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**BAYKEEPER FILES LAWSUIT AGAINST STATE LANDS COMMISSION OVER
APPROVAL OF EXCESSIVE SAND MINING HARMFUL TO SAN FRANCISCO BAY
Removing Unsustainable Amounts of Sand from San Francisco Bay Disrupts Habitat,
Causes Ocean Beach to Erode**

(San Francisco, CA)—San Francisco Baykeeper has filed a lawsuit against the State of California over its decision to approve an Environmental Impact Report allowing unprecedented rates of sand mining in the Bay. