SHAWNA B. CASEBIER (Bar No. 267782)	
San Francisco, CA 94117 Tel: 415-407-9715	ENDORSED FILED
Fax: N/A sbcasebier@gmail.com	SAN MATEO COUNTY  JUN 1 5 2015
BRENT PLATER (Bar. No. 209555)	Glerk of the Superior Court
474 Valencia St., Suite 295	S. YAMBING CLERK
Tel: 415-349-5787	
bplater@wildequity.org	
Attorneys for Petitioner WILD EQUITY INSTITUTE,	
a non-profit corporation	
	THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY	OF SAN MATEO CIV 534249
WIN D DOLLARY DIGHTS IND	la v
a non-profit corporation,	Case No.:
Petitioner,	VERIFIED PETITION FOR WRIT OF ADMINISTRATIVE MANDAMUS (C.C.P. § 1094.5)
VS.	(Cicili § 105 iiu)
CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION, a state agency, and DOES 1 through 20, inclusive,	Dept:
Respondents.	
CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN	
FRANCISCO, a municipal corporation, SAN FRANCISCO RECREATION AND	•
PARKS DEPARTMENT, a public entity, SAN FRANCISCO RECREATION AND	
Real Parties in Interest.	
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	1290 Grove Street, #502 San Francisco, CA 94117 Tel: 415-407-9715 Fax: N/A sbcasebier@gmail.com  BRENT PLATER (Bar. No. 209555) WILD EQUITY INSTITUTE 474 Valencia St., Suite 295 San Francisco, CA 94103 Tel: 415-349-5787 Fax: N/A bplater@wildequity.org  Attorneys for Petitioner WILD EQUITY INSTITUTE, a non-profit corporation  SUPERIOR COURT FOR COUNTY (  WILD EQUITY INSTITUTE, a non-profit corporation,  Petitioner,  vs.  CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION, a state agency, and DOES 1 through 20, inclusive,  Respondents.  CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO, a municipal corporation, SAN FRANCISCO RECREATION AND PARKS DEPARTMENT, a public entity,

VERIFIED PETITION FOR WRIT OF ADMINISTRATIVE MANDAMUS (C.C.P.  $\S$  1094.5)

Petitioner WILD EQUITY INSTITUTE ("Wild Equity") alleges as follows:

## NATURE OF THE CASE

- 1. In this mandamus action, Petitioner Wild Equity alleges that in the course of approving the City and County of San Francisco's Coastal Development Permit Application Number 2-12-014 (hereinafter the "CDP") for the "Pump House Safety, Infrastructure Improvement, and Habitat Enhancement Project" ("Pump House Project") at Sharp Park, Respondent CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION (hereinafter the "Commission" or "CCC") abused its discretion, exceeded its jurisdiction and violated the California Coastal Act (California Public Resources Code § 30000 et seq.) (hereinafter "the Coastal Act") by illegally authorizing prohibited development in wetlands.
- 2. The CDP, as approved, violates, without limitation, Coastal Act Sections 30003, 30006.5, 30007.5, 30105.5, 30230, 30231, 30233, and 30240.
- 3. Petitioner petitions this Court for a writ of mandate under Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.5, or such writ as may be appropriate, directing the Commission to vacate and set aside its approval of the CDP.
- 4. A true and correct copy of the administrative record will be lodged with the Court prior to the hearing on this petition for administrative mandamus.

#### **PARTIES**

5. Petitioner Wild Equity is a non-profit organization based in San Francisco, California. Wild Equity unites the grassroots conservation and environmental justice movements into a powerful force that builds a healthy and sustainable global community for people and the plants and animals that accompany us on Earth. Wild Equity accomplishes this by working on projects that highlight and redress the inequitable relationships across our human communities while improving our relationship to the lands in which we live. Wild Equity's concerns encompass the acts engaged in by Respondent herein. Wild Equity's particular interest in this case stemmed from the allegations set forth herein below. Petitioner Wild Equity, by and through the written

and verbal comments of its membership, staff and Board of Directors, has satisfied the requirements of Public Resources Code § 30801 and is an "aggrieved person" under said section, having appeared before and submitted multiple letters to Respondent Commission regarding the Coastal Development Permit ("CDP") that is the subject matter of this Petition. Petitioner Wild Equity has, from and after August 2012, submitted to Respondent Commission multiple written and oral communications opposing approval of the CDP. In so doing, Petitioner Wild Equity has exhausted its administrative remedies.

6. Respondent California Coastal Commission is a state agency duly organized under the laws of the State of California and is the agency that approved the CDP.

## REAL PARTIES IN INTEREST AND OTHER RESPONDENTS

- 7. Real Party in Interest CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO (hereinafter the "City and County") is a political subdivision existing under the constitution and laws of the State of California. Sharp Park, the coastal land affected and at issue in the CDP, is owned and operated by the City and County.
- 8. Real Party in Interest SAN FRANCISCO RECREATION AND PARKS
  DEPARTMENT ("Rec & Park") is the City and County's department, overseen by its Recreation and Parks Commission, which administers parks, playgrounds, and open spaces within City and County jurisdiction including Sharp Park, which is located in Pacifica. Rec & Park is the proponent/applicant for the Pump House Project.
- 9. Real Party in Interest SAN FRANCISCO RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION ("Rec & Park Commission") is the decision-making body of Rec & Park.
- 10. Petitioner is ignorant of the true names and capacities of respondents sued herein as DOES 1 through 20, inclusive, and therefore sues these respondents by these fictitious names. Petitioner will amend this petition to alleged their true names and capacities when ascertained.

### JURISDICTION AND VENUE

11. Jurisdiction of this Court is invoked pursuant to California Public Resources

Code § 30801 and California Code of Civil Procedure § 1094.5. Venue is proper because the affected Coastal Zone land at Sharp Park, for which the CDP has been approved, is located in San Mateo County.

## ALLEGATIONS COMMON TO ALL CAUSES OF ACTION

- 12. Sharp Park is located in Coastal Zone land in Pacifica, California, but it is owned and operated by the City and County of San Francisco. Sharp Park is adjacent to Mori Point, part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, to the South, and Sweeney Ridge, also part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, to the East. Protected San Francisco Public Utility Commission watershed lands are Southeast of Sharp Park.
- 13. Sharp Park contains one of the last remaining backbarrier lagoon wetland complexes in Northern California. The wetland complex contains several water features, including Sanchez Creek, Laguna Salada, Horse Stable Pond and a connecting charmel between these two water bodies, and wetlands that surround these water features. Collectively, these features are called the Laguna Salada wetland complex.
- 14. Much of the Laguna Salada wetland complex is classified as jurisdictional wetlands<sup>1</sup> that are also classified as environmentally sensitive habitat areas ("ESHA") under the California Coastal Act.
- 15. The Laguna Salada wetland complex is essential habitat to the California Red-Legged Frog, *Rana draytonii* (federally Threatened; state Species of Concern), and the San Francisco Garter Snake, *Thamnophis sirtalis tetrataenia* (federally and state Endangered).
- 16. Sharp Park also contains an 18-hole golf course, which surrounds much of the Laguna Salada wetland complex. Winter rains that fall in Sharp Park's watershed naturally flow into the

Act's single parameter guidelines.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The California Coastal Commission has never conducted a comprehensive delineation based on the single parameter wetlands definition in the Coastal Act and in the Commission's Regulations. Coastal Act § 30121; 14 CCR § 13577(b). Petitioner contends that far more coastal resources than have been addressed by Respondent at Sharp Park would and should be protected as wetlands under the Coastal Act upon a delineation conducted in accordance with the Coastal

Laguna Salada wetland complex. The golf course's construction, combined with the subsequent construction of an earthen berm along Sharp Park's coastline, prevent this water from its natural flow to the ocean.

