

Bay Area officials oppose Cargill plan

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Ninety-two current and former elected officials called on Redwood City leaders to oppose the proposed development of the Saltworks site, sending the council a letter in which signers pushed for restoration.

The letter argues that “salt ponds are not land to be paved — they are part of San Francisco Bay to be restored to tidal marsh for wildlife habitat, natural flood protection for our communities, cleaner water and recreation areas for everyone to enjoy.”

Signers include the current mayors of 13 cities, elected officials for 26 cities and supervisors from six counties, 11 members of the executive board of the Association of Bay Area Governments and eight commissioners of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission.

Those participating urged other officials to join the effort.

“The proposal to build in our Bay is a direct assault on the whole Bay Area’s quality of life and our region’s residents will not stand for it,” said John Gioia, chair of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors .

Opponents say the salt ponds should be restored to tidal marsh, much as other ponds throughout the Bay Area are currently being restored, and are important beyond the borders of Redwood City.

“People understand that a thriving Bay is vital for our region’s quality of life and economy and this deep support is a critical asset in protecting the Bay, restoring more tidal marsh and making the bay healthier for people and wildlife,” said Save the Bay Executive Director David Lewis.

But as the leaders and nonprofit Save the Bay rallied the opposition, developer DMB Redwood City Saltworks had its own announcement — endorsements from regional groups such as the San Mateo County Economic Development Association, Redwood City San Mateo County Chamber of Commerce and employers like Bank of America, Electronic Arts and the San Francisco International Airport.

“Silicon Valley’s success depends on having access to the most talented workforce in the world and those people need places to live that don’t demand huge daily commutes,” said Carl Guardino, president and CEO of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group.

The proposed so-called 50-50 Balanced Plan calls for 50 percent of the 1,436-acre site to be preserved for permanent open space, public recreation and tidal marsh restoration and the remaining half be developed into housing, schools, parks and retail and transit facilities. The site could house up to 12,000 housing units.

In early February, Redwood City officials accepted reports finding there is enough water and traffic circulation within the project area to make it feasible. Around the same time, the Menlo Park City Council officially passed an ordinance opposing the development. Redwood City officials, however, counter that the environmental review process must be followed.