

# Staff Report 53

## APPLICANT:

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City of Redwood City

## PROPOSED ACTION:

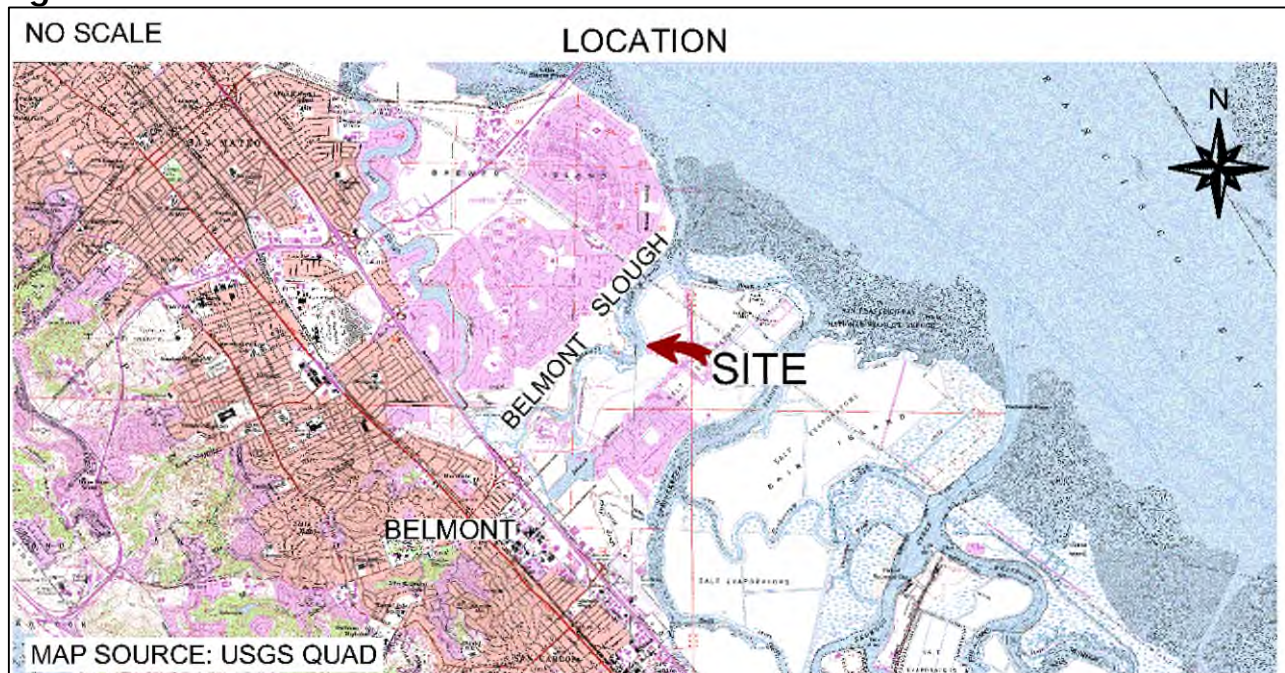
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Issuance of a General Lease – Public Agency Use.

## AREA, LAND TYPE, AND LOCATION:

0.328 acres, more or less, of sovereign land in Belmont Slough, adjacent to Redwood Shores, northwest portion of the intersection of Marine Parkway and Shearwater Parkway, Redwood City, San Mateo County (as shown in Figure 1).

