

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

April 14, 2023

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

[will@lh-pa.com](mailto:will@lh-pa.com)

415-420-0905

**VESSEL BUYBACK PROGRAM UNANIMOUSLY REINSTATED BY  
RICHARDSON BAY REGIONAL AGENCY'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

*Initiative incentivizes boat owners to transition aging vessels out of  
environmentally sensitive waters*

**Sausalito, CA**—The [Richardson Bay Regional Agency](#)'s (RBRA) Board of Directors unanimously voted to reinstate the vessel buyback program to help incentivize boaters to move off environmentally sensitive waters.

Originally adopted in June 2022, the Vessel Buyback Program offers eligible participants money based on the length of their boat (\$150 per foot) to move their vessels off an established [Eelgrass Protection Zone](#) (EPZ) and other parts of Richardson Bay. The program also conforms with an [Agreement](#) reached between the RBRA and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), which calls for removal of all illegally anchored vessels from Richardson Bay by October 2026.

Rather than relying on enforcement to remove vessels, the Vessel Buyback Program incentivizes vessel or floating homeowners to transfer their property to the RBRA. The RBRA will then dispose of the vessels at no cost to the owner.

The program initially concluded on December 31, 2022, following a tenure in which a total of nine vessels participated, resulting in distributions totaling \$46,390. As the RBRA moves forward with a new Temporary Housing Support Program (HSP), it is restarting the Vessel Buyback Program to further assist individuals interested in moving off the water and into safe, secure housing in the surrounding area.

“The original vessel buyback program demonstrated that the RBRA and boat owners could work together on collaborative solutions to benefit Richardson Bay,” said RBRA Chair Stephanie Moulton-Peters. “As we move forward with the next phase of transitioning individuals into housing on land, we want to make sure that they are fairly compensated for that transition. This is about making sure they have some stability and security for their future.”

In February, the Marin Housing Authority's (MHA) Board of Commissioners approved an agreement with RBRA to work collaboratively on the HSP and help relocate individuals living on boats in Richardson Bay into stable, long-term housing throughout the county. Individuals participating in that Program will be given priority in the Vessel Buyback Program.

A similar agreement with Marin Health and Human Services (HHS) will be presented to the Board of Supervisors for approval that will allow HHS to provide wrap-around services to participants of the HSP and Vessel Buyback Program.

When the Vessel Buyback Program first began in June 2022, there were 69 vessels and floating homes anchored in Richardson Bay in violation of RBRA regulations, which stipulates all boats have a maximum allowable stay of 72 hours.

“The Vessel Buyback Program helps protect the delicate environment of Richardson Bay while also providing financial and logistical support for residents looking to relocate off the waters,” said RBRA Executive Director Brad Gross. “It’s a respectful and cooperative process that helps make Richardson Bay safer, more accessible and more secure for everyone.”

There are now 52 remaining vessels and floating homes anchored in Richardson Bay, a significant reduction attributed in large part to the buyback program. Still, the overwhelming majority of remaining vessels are located in the EPZ, which was established to protect the eelgrass ecosystem.

Eelgrass is a foundational element of Richardson Bay. It protects the Bay from the impacts of climate change, reduces erosion, stabilizes the shoreline and acts as a critical support function for local fisheries, waterbirds, harbor porpoises, sea lions and other marine creatures.

Anchors, chains, and other ground tackle scrape along the bay bottom, acting like a lawn mower for all plants living there. This creates “crop circles,” or barren areas where no eelgrass can grow. There is a large area of Richardson Bay without eelgrass cover that has been designated for boat anchorage.

In addition to protecting the eelgrass environment, the Vessel Buyback and Temporary Housing Support programs will help RBRA meet the terms of its Agreement with BCDC. Under that pact between the two agencies overseeing Richardson Bay in southern Marin County, only seaworthy vessels will be allowed to anchor on a temporary basis in the Bay after October 2026.

###

*The Richardson 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 Bay.*