- 17. Due to the poor design and placement of Sharp Park Golf Course and the subsequently constructed earthen berm, winter rains flood Sharp Park annually. To address the flooding, the City and County installed and operates pumps at the Laguna Salada wetland complex to drain the wetlands during winter rains.
- 18. Without approval from the Coastal Commission, the City and County drastically increased the pumping capacity of its pumping operation by replacing two pumps rated at 500 gallons per minute ("gpm") and the other at 250 gpm, with pumps rated at 1,500 gpm and 10,000 gpm, respectively. In or about 2010, the City and County replaced the 10,000 gpm pump in kind, again, without the benefit of analysis and consultation with the Coastal Commission's permit process.
- 19. Based on information and belief, the Commission has found that installation of the 1,500 gpm and 10,000 gmp pumps, in addition to the 2010 in kind pump replacement, were in violation of the Coastal Act and require coastal development permits.
- 20. The Coastal Commission is tasked with the mission to "protect, conserve, restore, and enhance the environmental and human-based resources of the California coast and ocean for environmentally sustainable and prudent use by current and future generations." http://www.coastal.ca.gov/whoweare.html (last visited 6/8/15).
- 21. The City and County's ongoing draining of the wetland complex via the pumps causes several significant adverse environmental effects in the coastal environment, including, but not limited to: killing rare and endangered species; altering the hydrology of the wetland system; changing the composition of aquatic vegetation on the site from species that require deep water to those that grow best in shallow water; and conversion of open water habitats to dry land and/or shallow wetlands.

- 22. In March 2011, a federal lawsuit was brought against Real Parties in Interest by Petitioner and others for illegally killing the endangered San Francisco Garter Snake and the threatened California Red-Legged Frog at Sharp Park. Of vital concern in that lawsuit was the fact that the City and County harms endangered species and their essential habitat through chronic draining of the wetland complex and makes alterations in the Coastal Zone of Sharp Park without review and permit approval from the requisite state and federal agencies.
- 23. Subsequent to, and based on information and belief, because of, the filing of the 2011 federal lawsuit, the City and County concocted the Pump House Project to establish federal permitting procedures and initiated consultation with the requisite federal agencies to permit the Pump House Project.
- 24. On or about August 2012, and through several application revisions thereafter, the City and County submitted to the Commission the CDP application requesting permission to make alterations to its pumping operations that will impact jurisdictional wetlands and environmentally sensitive habitat areas. The development asked to be permitted in the CDP includes, but is not limited to:
  - a. Filling portions of the jurisdictional wetlands at Horse Stable Pond with concrete to build support structures for a walkway around the front of the pump intake box;
  - b. Filling portions of the jurisdictional wetlands at Horse Stable Pond with concrete to build a retaining wall;
  - c. Dredging sediments and removing vegetation from the jurisdictional wetlands of Horse Stable Pond;
  - d. Dredging sediments and removing vegetation in select locations within the
    jurisdictional wetlands of the connecting channel and culverts that link Horse
    Stable Pond and Laguna Salada;

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lines (roads do not qualify)3."3

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(http://www.coastal.ca.gov/wetrev/wetch1.html, last visited 5/31/15) (hereinafter "Procedural

The Coastal Commission's Interpretative Guidelines on Wetlands and Other Wet

Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (adopted 2/4/81) (hereinafter "Interpretative

Guidelines") mandates that impacts on the environment from development pursuant to the

"incidental public services purposes" use must be temporary: "Incidental public services

purposes which temporarily impact the resources of the area, which include, but are not limited

to, burying cables and pipes, inspection of piers, and maintenance of existing intake and outfall

Based on information and belief, the Coastal Commission has uniformly followed and

Guidance") also addresses the allowable uses analysis under Coastal Act § 30233(a) and

California's Coastal Zone, Chapter 1, Section (3)(B)(1)(iii),

reiterates that the allowable use under Coastal Act § 30233(a)(4) "relates to incidental public

service purposes that temporarily impact the resources of an area, such as burying cables and

<sup>3</sup> On the record at the April 15, 2015 hearing, CCC Staff advised that the Commission could

permit the proposed Pump House Project under an alleged exception to the long-standing requirement that incidental public service purposes be temporary. However, this alleged exception, which applies expressly to roads, in fact places additional constraints on road construction in wetlands. To develop roads in wetlands it must be demonstrated that "no other

alternative exists" and that the road is "necessary to maintain existing traffic capacity."