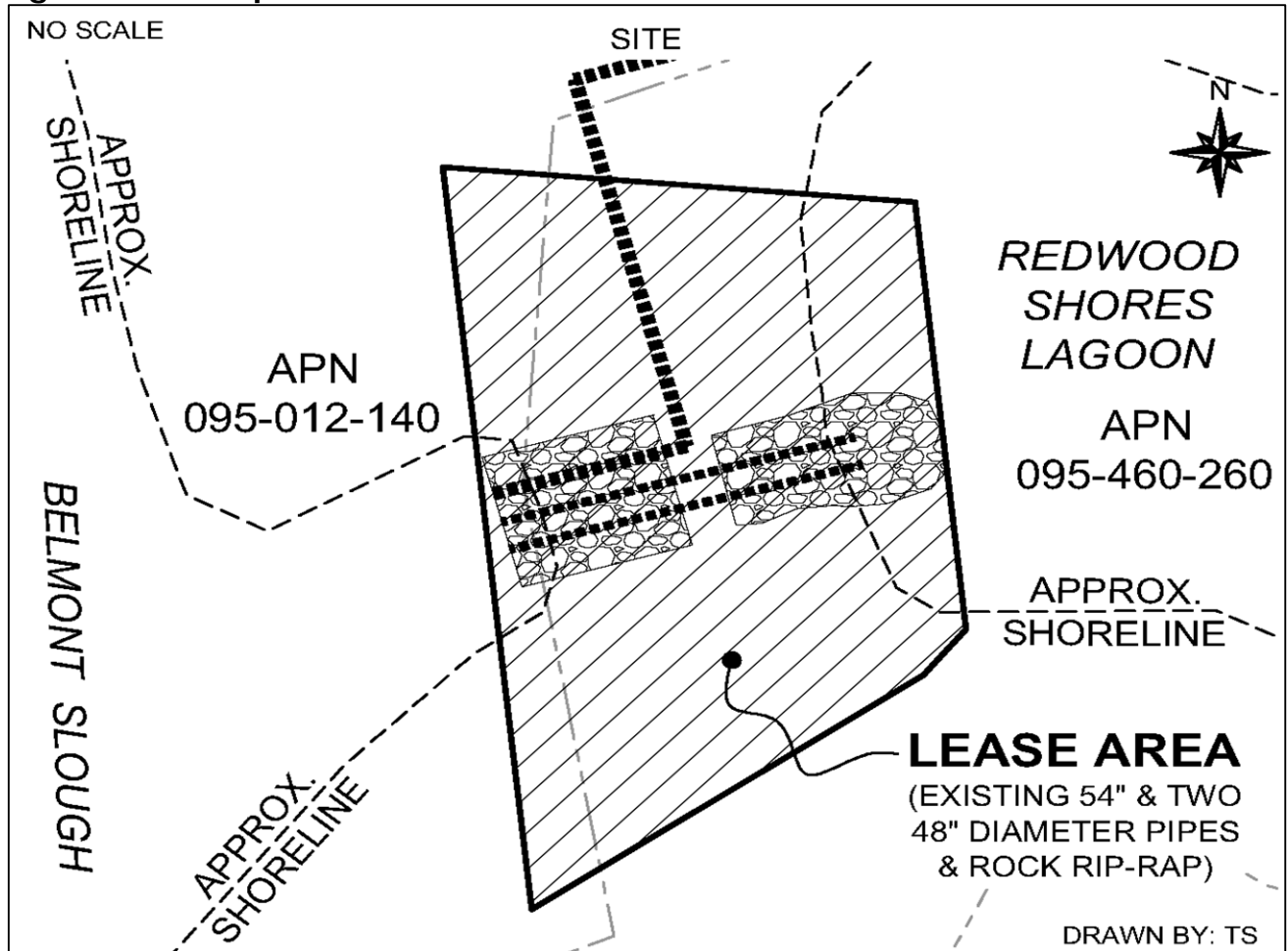
**Figure 1. Location**



**AUTHORIZED USE:**

Use of two existing 48-inch diameter and one 54-inch diameter reinforced concrete pipes, flap gates, slide gate, rock riprap, and other appurtenances (as shown in Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Site Map**



NOTE: This depiction of the lease premises is based on unverified information provided by the Applicant or other parties and is not a waiver or limitation of any State interest in the subject or any other property.

**TERM:**

20 years, beginning May 1, 2025.

**CONSIDERATION:**

The public use and benefit, with the State reserving the right at any time to set a monetary rent if the Commission finds such action to be in the State's best interests.

**SPECIFIC LEASE PROVISIONS:**

- Lessee shall provide copies of all periodic condition/integrity assessments and inspection results of the pipelines.

**STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:**

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**AUTHORITY:**

Public Resources Code sections 6005, 6216, 6301, 6321, 6321.2, 6501.1, and 6503; California Code of regulations, title 2, sections 2000 and 2003.

**PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:**

On July 6, 1995, the Commission authorized the acceptance of a lease quitclaim deed and termination of a General Lease – Right-of-Way Use from Redwood Shores, Inc. and the issuance of a General Lease – Public Agency Use to the City of Redwood City for the use and maintenance of two 36-inch diameter metal saltwater intake lines in Belmont Slough, City of Redwood City, San Mateo County ([Item 26, July 6, 1995](#)). On June 20, 2005, the Commission authorized an amendment of lease for the removal of the two 36-inch diameter saltwater intake pipes, with associated flap gates, slide gate, and maintenance platform deck, and the installation of two 48-inch diameter and one 54-inch diameter reinforced concrete pipes, flap gates, slide gates, rock riprap, and other appurtenances ([Item 34, June 20, 2005](#)). This lease expired on April 30, 2025.

Now, the Applicant is applying for a General Lease – Public Agency Use for the use of the two existing 48-inch diameter and one 54-inch diameter reinforced concrete pipes, flap gates, slide gate, rock riprap, and other appurtenances. Staff recommends issuance of a General Lease – Public Agency Use to the Applicant, effective May 1, 2025.

The concrete pipes connect Belmont Slough to Redwood Shores Lagoon (Lagoon) and serve to promote better water circulation, which enhances the ecosystem health of the surrounding areas. The Lagoon functions as a stormwater retention facility, which stores surface runoff during periods of high tide in the San Francisco Bay. The facilities are surrounded by the San Francisco Bay Trail, which is a popular destination for public recreation. The improvements help ensure the lagoon is well maintained and contributes to the aesthetic and recreation usage of the area. Therefore, the improvements facilitate public recreation and improve

environmental and water conditions to provide a regional public benefit to the surrounding communities.

The rock riprap protects the levee and maintains the integrity of Belmont Slough, which will help protect the Public Trust resources for recreational use by the public. Loss or degradation of this structure could result in property damage and adverse impacts to Public Trust resources in the lease area and the surrounding waterways. As such, the improvements provide a benefit to the public.

The proposed Lease does not alienate the State's fee simple interest or permanently impair public rights. The lease is limited to a 20-year term, does not grant the lessee exclusive rights to the lease premises, and will have no significant impact on Public Trust-consistent uses or resources in the area. Upon termination of the lease, the lessee may be required to remove any improvements from State land and restore the lease premises to their original condition. The proposed lease requires the lessee to indemnify the State for any liability incurred as a result of the lessee's activities thereon.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE:**

### ***INTRODUCTION:***

The climate crisis and rising sea levels are impacting coastal California now. As underscored in the [State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance](#) (Ocean Protection Council, 2024), the combination of extreme weather events and the persistent and accelerating rise in sea levels will lead to increased coastal hazards, such as wave runup, storm surges, flooding, and erosion. Shorelines will move inland due to rising seas, exposing more of the natural and human-built environment to coastal hazards. The resulting damage will occur repeatedly and incrementally over years and, in extreme cases, over the span of a few large winter storms. These impacts may affect the existing two reinforced concrete pipes, flap gates, slide gates, rock riprap, and other appurtenances subject to the proposed lease, located in Belmont Slough, near Redwood City.

### ***DATA & PROJECTIONS:***

Sea levels along most of the California coast rose four to eight inches during the last century, and this trend will accelerate throughout this century. The current rate of sea level rise is triple the rate during the last century. There is growing confidence that by 2050 sea levels will be approximately ten inches higher than they were in

2000. The severity of sea level rise beyond 2050 is contingent on future levels of greenhouse gas emissions. The California Ocean Protection Council updated the State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance in 2024 to provide a synthesis of the best available science on sea level rise projections and rates for multiple emissions scenarios. To apply a precautionary approach, Commission staff evaluated the “intermediate-high” and “high” scenarios due to the vulnerability and exposure of the lease location and the continued global reliance on fossil fuels. The San Francisco tide gauge was used for the projected sea level rise scenario for the lease area, as listed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Projected Sea Level Rise for San Francisco**

Year	Intermediate-High (feet)	High (feet)
2040	0.7	0.8
2050	1.0	1.3
2070	2.2	2.9
2100	4.8	6.5

Source: Table 6, State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance: 2024 Update

Note: Projections are with respect to a 2000 baseline.

### **ANALYSIS:**

Commission staff used the online sea level rise mapping tool, [Our Coast Our Future](#), to evaluate risks to the lease premises and structures from sea level rise. At present sea levels, the lease premises are already regularly flooded, which could potentially damage any structures or improvements on the lease premises. Episodic or short-term events, such as extreme storms, very high or King tides, and El Niño events, alone or in combination, will increase the vulnerability of the lease premises and expose it to higher water levels and overtopping, and erosion.

