



February 19, 2025

2025 State of the San Mateo County Harbor District¹

It is with great pride that the San Mateo County Harbor District presents this State of the Harbor District. Through the remarkable leadership, respect, coordination, cooperation, and direction provided by the Board of Harbor Commissioners and input provided by the public, the Harbor District excelled in multiple areas to include financial management, capital improvement projects, maintenance, search and rescue, partnerships, and transparency.

The great improvements in management, administration, finances, and transparency have been recognized by the 2024 San Mateo County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) Municipal Service Review in which they note “the District has greatly improved its financial transparency and budgetary practices.” LAFCo further noted that “there are no ongoing concerns regarding the District’s financial ability to provide services.”

Search and Rescue/Maritime Assists: Before highlighting the successes of the District, it is critical we discuss the largest and most significant challenge the Harbor District is facing- Coastside Search and Rescue/Maritime Assists. The San Mateo Harbor District is the only government agency providing immediate emergency search and rescue on the San Mateo Coast. In the past 12 months, the professional, highly skilled, and dedicated Deputy Harbormasters have saved 108 people and assisted over 300 boats to safety. However, the District continues to struggle with maintaining this capability due to lack of recurring funding. The current funding only allows for minimal staffing to operate and maintain our facilities, with limited opportunity to fully provide staff for search and rescue response. There are multiple hours each week where the Harbor is not staffed to a level that would permit a launch of a search and rescue asset. To properly staff, train, and equip our staff, the Harbor District requires six additional

¹ Reviewed and approved by the San Mateo County Harbor Board of Harbor Commissioners on February 19, 2025 at the regular meeting of the Harbor Commission.

Deputy Harbormasters and \$1.5 million in annual funding (salaries, benefits, training, equipment, vessels, maintenance).

The District has investigated multiple funding sources in support of the Coastside maritime rescue program, but as of the date of the report, have been unsuccessful identifying an additional funding source. We requested funding from Half Moon Bay based on the proceeds collected through the transitory tax charged to the visitors at the Pillar Point Harbor RV Park. The District requested this funding based on the following: 1) the citizens of Half Moon Bay benefit from the Harbor's search and rescue services, 2) in 2020, Measure U, a measure that increased the Transitory Tax to 15% to support emergency response, was passed by the citizens of Half Moon Bay, 3) in 2024, Measure R passed to in part to fund "emergency response, and 4) the Pillar Point Harbor RV park is located on land owned by the Harbor District. No formal response was received to this request.

We also requested from the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office a percentage of their funding under Section 35 of Article XIII of the California Constitution. Section 35 was added to the California Constitution because of Proposition 172. Proposition 172 created a statewide ½ percent sales tax which funds the Local Public Safety Fund to be used in support public safety, including ocean rescue. San Mateo County, in 2023 received over \$110 million from this fund. As of the date of this report, the District has not received a response to our request.

The Harbor District will continue to provide emergency search and rescue response and maritime assistance (vessel tows, fuel) when properly staffed, equipped, and trained. However, until such time the District is properly funded, there will be large blocks of time where no immediate search and rescue capabilities will be available, placing the Coastside at risk.

Federal/State Partnerships: In 2024 the Harbor District was able to make remarkable partnerships with both State and Federal partners to assist in several significant projects to include the Surfers Beach Replenishment Pilot Project, Harbor Dredge Project, Princeton Shoreline Project, and the Pillar Point Harbor Sea Level Rise Project. Each of these projects are discussed below:

Surfers Beach Replenishment Pilot Project: In 2024 the Harbor District received all required permits to begin the Surfers Beach Replenishment Project. The project will include the Eel Grass Mitigation Project, the Pillar Point Harbor Dredging Project, and

the Beach Replenishment Project. The District was supported in this project by a \$2.9 million grant from the California Ocean Protection Council.

It is important to note, a very generous grant from the California Division of Boating and Waterways of \$800,000 was lost due to the significant delays caused by the myriads of federal, state, and local permitting agencies.

Pillar Point Harbor Launch Ramp Rehabilitation Project: In partnership with the California Division of Boating and Waterways, the Harbor District is in the engineering, design, and permitting of the Pillar Point Launch Ramp Rehabilitation Project. This project includes new floating docks, new concrete launch ramp and apron, and a new restroom facility with unisex stalls, changing room, and outdoor showers. The project will also include a new boat rinsing system that will recycle and filter the used rinse water before it is returned to the harbor. This project has already been approved for a \$400,000 grant from the California Division of Boating and Waterways.

