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MANAGEMENT BOARD:

*Bay Area Audubon Council  
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PRBO Conservation Science  
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Natural Resources  
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Regional Water Quality Control  
Board, SF Bay Region  
San Francisco Estuary Project  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
U.S. Environmental  
Protection Agency  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
U.S. Geological Survey  
Wildlife Conservation Board*

August 21, 2013

The Honorable Anthony Rendon  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0063

**Subject: Assembly Water Bond Priorities**

Dear Assembly Working Group Chair Rendon,

I am writing on behalf of the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture (SFBJV) to request that the proposed priorities be amended to add \$250 million in funding for the Bay, its wetlands, and immediate watersheds. The SFBJV is concerned about the lack of dedicated funding for San Francisco Bay and the Bay Conservancy in priorities identified for the State Water Bond. While it may be implied that the Bay is part of the Delta system, the priorities do not seem to address the Bay and surrounding watersheds.

The SFBJV is a partnership of non-governmental organizations, utilities, landowners, and non-voting agencies with a goal to acquire, restore and enhance wetlands and riparian habitats and associated uplands to benefit birds, fish, and other wildlife in the San Francisco Bay Area. The SFBJV is one of the eighteen federally-sponsored habitat Joint Ventures to implement the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and federal bird conservation plans. The SFBJV Implementation Plan, *Restoring the Estuary* is based on the goals established in the Baylands Habitat Goals and, targets nearly 200,000 acres of wetlands and riparian habitats for protection, restoration, or enhancement through our partners' funding and expertise. The SFVJV Management Board consists of 27 agencies and private organizations whose members agree to support and promote the goal and objectives of the Joint Venture and who represent the diversity of wetlands interests found in the San Francisco Bay Region.

Proposition 50 included \$200 million in funding to the Wildlife Conservation Board and the Bay Conservancy of the State Coastal Conservancy. This funding has protected and restored thousands of acres of wetlands that have provided habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. In addition to providing important wildlife habitat, wetlands filter water of toxic contaminants and serve as a buffer from tidal surges and floods. These natural infrastructure functions are even more important in this era of climate change. Investing in natural infrastructure is significantly more cost-effective in the long run than building levees and other flood control measures.

Since 1996, nearly \$600 million dollars have been spent on acquisition, restoration, and enhancement projects tracked by the SFBJV partnership. Within this timeframe, nearly 200 wetland protection, restoration or enhancement projects have been completed on more than 70,000 acres of tidal wetlands, seasonal wetland, and riparian habitat. State bond funding has been instrumental to funding these habitat projects. State bond funding

has also been crucial in providing the required local or regional “match” to secure federal and private funding. Over \$1.43 billion in project construction and management is needed over a 50-year timeframe. The SFBJV has identified \$155 million in necessary funding over the next 3-5 years to deliver the only the projects that have or will be issued permits and to and continue the trajectory of restoring the Bay and other wetland habitats and not lose momentum toward our goals or leave projects partially complete. As Phase 2 of the South Bay Salt Pond project is implemented, project implementation needs will vastly exceed the \$250 million that we request be in the bond act.

With a few exceptions for listed species, bird populations are generally stable in the region even as they decline in other areas throughout the Pacific Flyway, and native fish are again spawning in these restored wetlands. An analysis of the research in the SFBJV/PRBO Conservation Science “*State of the Birds Report*” (2011) has indicated that wildlife populations can remain stable by continuing to protect and restore wetlands.

It is imperative that dedicated state funds be made available for the Bay and immediate watersheds in the next water bond measure, and we implore you to add \$250 million for the Bay Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Board, and other state conservation programs identified in the bond.

If you have questions about our request or the SFBJV, please contact our Coordinator, Beth Huning. Thank you for anything you can to do address our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diane Ross-Leech". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Diane Ross-Leech  
Immediate Past Chair

Cc: Assemblymember Richard Gordon

Assemblymember Kevin Mullin