Interpretive Guidelines, pg. 10.

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pipes, or inspection and maintenance of existing structures such as piers and outfall lines." (emphasis in original).

- The Procedural Guidance further instructs that "past decisions by the CCC have been 37. fairly restrictive as to what constitutes a temporary project." Procedural Guidance, Chapter 1. Section (3)(B)(1)(iii).
- 38. The Pump House Project, as approved by the Commission through the CDP, contemplates numerous permanent impacts to jurisdictional wetlands, including, but not limited to: concrete fill of wetland for the retaining wall and walkway support structures; chronic draining via pumps; ongoing dredging; recurring vegetation removal; relocation of two golf cart paths; and installation of steps to the pump house.
- 39. The City and County concede in its materials submitted to the Coastal Commission in support of the project that the Pump House Project would result in permanent impacts to the wetland habitat as a result of the construction of the walkway around the Horse Stable Pond pump house, construction of a concrete retaining wall and removal of sediment and emergent vegetation in Horse Stable Pond and the connecting channel. California Coastal Commission Staff Report, Exhibit 4, pg. 94.
- Based on information and belief, the Coastal Commission found that the clearing of 40. sediment and vegetation was a temporary action to maintain the existing capacity of the pumps; however such a finding is not supported by the City and County's past practices nor the cumulative impacts that recurrent pumping, dredging and vegetation removal have on the wetland complex.
- 41. Substantial evidence does not support a finding that the dredging of sediments and removal of vegetation is only a temporary action to maintain the existing capacity of the pumps.
- 42. Experts have stated on the record that maintenance of shallow water in the wetland complex via pumping actually promotes the growth of vegetation and loss of open water habitat that is then followed by dredging and vegetation removal to maintain the existing capacity of the

- pumps, creating an unending cycle of pumping, dredging and vegetation removal and attendant cumulative permanent impacts.
- 43. The Coastal Commission abused its discretion by failing to address the cumulative impacts that the dredging of sediment and removal of vegetation will have on the wetlands of Sharp Park.
- 44. The Commission's decision to approve the Pump House Project pursuant to Coastal Act § 30233(a)(4) is not supported by the fact that the project will have permanent impacts on the wetlands of Sharp Park.
- 45. In approving the CDP pursuant to Coastal Act § 30233(a)(4), when the specific requirements of that section have not been met and when no other allowable uses under § 30233(a) apply, the Commission exceeded its authority, proceeded without jurisdiction and permitted an illegal development of coastal wetlands.
- 46. Under Coastal Act § 30233(a), the Commission must also find that "no feasible less environmentally damaging alternative" exists to permit the proposed project.
- 47. A feasible less environmentally damaging alternative to the Pump House Project exists and was presented by Petitioner and others to the Commission in written and oral communications, in addition to public comment at the April 16, 2015 CCC meeting.
- 48. A primary purpose of the Pump House Project is to remove impediments to water flow via pumping within the wetland complex. Experts have demonstrated on the record that a drowning-dieback management method of controlling the vegetation growth that the City and County seeks to eradicate by dredging and vegetation removal is not only a feasible, but also a naturalist approach with significantly less wetland impact.
- 49. Based on information and belief, substantial evidence does not support a finding that no feasible less environmentally damaging alternative exists to the Pump House Project.
- 50. The Commission abused its discretion and exceeded its jurisdiction by permitting the Pump House Project when a feasible less environmentally damaging alternative exists.