Princeton by the Sea Shoreline Project. The Princeton shoreline has suffered significant coastal erosion. This excessive erosion has been caused by the changed currents within Pillar Point Harbor following the construction /of the Pillar Point Harbor Breakwater, a Federal navigation project. In January 2024, the Harbor District requested the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) to mitigate this damage to the shoreline and prevent it from continuing. Following an initial cost-benefit analysis, the ACOE has agreed to move forward with a project under their Continuing Authorities Program to address the Princeton Shoreline. The Harbor District is now working with the ACOE on a cost share agreement to begin the feasibility phase. The feasibility phase will involve the ACOE, Harbor District, County Planning, OneShoreline, County Public Works, and Coastal Commission. The ACOE will cover 91.4% of the cost to complete this project.

North Half Moon Bay Coastal Erosion and Sea Level Rise Project. In 2024, the Harbor District worked closely with the Honorable Congresswoman Anna Eshoo to include the North Half Moon Bay Coastal Erosion and Sea Level Rise Project in the Water Resources Development Act of 2024 (WRDA 2024). On January 4, 2025, the President signed WRDA 2024 into law. The ACOE now has the authority to conduct a general investigation into the coastal damage caused by the breakwater and formulate a solution that will mitigate and prevent the damage from continuing. This project is significant as it will address the entirety of Northern Half Moon Bay (Pillar Point Harbor to Pilarcitos Creek). This project will involve multiple agencies to include the Army Corps of Engineers, Coastal Commission, Monterey National Marine Sanctuary, California Water Board, Caltrans, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, OneShoreline, County Planning, County

Public Works, El Granada Community Service District, and the City of Half Moon Bay. The public will also be heavily involved through public meetings and workshops.

Capital Improvement Plan : The District made significant progress towards the Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan in 2024. Several projects were completed outright, while others have been fully approved, permitted, and funded, and others are on track for full approval/funding. This includes:

Oyster Point Entrance Ramp Project: District has received all required permits and approvals to upgrade the entrance ramps for Docks 1 through 6 at Oyster Point Marina. The new ramps will be ADA compliant and elevated to the new Bay Trail elevation, greatly improving accessibility. The Entrance Ramp Project is fully funded and will break ground in Spring 2025.

Surfers Beach Restroom and Greenspace Project: The area previously occupied by a privately managed paid parking lot and unsightly portable restrooms was reconfigured into a much-needed public rest stop. The new rest stop facility included public restrooms, a dressing room, outdoor showers, bike racks, benches and green space. The project also included the installation of multiple ADA accessible parking spaces with access to the Coastal Trail and Pillar Point Harbor, and multiple free public parking spaces, two of which were equipped with EV charging stations. The Coastal Trail was also reconfigured through this area, separating pedestrian and bicycle traffic, greatly improving safety. The new public space serves thousands of California Coastal Trail users, patrons of Surfers Beach and Hotel Beach, shoreside fishermen and shellfish gatherers. This project was completed in 2024.

The District did compete for and was awarded a \$510,000 grant for use in the construction of this project.

Johnson Pier Fish Buyer's Building Electrical Upgrade Project: The Johnson Pier Fish Buyer's Building Electrical Upgrade Project will run additional power to the terminus and upgrade the existing system. The upgraded system will provide enough power to meet the demands of the fish processing/ offloading systems, eliminating any need for external diesel generators and the associated diesel exhaust. This project is scheduled for completion in Spring 2025.

Floating Dock Life Extension Project: The Floating Dock Life Extension Project includes the replacement of all surface boards, the inspection and replacement of internal structures and brackets, removal of all dry rot, and the inspection, cleaning, pumping out, and where needed, the replacement of dock floatation units. This project, when

complete, will extend the useful life of the docks for several years while ensuring their safety and functionality. This project is ongoing.

Oyster Point Electrical Upgrades Project: The Oyster Point Electrical Upgrade Project included the replacement of the power transformers on docks 1-6 with new, fully compliant, larger capacity transformers with Ground Fault Controllers. With the new transformers, the District is now providing safer, more dependable, and cleaner power to each of the docks. This project has been completed.