As a result, the rock riprap may sustain substantial damage and degradation over the lease term, requiring more frequent repairs and maintenance to retain its function. Reliance on the rock riprap is typically not a long-term or sustainable protection strategy because the rock riprap will provide diminishing protection as it becomes destabilized and rising sea levels exceed the conditions for which the rock riprap was originally designed.

While the riprap may protect the upland property, that protection comes at the expense of the tidal marsh in front of the riprap by covering and eliminating the intertidal area where it is placed and altering the natural coastal processes. As sea levels rise, the riprap will further accelerate the erosion and narrowing of the marsh



by preventing it from migrating inland. The loss of intertidal areas harms critical habitats and ecosystem services and impairs public coastal access and recreational uses. The riprap can block public access to the shoreline in front of and adjacent to the riprap, exacerbating the existing inequities in coastal access that affect many disadvantaged and tribal communities ([Reineman et al., 2017](#)).

In addition, the concrete pipes, flap gates, and slide gates may sustain substantial damage and degradation over the lease term, requiring more frequent repairs and maintenance to retain their function. Stronger coastal erosion can wash away the soil and sediment supporting the concrete pipes, flap gates, and slide gates, causing structural instabilities. The increased saltwater exposure from higher sea levels and rising groundwater can accelerate the corrosion of metal components and the deterioration of concrete foundations. Additionally, the concrete pipes, flap gates, and slide gates may experience increased damage from waves breaking closer and stronger to shore.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Alternative strategies should be explored to protect the pipes, associated structures, and upland areas, including nature-based strategies (also referred to as 'natural shoreline infrastructure'), accommodation strategies, and relocating vulnerable structures further inland. These approaches can be more effective long-term because they interfere less with dynamic coastal processes, which will preserve public access and natural resources and protect the upland areas by buffering coastal hazards. Coordinating with adjacent properties and local governments to develop a regional approach could further enhance the effectiveness of these strategies.

Please refer to Section Four of the Commission's report [Shoreline Adaptation and the Public Trust: Protecting California's Public Trust Resources from Sea Level Rise](#) for more information about various shoreline adaptation strategies and their advantages and disadvantages for mitigating coastal hazards and protecting Public Trust resources. Any future construction or activities on State land would require a separate authorization from the Commission.

Regular maintenance, as referenced in the terms of the lease, may reduce the likelihood of severe structural degradation or dislodgement. Pursuant to the proposed lease, the Lessee acknowledges that the lease premises and adjacent upland (not within the lease area) are located in an area that may be subject to

the effects of climate change, including sea level rise and rising groundwater levels.

**CONCLUSION:**

For all the reasons above, staff believes approval of this lease will not substantially interfere with Public Trust needs at this location, at this time, and for the term of the lease; and is in the best interests of the State.

**OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:**

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1. Approval or denial of the application is a discretionary action by the Commission. Each time the Commission approves or rejects a use of sovereign land, it exercises legislatively delegated authority and responsibility as trustee of the State's Public Trust lands as authorized by law. If the Commission denies the application, the Applicant must remove the improvements and restore the property to its original condition. The lessee has no right to a new lease or to renewal of any previous lease.
2. This action is consistent with the "Leading Climate Activism" and "Meeting Evolving Public Trust Needs" Strategic Focus Areas of the Commission's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.
3. Staff recommends that the Commission find that this activity is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as a categorically exempt project. The project is exempt under Class 1, Existing Facilities; California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905, subdivision (a)(2).

Authority: Public Resources Code section 21084 and California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061 and California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

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It is recommended that the Commission:

**CEQA FINDING:**

Find that the activity is exempt from the requirements of CEQA pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061 as a categorically exempt

project, Class 1, Existing Facilities; California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905, subdivision (a)(2).

**PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:**

Find that the proposed lease will not substantially interfere with Public Trust needs and values at this location, at this time, and for the term of the lease; and is in the best interests of the State

**AUTHORIZATION:**

Authorize issuance of a General Lease – Public Agency Use to the Applicant beginning May 1, 2025, for a term of 20 years, for the use of two existing 48-inch diameter and one 54-inch diameter reinforced concrete pipes, flap gates, slide gate, rock riprap and other appurtenances; consideration being the public use and benefit, with the State reserving the right to set a monetary rent if the Commission finds such an action to be in the State's best interest.