- 51. Based on information and belief, the Commission has adopted, without substantial evidentiary support, the City and County's assertions that the relocation of the two golf cart paths and installation of steps leading down the slope from the access road to the pump house and the intake structure do not impact jurisdictional wetlands.
- A 2013 wetland delineation report prepared by Rec. & Park, and based upon information and belief, relied upon by the Commission in assessing which aspects of Pump House Project will impact jurisdictional wetlands at Sharp Park, addressed only limited locations within Sharp Park and did not comprehensively consider the full extent of wetlands on the property. As such, the 2013 wetland delineation report is a deficient source from which to determine where jurisdictional wetlands lie on the property and is inconsistent with the Coastal Commission's single parameter guidelines on wetland delineation. 14 CCR § 13577(b).
- 53. Relocation of the golf cart paths and installation of the steps leading down the slope from the access road to the pump house and intake structure will occur in ESHAs that upon a proper delineation would be classified as jurisdictional wetlands because the lands contain hydric soils, hydrophytes and/or have surface water or saturated substrate at some time during each year, in addition to being located adjacent to vegetated wetlands.
- 54. The requirements of § 30240 do not apply to the Pump House Project because the Pump House Project is to occur in jurisdictional wetlands and the Coastal Act provides specific guidance on development in wetlands pursuant to § 30233(a), which is controlling when an ESHA is also a wetland. <sup>4</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Based on information and belief, the Commission found that the Pump House Project could be permitted pursuant to the conflict resolution provision of § 30007.5 because the project does not comply with the requirements of § 30240's mandate that ESHAs be "protected against any significant disruption of habitat values" and limited to "uses dependent on those resources." Based on information and belief, the Commission balanced the Coastal Act's provisions relating to preservation of ESHAs with the provisions relating to recreational opportunities to sanction all or some aspects of the project. Petitioner contends that § 30240 does not apply because the development will occur in wetlands, and secondarily, that the denial of the CDP does not dictate the elimination of low-cost, public recreational at Sharp Park nor conflict with the recreational use provisions, and thus, conflict resolution was inapplicable and improperly utilized.

- 55. The Coastal Commission proceeded without jurisdiction by allowing the illegal development in wetlands as contemplated by the CDP pursuant to the Coastal Act provisions that generally apply to ESHAs.
- 56. The Commission abused its discretion in failing to apply and analyze the requirements of § 30233 in permitting the golf cart path relocation and the building of the steps to the pump house and intake structure.
- 57. The *Interpretive Guidelines*, in recognizing that wetlands are "not isolated, independently functioning systems," states that a buffer area of at least 100 feet of open space between the proposed development and environmentally sensitive habitat area of a wetland is required to ensure that the development proposed "will not significantly degrade the habitat area." *Interpretive Guidelines*, pgs. 4, 21.
- 58. The Commission failed to analyze and address the impact of the golf cart path relocation on the buffer zone required to protect environmentally sensitive habitat areas from the impacts of development, and in doing so abused its discretion.
- 59. The Commission abused its discretion in approving the after-the-fact permitting of the 2010 higher capacity pump and the facts in the record do not support the Commission's after-the-fact approval.
- 60. The Coastal Act provides no basis upon which the higher capacity pumps for the Pump House Project may be authorized. Analyzing the pumps under § 30240, which applies to development in ESHAs, experts have stated on that record that the higher capacity pumps significantly disrupt the habitat values that sustain the California Red-Legged Frog, and consequently the San Francisco Gartner Snake, and further are not a use dependent on the resources of the area. Analyzed under § 30233(a), the higher capacity pumps do not serve any of the allowable purposes of that section nor are they proposed as a temporary impact to the natural environment.