Oyster Point Entrance Structures: The Harbor District rebuilt and replaced the existing and deteriorated Oyster Point Marina Cannel Markers to ensure safe passage for all vessels entering and existing the Marina. This project has been completed.

Re-pavement of Pilar Point Harbor Avenue: As a result of heavy use and saltwater intrusion from the vessels and vehicles departing the launch ramp, Pillar Point Harbor Blvd consisted of wasted pavement, uneven road surface, and potholes. To address this issue and improve safety, the District repaved Pillar Point Blvd and added marked crosswalks. This project was completed in 2024.

Perch Beach Coastal Trail Extension: The Coastal Trail Extension Project included the construction of a fully ADA compliant paved pathway from south of Perch Beach through to Pillar Point Avenue in Pillar Point Harbor. The project replaced an undeveloped, unapproved, dirt trail which thousands of visitors transited each year. This project was completed in 2024.

Slurry & Striping Parking Lots A4, B, C1, and C2. C3: Over the past several years, the asphalt in upper parking lots, (Lot A4, B, C1, C2, and C3) had failed in several areas that included cracks, crumbling asphalt, potholes and uneven surfaces. To address this issue, the District conducted repairs and slurry sealed each lot. In addition, each parking area was re-striped to maximize the parking layout plan to include 119 marked parking spaces for truck and trailer combinations in support of the public boat ramp. This project was completed in 2024.

Pillar Point Harbor Native Plant Project: This project identified and removed non-native invasive plant species throughout Pillar Point Harbor and replaced them with native, drought resistant plants. This project is ongoing.

Tenant Row ADA Restroom Facility: The District constructed a new ADA complaint restroom facility at the commercial building in Pillar Point Harbor. This new facility replaced the internal restroom within the Ketch Joanne Restaurant that was not in

compliance with the ADA. This new restroom significantly increased the accessibility of the Harbor for people of all capabilities. This project is complete.

Property Purchases: The Harbor District, with the intent to increase the number of revenue streams and improve customer service, purchased several pieces of property situated next to or near Pillar Point Harbor in January 2024. These parcels include four parcels located above the Pillar Point Harbor public launch ramp. The District also purchased two parcels on Burnham Strip in El Granada. (See Exhibit 1). The exact use of the properties above the launch ramp is being discussed as part of the 2025 Strategic Plan with an emphasis on using the property for harbor serving, income producing purposes.

The two parcels located on the Burnham Strip are being considered for public parking to serve the Harbor District as an overflow lot given the fact Caltrans is eliminating parking on Hwy 1 with the Highway 1 Intermodal Improvement Project.

This District is also considering property purchases in Princeton by the Sea, or other areas around Pillar Point Harbor with the goal of providing additional services to the Harbor and increasing the number of revenue streams.

Real Property Leases: Real Property Leases have also been reviewed and upon renewal or issuance, the lease payments are being brought up to current market values. This effort has increased the District's rental income by well over \$200,000 per year.

The District has also ensured that all leasable space is occupied, to include the restaurant spaces at Pillar Point Harbor. This space was non-operable for over a year with no rental income being received. The restaurants are now up and running and paying market rate for the spaces.

Budget/Finance: The District has continued to receive clean audit reports, including the Fiscal Year 2023/2024. The District's Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget Document, which serves as a policy document, financial plan, operations guide, and communication tool, has once again earned the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). The Award recognizes the District's budget and five-year capital improvement plan is of the very highest quality that reflect both the guidelines established by the National Advisory Council on State and Local Budgeting and the GFOA's best practices on budgeting. It further acknowledges the Harbor District's commitment to transparency in budgeting.

Transparency: The District has also earned and maintained the Special District Leadership Foundation's Transparency Certificate of Excellence. The Certificate provides third-party recognition from a statewide non-profit foundation known for promoting good governance and best practices, highlighting the Harbor District's efforts to openly engage the public, create greater awareness of our activities, and the District's commitment to operating in a transparent and ethical manner.

Public Outreach and Engagement: Hosted the annual Lighted Boat Festival. Even with inclement weather, well over 1000 individuals attended the event, which for the first time included a holiday drone show. The Harbor District also participated in the Coastside Chamber of Commerce's Holiday Night of Lights Parade in Half Moon Bay, promoting ocean safety.

Exhibit 1

