

Saving Point Molate Again

By David Helvarg, Exec. Director Blue Frontier Campaign – July 18, 2016



The late Peter Douglas, long-time Executive Director of the California Coastal Commission once said, “The Coast is never saved, it’s always being saved.” Now the Coastal Commission is being undermined from within by developer interests (see [Blue Notes #143](#)) as is Point Molate – a stunning 422-acre natural headland in Richmond California where I live. Blue Frontier’s Citizens For a Sustainable Point Molate (CFSPM) project played a key role in the 2010 vote in which the citizens of Richmond voted 58% to 42% against building a mega-casino on this natural bay front treasure. In the six years since then the casino developer – not understanding the principle that when you gamble you usually lose – has been suing the city and continuing to lose in a series of rulings by federal judges including one last year that ordered his company and partners to pay the city almost \$2 million in attorney fees generated by their suit.

Nonetheless Richmond Mayor Tom Butt has been working to cut a secret deal with the developer– Jim Levine, including two closed door city council meetings in June and another one tonight (Tuesday July 19) to settle in exchange for development rights at Point Molate. Although the public is not allowed to know what is going on indicators from other private meetings that have taken place are that they want to put 1,100 units of high-income housing on the site

(essentially the casino plan without the casino). Housing clusters would cover the slopes of one of the only intact coastal grasslands watersheds that also lead down to healthy offshore eel grass beds where fish, seals and osprey feed. To date California has lost 99% of its native coastal prairies like this to development.



CFSPM is mobilizing a coalition of political and environmental activists and others to let the city council know that of all the potential futures for this incredible natural treasure, cutting a deal with the one developer the people of Richmond have already rejected is not acceptable. Meanwhile CFSPM has received a generous grant from California's Coastal Conservancy to expand on its existing work bringing local high school classes to the headlands by providing charter bus service for low-income parts of the city so that more Richmond citizens have a way to get to and enjoy the beach park and other wonders of this natural and historic site. For more on the present battle check out the CFSPM website [here](#).