- 61. The Coastal Commission segmented the permitting processes by considering the elements of the Pump House Project separately. In doing so, the Coastal Commission exceeded its jurisdiction by failing to analyze the cumulative impacts of the Pump House Project on the natural environment.
- 62. In approving the CDP in violation of the Coastal Act and contrary to the Commission's longstanding policies and interpretations regarding development in coastal wetlands, the Coastal Commission's decision was arbitrary and capricious.
- 63. Petitioner has paid, and will pay, its own attorney's fees in bringing this matter to court.
- 64. Petitioner files this petition to uphold the legislative intent and purposes of the Coastal Act and to enforce important rights affecting the public interest in the protection and enhancement of California's wetlands and Coastal Zone.
- 65. Petitioner has no plain, speedy, and adequate remedy in the ordinary course of law unless this Court grants the requested Writ of Mandate to require Respondent Commission to set aside and vacate its approval of the CDP.

# FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION (California Public Resources Code § 30000 et seq.)

- 66. Petitioner hereby incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 65 inclusive, of this Petition as though fully set forth herein.
- 67. In approving the CDP, Respondent Commission exceeded its jurisdiction and violated substantive provisions of the California Coastal Act. Such violations include, without limitation, California Public Resources Code Sections 30003, 30006.5, 30007.5, 30105.5, 30230, 30231, 30233, and 30240.
- 68. Violations of the Coastal Act include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a. Permitting the permanent concrete fill of jurisdictional wetlands to construct support structures for a walkway around the front of the pump intake box in violation of Section 30233(a)(4);

- b. Permitting the permanent concrete fill of jurisdictional wetlands to create a retaining wall in violation of Section 30233(a)(4);
- c. Permitting the construction of steps leading down the slope from the access road to the pump house and intake structure without assessing whether the proposed development falls within jurisdictional wetlands (14 CCR 13577(b)) and failing to apply the specific requirements applicable to development in wetlands (Section 30233);
- d. Permitting the ongoing dredging of sediments and removal of emergent vegetation within the jurisdictional wetlands of Horse Stable Pond in violation of Sections 30233(a)(4) and 30105.5;
- e. Permitting the ongoing dredging of sediments and removal of emergent vegetation in select locations within the jurisdictional wetlands of the connecting channel and culverts that link Horse Stable Pond and Laguna Salada in violation of Sections 30233(a)(4) and 30105.5;
- f. Permitting the permanent relocation of two golf cart paths within Sharp Park without first determining if the paths would be relocated to an area within jurisdictional wetlands (14 CCR 13577(b)), and failing to apply the specific requirements of development in wetlands to the relocation of the two golf cart paths (Section 30233(a));
- g. Permitting the Pump House Project when feasible less environmentally damaging alternatives exist (Section 30233(a));
- h. Failing to analyze the previously unpermitted pumps and the impacts of the increased pumping capacity on the natural environment, and permitting the increased capacity pumps without a basis to do so (§ 30240 and § 30233(a)); and,
- i. Failing to analyze and address the cumulative impacts of the Pump House Project on the natural environment (Sections 30105.5 and 30006.5).

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## PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Petitioner WILD EQUITY INSTITUTE prays for relief against Respondent CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION, as follows:

- 1. For a peremptory Writ of Mandate to require Respondent Commission to set aside and vacate its approval of the CDP;
- 2. For provisional relief, including, without limitation, a stay of the effect of the CDP approval;
- 3. For attorney's fees and costs under California Code of Civil Procedure §1021.5 for enforcement of an important right affecting the public interest;
  - 4. For attorney's fees pursuant to California Government Code § 800;
  - 5. For costs of suit; and,
  - 6. For such other and further relief as the Court shall deem just and proper.

Date: June 13, 2015

Shawna B. Casebier
Attorney for Petitioner

WILD EQUITY INSTITUTE;

A non-profit corporation

**VERIFICATION** 

I, Brent Plater, hereby declare that I am the Executive Director of, and attorney for,
Petitioner Wild Equity Institute. I have read the foregoing **VERIFIED PETITION FOR ADMINISTRATIVE WRIT OF MANDAMUS** and know the contents thereof. The same is true of my own knowledge, except as to the matters stated upon information and/or belief, as to those matters I believe it to be true.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed this 13<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2015 at San Francisco, California.

Brent Plater