



AGENDA REPORT

PROPOSED ACTION: Resolution: Approve and Authorize the Executive Director to Execute a Professional Services Agreement for Naturalist Education Program Services at Middle Harbor Shoreline Park with Beth Teper, dba Nurture NATURE, for up to Two Years with Three Optional 1-year Extensions Permitted at the Discretion of the Executive Director, for a Total Amount Not to Exceed \$1,010,799 over Five Years; and Find that the Proposed Action is Exempt Under the California Environmental Quality Act.

Submitted By: Matt Davis, Chief Public Engagement Officer; Kristi McKenney, Executive Director

Parties Involved: Beth Teper, dba Nurture NATURE

Amount: \$1,010,799 (FY 2027, FY 2028, FY 2029, FY 2030, FY3031)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: In April 2026, the Port of Oakland (Port) issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) seeking naturalist services to conduct onsite and offsite field trips (FTs) for students in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), as well as organize and conduct three annual shoreline cleanup events at Middle Harbor Shoreline Park (MHSP). These programs benefit thousands of local students, by providing public access to engaging environmental education programs and promoting stewardship of the San Francisco Bay and Shoreline.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

The Port established Middle Harbor Shoreline Park (MHSP) in 2003 as a 38-acre waterfront park built and operated for the benefit of the community. The park features more than two miles of pathways surrounding the Middle Harbor Enhancement Area, recreation and event space for public gatherings, and serves as a public resource for education and engagement focused on local history, natural ecosystems, maritime operations, and environmental stewardship.

The San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), a California state agency, regulates land use, shoreline development, and environmental protection within the San Francisco Bay. BCDC issues various permits to the Port of Oakland and other shoreline agencies, and as part of the original Vision 2000 maritime development requires the Port to provide a nature education program for youth at MHSP. The Port's nature education programming supports public access to environmental education, with a focus on students from OUSD schools, while promoting stewardship of the Bay's natural and cultural resources. The program also includes three shoreline cleanups per year at MHSP (Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service; Earth Day; Oakland Creek to Bay Day), open to volunteers from the entire region.

In the 2025-2026 program year nearly two dozen field trips for almost 2,000 transitional kindergarten through twelfth grade students were conducted, with students drawn primarily from Title 1 (Free and Reduced-Price Meal Program) OUSD schools. The shoreline cleanups also attracted nearly 500 volunteers across the three hosted events, removing over a thousand pounds of trash and debris, in addition to the removal of invasive plants and the re-introduction and planting of native plant species at MHSP.

The Port has regularly utilized the services and expertise of qualified environmental naturalists with experience and background in youth education and outreach. The Port sought to enter into a multi-year agreement with a qualified environmental naturalist and in support of this goal issued an RFP on April 10, 2026, to solicit proposals for a Naturalist Management and Consulting Service. Proposals were due on May 14, 2026.

The RFP was distributed in several ways, including the Port website listing and email distribution by Port staff to local Chambers, Community-Based Organizations, and Port-certified Local/Small firms in the Port's certified database; direct notification to local naturalist firms/proprietors; and advertisements in the Bay Area News Group.

The Port received one response from the incumbent naturalist in response to the RFP. The Port Evaluation Committee (Committee) highly rated the proposal and recommended a contract award for Board of Port Commissioners consideration.

This contract award would continue the Port's partnership with its current naturalist, Beth Teper, doing business as Nurture NATURE. Nurture NATURE is a Port-certified Local Impact Area/Very Small Business Enterprise and has partnered with the Port since 2024, following its selection via two Informal RFP processes. Since that time, Nurture NATURE has consistently delivered high-quality environmental education, naturalist programming, and special event coordination on behalf of the Port, serving OUSD students and other community organizations. The program has been well received by participants and has successfully advanced the Port's community engagement and environmental education objectives.

The Naturalist Program includes the update and development of educational program content and curriculum tailored to the Port of Oakland and MHSP, which will be owned by the Port, along with approximately 23 field trips to MHSP per academic program year (Fall and Spring) for local students. These field trips include virtual and/or in-class pre-trips to provide additional focused environmental and educational background about the Port and MHSP for trip participants.

Additionally, the consultant will organize, publicize and manage the three annual Shoreline Cleanup events, including coordinating with local exhibitors for the events. Nurture NATURE has strengthened the Port's events programming through partnerships

with organizations that provide educational exhibits and outreach during field trips and community events. Participating organizations have included the U.S. Geological Survey Western Ecological Research Center – San Francisco Bay Estuary Field Station, New Voices Are Rising (Rose Foundation), and the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project (WOEIP). These collaborations enhance visitors' understanding of the Bay's ecosystems, environmental conditions, and ongoing conservation and sustainability efforts being undertaken by the Port, including its Clean Ports program.

The proposed contract is for two years, with three optional one-year extensions permitted at the discretion of the Executive Director. The initial Year 1 fees for consultant program elements are \$185,500, which will escalate to \$203,154 in Year 5 when accounting for annual program fee increases. The Board-authorized amount of \$1,010,799 for the five-year potential consultant agreement period also includes \$9,500 in annual pre-approved reimbursable expenses for incidental program costs, including the purchase of native plants as well as meals for shore cleanup volunteer participants.

OTHER FINDINGS AND PROVISIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed action was analyzed under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and was found to be:

☐ Categorically exempt under the following CEQA Guidelines Section:

Choose an item.

☒ "Common Sense" exemption under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).

☐ Other/Notes:

BUDGET

☐ Administrative (No Impact to Operating, Non-Operating, or Capital Budgets); OR

☒ Operating

☐ Non-Operating

☐ Capital

Analysis: Projected costs for MHSP Naturalist Education Program services have been accounted for within the FY2027 budgeted amount in the Social Responsibility Division.

STAFFING

☒ No Anticipated Staffing Impact.

☐ Anticipated Change to Budgeted Headcount.

Reason:

☐ Other Anticipated Staffing Impact (e.g., Temp Help).

Reason:

MARITIME AND AVIATION PROJECT LABOR AGREEMENT (MAPLA):

Applies? No (Not Aviation or Maritime CIP Project) – proposed action is not covered work on Port's Capital Improvement Program in Aviation or Maritime areas above the threshold cost.

☐ Additional Notes:

LIVING WAGE (City Charter § 728):

Applies?

No (Not Covered Entity) – proposed action involves entity not covered by Living Wage requirements because it is not a covered service provider or tenant, does not employ at least 21 employees, or receive from or pay to Port at least \$50,000.

☐ Additional Notes:

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES:

Applies? Yes.

GENERAL PLAN (City Charter § 727):

Conformity Determination:

<u>Reason:</u> In addition to providing sustainable educational programming and activities for youth, the program hosts tri-annual shoreline cleanups at Middle Harbor Shoreline Park.	Not Required – conformity determination not required because proposed action does not change use of or make alterations to an existing facility, or create a new facility.
<u>STRATEGIC PLAN.</u> The proposed action would help the Port achieve the following goal(s) in the Port's Strategic Plan: ☐ Capture Our Market and Grow the Economic Base ☐ Modernize and Upgrade Infrastructure ☒ Transition to Zero-Emissions and Build Climate Resilience ☐ Maximize Land Use Value and Revenues ☐ Workforce Training and Jobs Development ☐ Create Opportunities for Local Businesses and Community Economic Development	