



Councilmember Terry Taplin
Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani
Councilmember Rigel Robinson
Mayor Jesse Arreguin

CONSENT CALENDAR
February 22, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmembers Rigel Robinson (Author), Terry Taplin (Author), Rashi Kesarwani (Author), & Mayor Jesse Arreguin (Author)
Subject: Budget Referral: South Sailing Basin Dredging

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the City Manager to dredge the Berkeley Marina's South Sailing Basin (SSB), including 1) pursuing and proposing potential funding opportunities for both planning and implementation, and 2) performing the necessary bathymetric, hydrography, technical, permitting, and mitigation studies required to move forward as quickly as possible.

Furthermore, refer \$350,000 to the June 2022 budget process for the purposes of South Sailing Basin Dredging planning & evaluation.

BACKGROUND

The Berkeley Marina is a treasured public open space, with over 100 acres of park space, seven miles of trails, 17-acres of off-leash dog area, educational programming at the Shorebird Nature Center, the nationally celebrated Adventure Playground, bird-watching, picnic areas, and panoramic views. It serves as a regional hub for boaters and watersports.

In many ways, the heart of the Berkeley Marina is the South Sailing Basin, where the Cal Sailing Club and Cal Adventures are located. The three docks of the South Sailing Basin make the water accessible to Berkeleyans of all backgrounds, and have a true regional draw. Bay Area residents from near and far come to the South Sailing Basin, where they can find three public docks, two sailboat hoists, a windsurfing rigging area with wash-down facilities, well-maintained public bathrooms, and a beach launch at nearby Shorebird Park. The Berkeley Marina itself creates a breakwater and wind shadow for the South Sailing Basin, resulting in an ideal environment for learning windsurfers, sailors, kayakers, and swimmers.

However, over the last several decades, silt and mud have accumulated in the South Sailing Basin, making it more and more challenging for the cove to be used. On low tide days, the City's three public docks sit on the mud. More and more frequently, due to the severity of the silt accumulation, it is impossible to use the SSB altogether. As a result, Cal Sailing and Cal Adventures must close on those days.

This challenge has prompted recreational users in the South Sailing Basin to consider advocating for the relocation of the public docks to the Hs Lordships peninsula, where the water would be consistently deeper. A more practical near-term solution would be to dredge the South Sailing Basin. While the City should aspire to dredge as much of the basin as possible, the City should also consider dredging a channel for only the three docks if that is more feasible. The SSB has not been dredged since the 1970s, when it was done alongside the work that created the peninsula out to 199 Seawall Drive.

Even as accessibility to the bay by way of the South Sailing Basin decreases due to increased siltage, interest in recreational activities at the waterfront is only increasing. Attendance at Odyssey Open Water Swimming's weekly chaperoned swims has quadrupled since 2018.¹ Despite the pandemic, Cal Sailing Club recruited more members in 2021 than in 2019, averaging upwards of a thousand new members every year.

The silting of the South Sailing Basin threatens the long-term viability of recreational uses at the Marina, and thus threatens the mission of the Berkeley Marina itself. It is imperative that waterfront recreation continues to have a future at the Berkeley Marina. It is therefore imperative that the City address this concern in a timely manner.

Council recently voted to request state funding for a number of necessary improvements at the Berkeley Marina, including dredging the main channel for better boat access.² While including a funding request for dredging the SSB was considered, there is significant study that needs to be performed before that project is ready to pursue outside funding for implementation.

Dredging the South Sailing Basin is not currently on staff's work plan. However, the Berkeley Marina Area Specific Plan process does create an opportunity to rank priority for infrastructure upgrades. Dredging the South Sailing Basin will be considered through that process. This referral seeks to see SSB dredging integrated into staff's work plan.

At present, the City has a consultant on board responsible for planning work related to dredging the Main Harbor channel at the Berkeley Marina. Staff should consider expanding the scope of that consultant contract to also determine how to approach dredging the South Sailing Basin. This planning and evaluation would be a necessary precursor to the dredging work itself.

As the BMASP and Pier/Ferry projects move forward and bring new energy and uses to the Marina, it is critical that the City act with the same level of urgency to maintain the recreational uses that make the Berkeley Marina so special today.

¹ <https://www.berkeleyside.org/2021/09/27/odyssey-open-water-swimming-san-francisco-bay>

² <https://www.berkeleyside.org/2021/10/27/officials-seek-state-money-help-revive-berkeley-marina>

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

City staff have held a placeholder of \$5 million on our unfunded list of capital projects for dredging the South Sailing Basin. Total waterside infrastructure needs are estimated to range from \$64.5 million to \$108 million. Recent conversations suggest that the technical, permitting, and mitigation elements of dredging the SSB are more complex than initially understood and may require extensive study and significantly more funding than \$5 million. Staff should propose funding opportunities that could support dredging the South Sailing Basin and present Council with more precise figures on complete estimated costs. This referral refers to the budget process the consideration of \$350,000 for planning and evaluation work related to South Sailing Basin dredging.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE IMPACTS

Staff should research and consider the environmental impacts of dredging the South Sailing Basin. Dredging is important to maintain the feasibility of recreational uses at the Marina. As silt issues worsen, the draw of the Marina as a natural resource and public park will be jeopardized, creating further challenges for the City to maintain and preserve this beautiful public space.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Rigel Robinson, (510) 981-7170

Attachments:

1: Citizens for East Shore Parks Letter, dated January 3, 2022



Citizens for East Shore Parks

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Office: 510.524.5000 | www.eastshorepark.org

cespmanager@eastshorepark.org

January 3, 2022

Berkeley City Council
2180 Milvia Street
Berkeley CA 94704

Re: Limited Dredging South Sailing Basin

Dear Mayor Jesse Arreguin and Councilmembers Rashi Kesarwani, Terry Taplin, Ben Bartlett, Kate Harrison, Sophie Hahn, Susan Wengraf, Rigel Robinson, Lori Droste:

Silt in the South Sailing Basin has progressed to the point that it is now limiting small craft aquatic recreation during low tides. Swimmers, sailors, and kayakers, as well as paddle boarders and windsurfers are unable to launch and land through extensive muck on their way to open water. Citizens for East Shore Parks (CESP) therefore supports limited dredging of the South Sailing Basin. This dredging would be limited to the area around the 3 docks and both lifts, creating a channel into deeper water in order to preserve access to this valuable recreational resource.

We understand that dredging of the Berkeley Marina’s main harbor (north of University) is scheduled. Having such dredging equipment in the area might reduce the cost of a limited dredge of the South Sailing Basin. Of course, any dredging would need to be carried out safely and responsibly. The dredging must be consistent with the protection of habitat and wildlife, especially rafting birds, not done in periods when rafting birds would be present, and performed in such a way as to maintain or enhance the habitat of the South Basin for wildlife.

Restoration of Bay access for water recreation would allow continued use of the Bay for much needed recreation. Additionally the dredging would allow the next generation of watercraft and recreational users to learn the skills and the responsibilities of sailing in SF Bay. If dredging is not carried out, these valued facilities could be eventually closed, and that would be a loss for everyone.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions. Citizens for East Shore Parks works to protect the Bay shoreline, the aquatic habitat, and to secure public access to shoreline open space along the magnificent East Bay Shore.

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Emeritus Co-Chair
(1914 - 2002)

Sylvia McLaughlin
Emeritus Co-Chair
Secretary
(1916-2016)

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Sincerely,

Shirley Dean, CESP Board President

Robert Cheasty, CESP Executive Director