforce the waters of Richardson Bay, furthering supporting the mission of the RBRA.

"Judge William Orrick III ruled that the claim made in the lawsuit filed by an anchor-out lacked an understanding of the law," the editorial stated. "The Constitution does not entitle someone "to anchor where he chooses," he wrote. That's pretty clear."

A full copy of the op-ed can be found on the Marin Independent Journal site [here](#).