

PRESS RELEASE

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CITY MUST PROTECT SF BAY AREA'S AIR AND WATER DURING AMERICA'S CUP
Environmental Council Holds Press Conference at City Hall, Thursday, August 11, 10:00 am
Planning Commission Public Hearing on America's Cup, Noon, City Hall Room 400

San Francisco – Environmentalists and neighborhood groups plan to urge San Francisco Planning Commissioners at a public hearing on Thursday, August 11, to make improvements in the draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the 34th America's Cup. The Environmental Council – a coalition of more than thirty organizations – is concerned that the Draft EIR underestimates the expected impacts of the event, and will not be able to ensure that the Bay Area's air, water, and sensitive shorelines are protected. The council was formed to work with the City to achieve a green and sustainable sailing event and shoreline development.

The City has recognized publicly that large crowds, thousands of spectator boats, dredging to accommodate super yachts, a cruise terminal and various building projects are likely to cause significant air and water pollution, as well as transportation impacts within and leading into the City.

Members of the Council have been working cooperatively with one another and with City staff for the past six months to identify and address the expected impacts of the event. "We made a commitment to assist the City in their effort to host a successful America's Cup event in a very short timeframe," said Deb Self, executive director of San Francisco Baykeeper. "We've had experts in natural resources, bay ecology and habitat, transportation and neighborhood and historic resources provide detailed written input to the City." Unfortunately, the groups say, very little of that expertise has been incorporated into the draft document, raising concerns that the City may not be able to meet the ambitious timetable they've set.

"It takes longer to fix an inadequate document than it does to write one correctly in the first place" said Deb Self. "We really need to take care of the shortcomings of this document now, before it gets rushed to final approval."

"So far, the DEIR does not do enough to protect our air and water from the expected side effects of the America's Cup," added Teri Shore, Program Director of Turtle Island Restoration Network. "Air pollution from spectator boats and cruise ships will be significant, but cleaner fuel and engine standards are not required. It seems that our concerns and recommendations for greening the event have not yet been incorporated."

Among the groups sounding the alarm are the South End Rowing Club and Dolphin Club, which are located at Aquatic Park, a location for some America's Cup activities. "The Draft EIR failed to recognize the events' impacts to 2,000 swimmers and rowers who use Aquatic Park regularly," said Ken Coren, Vice President of the Dolphin Club, which has been located in Aquatic Park since the 19th Century. "It's just not appropriate use this historic maritime park for super yachts and a floating video jumbotron."

Other major impacts of concern are crowds in sensitive upland habitats in the Presidio, the loss of shoreside power for visiting cruise ships, water quality impacts from boatyards and increased trash in the Bay, and interactions between marine mammals and visiting watercraft.

"Imagine having the Blue Angels and Fleet Week non-stop for nine weeks," said Jennifer Clary of San Francisco Tomorrow, the coordinator of the Council. "Everyone who lives in the City understands the impacts of those events. We want the City's plan to do the same."

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The Environmental Council's purpose is to ensure that America's Cup is a benefit for San Francisco Bay and its surrounding neighborhoods and historic resources, in both the short and long term.