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Media Contact:

Pete Hillan

415-318-4111 or 831-252-1512

Why is a Bay Area Environmentalist Undermining Environmental Review in Redwood City?

Redwood City, Calif. – February 24, 2010 – More than a year ago, Redwood City voters soundly rejected a campaign led by David Lewis, Executive Director of Oakland-based Save the Bay, to block consideration of restoration and development opportunities for Redwood City’s industrial salt-harvesting facility.

Earlier this month, the Redwood City Council agreed to take the next step to begin evaluation of the Redwood City Saltworks project proposal under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to measure its potential effects on the natural and human environment and to consider appropriate land use alternatives. Rather than participate in the public evaluation process, Mr. Lewis and Save the Bay are circulating a petition among regional governmental officials to stop the public environmental review process of Saltworks before it meaningfully begins.

The Redwood City Saltworks project represents a once in a generation opportunity to leverage private capital and private property to meet local, regional, state and national public policy goals to put housing close to jobs within Silicon Valley and to restore bay front wetlands and tidal marsh.

Mr. Lewis’ actions raise a number of questions that responsible Bay area leaders should be asking:

Why would any responsible Bay area environmental advocate be afraid of environmental review of a proposal that has the potential to be a model of smart growth by getting cars off the road and allowing workers to live closer to their jobs?

Why would any responsible Bay area environmental advocate be afraid of environmental review of a proposal with the potential to improve Bay health by restoring more than 400 acres of wetlands with no financial burden to average taxpayers?

Why would any responsible environmental advocate be asking public officials from throughout the Bay area to pressure Redwood City officials to abandon or stop a state-mandated, transparent public process and environmental review of a development proposal under their jurisdiction prior to a hearing on that proposal’s environmental, social and economic merits?

Why would any responsible Bay area environmental advocate be pressuring public officials from nearby cities, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) and other public bodies to prejudge a proposal before it hears the facts or it has the opportunity to participate in an environmental review process?

Answer: We don’t know. But we invite Mr. Lewis to productively contribute to the environmental review process that has served California well for decades.

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