

July 12, 1996

TO: Commissioners and Alternates

FROM: Will Travis, Executive Director

SUBJECT: **A Long Term Perspective on Public Access**
(For Commission information only)

When BCDC was established in 1965 the general public had access to only about four miles of the Bay shoreline. Now there is well over a hundred miles of access to the waterfront. Some of this additional access was required by the Commission through permit conditions. Some is within public parks that did not exist in 1965. For example, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, which was established in the 1970s and is the most popular facility in the entire National Park system, includes many waterfront trails and shoreline facilities. Some of the new access to the waterfront has been provided by local governments and other public agencies working in concert with the Bay Trail program. And some of the access is provided on the grounds of hotels, office parks, restaurants, and other waterfront enterprises by enlightened private business operators who have found that they can transform a regulatory requirement into a marketing feature by incorporating shoreline trails and other public amenities into their initial project planning.

With this record of success behind us, it is difficult to image what the situation was like in the 1960s. Fortunately, we have a historian in our extended family to remind us. Sylvia McLaughlin, who along with Kay Kerr and Esther Gulick founded Save San Francisco Bay Association, came across the attached document when she was rummaging through her records recently. It is a statement that Normal B. Livermore, California's first Secretary for Resources and one of BCDC's original Commissioners, made at a BCDC meeting nearly 28 years ago on August 1, 1968. Mr. Livermore passionately advocated that BCDC should take an aggressive role in providing access to the Bay shoreline so that all members of the public, and particularly children, would have the opportunity to reach the waterfront and enjoy the Bay. He warned the Commission that "unless we make every effort to provide truly low-cost access to recreational opportunities along the edge of the Bay, we will be locking up a great resource from a whole generation of youngsters who desperately need it."

BCDC heeded the Secretary's call. The *San Francisco Bay Plan* which the Commission delivered to the California Legislature later in 1968 included public access policies that were tough, innovative and workable. These policies are clearly a large part of the reason that the generation of youngsters which grew up over the past 30 years has been able to fish, hike, and even rollerblade along the Bay shoreline.

Public access requirements have recently been challenged in a number of court cases around the country. And here in the Bay Area, there are increasing calls to limit further access to the Bay because of concerns about the impact of humans on Bay wildlife. As the Commission considers how best to administer its public access responsibilities in light of these challenges and concerns, it might be helpful to pause and reflect on what the situation might now be like without BCDC's firm implementation of the McAteer-Petris Act requirement that every shoreline project must include "maximum feasible public access, consistent with the proposed project, to the Bay and its shoreline."

"Ike" Livermore lives in San Rafael. Sylvia McLaughlin lives in Berkeley. Both still follow the work of BCDC.



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July 31, 1968

Statement of Norman B. Livermore, Jr., Administrator, California Resources Agency, presented to the Bay Conservation and Development Commission, Thursday, August 1, 1968, at the Palo Alto Community Center.

Chairman Lane and Fellow Commissioners:

I would like to take this opportunity to step out of my role as one of your fellow commissioners and say a few words about the Commission's plan from two other points of view. First, as Administrator of the California Resources Agency, and secondly, from the standpoint of a private Bay Area citizen who is deeply interested in the future of the Bay and equally concerned about the present and future well-being of all its citizens.

Let me first of all say that both my office and the constituent departments of the Resources Agency have reviewed the preliminary San Francisco Bay Plan. Concerning the Plan's technical complexities we believe that both the approach taken in developing the Plan -- and the Plan itself -- are excellent. In general, we believe the Commission and its staff have performed an outstanding service to the people of California in writing this Plan. By way of more detailed comment, on July 30 I transmitted to your Chairman a letter containing several pages of specific editorial comments on the Plan.

The principal point to which I address myself now deals not with any omissions or shortcomings of the Plan -- but rather with an element which I believe needs greater emphasis. I am speaking of the issue which I believe was first publicly discussed at our last meeting in Richmond.-- that is, the appalling lack of Bay access and recreational facilities adjacent to some of our most heavily populated areas where large numbers of our less affluent citizens reside.

For the past year, I have devoted much of my time and energy trying to help solve issues such as the Redwood National Park and maintenance of the integrity of the John Muir Trail in the High Sierra wilderness. These are areas of outstanding beauty whose values have a deep emotional hold on all of us fortunate enough to be able to visit them.

I pray that time will prove me wrong, but I fear that the joys and wonders of such areas will long be beyond the reach of a great many of our citizens and their children. They simply cannot afford the cost in time and money to visit these great but distant scenes. Their first priorities inevitably relate to more mundane necessities such as food, shelter and clothing, and they have little if anything left over for travel and recreation. For these thousands of people, recreation and access to natural beauty will either be near their homes or they will not experience it at all.

The BCDC Plan appropriately points out the locations for possible future fishing piers, marinas, commercial recreation, and public parks. Certainly all these features are highly desirable and I believe are located properly.

Realistically, however, we must all recognize that development of most of these facilities will come some time in the future. Moreover, from an economical standpoint, the handsome restaurant overlooking the marina full of expensive boats will be nearly as unattainable for our economically depressed citizens as a visit to redwood parks or the John Muir Trail.

Thus, unless we make every effort to provide truly low-cost access to recreational opportunities along the edge of the Bay, we will be locking up a great resource from a whole generation of youngsters who desperately need it.

Again, I must emphasize that our Plan does not preclude the ultimate development of access and facilities available to all of our citizens. My concern is that we should more strongly emphasize the urgency and opportunity to commence immediately on the development of some facilities in areas of greatest need -- now!

I am not speaking of major parks with grass, groves of trees, picnic and camping facilities, and full-time professional maintenance personnel -- although many such parks are needed and will ultimately be developed. What I am saying is that surely we can and must find a way now to develop a fishing pier for the children of Hunter's Point; a place away from the city dump where youngsters can safely enjoy themselves along the Richmond waterfront; and places around the Alameda estuary and the San Francisco waterfront for them to fish and enjoy the Bay now while they are still young.

These are not unattainable goals. I would like to urge strongly that the BCDC -- and its successor agency, work quickly and effectively with local government, industry and citizens' groups on a program to develop these essential facilities wherever appropriate. Action should be initiated now, or it may soon be too late.

You may be assured that the California Resources Agency and its departments will lend all possible assistance in this effort.

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