

California Native Plant Society

East Bay Chapter
P O Box 5597, Elmwood Station
Berkeley, CA 94705

June 29, 2005

Lamont Thompson, Senior Planner
City of Richmond Planning Department
1401 Marina Way South
Richmond, CA 94804

Re: Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Report for Sea Cliff Marina in the City of Richmond

Dear Mr. Thompson,

The following are comments of the California Native Plant Society, East Bay Chapter (CNPS), on the *Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Report for Sea Cliff Marina in the City of Richmond*. The California Native Plant Society is a non-profit organization of more than 10,000 laypersons and professional botanists organized into 32 chapters throughout California. The Society's mission is to increase the understanding and appreciation of California's native plants and to preserve them in their natural habitat through scientific activities, education, and conservation.

Two CNPS list 1B species and 15 that are locally rare or rare in the East Bay are known to exist or have existed previously in the Point Richmond area. Point Richmond is also home to important plant communities such as vernal pools, alkali areas, serpentine areas, and saltwater marshes. Point Richmond is also be home to listed animal species including salt marsh harvest mouse, California black rail, and California clapper rails. CNPS requests that the EIR reflect this important botanical and biological diversity and the need to protect local and state rare plant and animal species as well as sensitive plant communities.

Pursuant to the mission of protecting California's native flora and vegetation, CNPS submits the following comments for the scoping process:

- CNPS requests that protection and management for state and federally listed species, special status species and sensitive plant communities be thoroughly addressed. Attached are complete lists for all state-listed and special status plant species known to exist in the Point Richmond area with potential to occur on the project site. We would like to further explain the rarity of some of the plant species on the list. Listed on CNPS's *Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California*, List 1B species *Fritillaria liliacea*, is endemic to California and restricted to the western-central portion of the state. Locally rare species listed in Dianne Lake's *Rare, Unusual and Significant Plants of Alameda and*

*Contra Costa Counties*¹, have very limited ranges within the two East Bay counties. Species designated as A1, A2, and A1x are protected under sections 15380 and 15125(a) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) which addresses species of local concern and places special emphasis on environmental resources that are rare or unique to the area. The Point Richmond area is one of two known sites in the East Bay for the following A1 species: Suksdorf's romanzoffia (*Romanzoffia californica*), and willow dock (*Rumex salicifolius* var. *crassus*). Examples of the List A2 species found in Point Richmond include; brownie thistle (*Cirsium quercetorum*), and prickly cryptantha (*Cryptantha muricata*). All plants on the attached list require appropriate protection and management to minimize fragmentation and ensure the survival of the remaining populations.

- While the attached list contains the special status plant species known to exist in the Point Richmond area, there is potential for additional special status species to be found on the project site. For this reason, CNPS requests that the DEIR allow for complete surveys for federally and state listed species as well as special-status plants, bryophytes and wildlife that are protected under CEQA. We request that a thorough biological assessment be conducted at the project site by qualified botanists and wildlife biologists to determine if suitable habitat exists for special-status plant, bryophyte, and wildlife species. If suitable habitat exists, in order for a project to comply with CEQA, focused protocol-level special-status species surveys should be conducted at the site prior to issuing a permit. CNPS requests that protocol-level plant surveys be conducted during the appropriate active growing stage of the life cycle of the target species. The surveys require adequate advance planning. Furthermore, we recommend that in addition to addressing federal and state listed species and CNPS List 1A, 1B and 2 species, the following species should also be addressed prior to issuing permits: plants and bryophytes that are CNPS List 1A, 1B, 2, 3 or 4 species, lichens on CDFG's Special Vascular Plants, Bryophytes, and Lichens List², plants listed in the *Rare, Unusual and Significant Plants of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties*, and plants that are federal species of concern or federally-listed as species of local concern. This request is in accordance with CDFG Habitat Conservation Planning Branch recommendations for "...protection of plants which are regionally significant, such as locally rare species, disjunct populations of more common plants, or plants on the CNPS Lists 3 and 4."³
- CNPS would also like to request that sensitive plant communities that are tracked by CDFG be addressed during the EIR process.
- CNPS requests on-site mitigation for all sensitive plant species and communities found on site. Whenever possible, negative impacts on the species should be avoided.
- A policy of CNPS is to "support all efforts to preserve and conserve wetlands of all types" and "oppose projects that adversely affect wetlands of any type unless there is a

¹ Lake, Dianne. *Rare, Unusual and Significant Plants of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties*. Seventh Edition. East Bay Chapter, California Native Plant Society. March 2004. (periodically updated)

² CDFG. California Department of Fish and Game Natural Diversity Database; Special Vascular Plants, Bryophytes, and Lichens List. July 2004 (periodically updated).

³ Department of Fish and Game Habitat Conservation Branch.

http://www.dfg.ca.gov/hcpb/species/t_e_spp/nat_plnt_consv.shtml. Accessed on December 9, 2004

demonstrated net gain, in-kind, of wetlands prior to project impacts.” There is significant evidence that more wetland acreage has been lost to development than any other habitat type in California. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, less than 1% of the wetlands remain in the world.⁴ Because the project location is adjacent the San Francisco Bay and associate wetlands and over half of the project site is submerged, CNPS recommends that an alternative proposal in the EIR include “no development”. If this is not possible, we strongly recommend that in the event of wetlands disturbance or destruction, mitigation be 4:1 preservation and 1:1 restoration. We also recommend that, should new wetlands be created as mitigation, they be located in areas that have been degraded, not within other intact functioning ecosystems.

- In order to fully identify issues and propose scientifically based management decisions, a vegetation map of the existing vegetation alliance is recommended for the document. CNPS requests that a vegetation map, mapped at the alliance level, be prepared as part of the EIR. CNPS recommends using the Releve or Rapid Assessment methods to achieve this level of mapping detail⁵.
- The project description indicates that no area will be set aside for open space or protection of biological resources. CNPS requests that a portion of the project site be set aside as for plant protection of any sensitive species found on site. CNPS recommends that the policy for open space reflect the size and location of rare plant populations and native plant communities and that open space areas be increased to support such sensitive habitat.
- The project description indicates that the project will include pedestrian walkways. CNPS requests trails be minimized around sensitive plant communities, such as wetlands, and that a significant fund be included in the EIR for maintenance of trail areas to prevent invasive species intrusion, and protection of sensitive plant and animal species.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important proceeding. We look forward to being active participants in the upcoming EIR process. If you have any questions, please contact me at jjolson@ebcnps.org.

Sincerely,

Jessica Olson
East Bay Conservation Analyst
California Native Plant Society

⁴ Environmental Protection Agency. Wetlands. <http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/> . Accessed on March 20, 2005

⁵ Sawyer, John O. and Todd Keeler-Wolf. 1995. *A Manual of California Vegetation*. California Native Plant Society, Sacramento, CA.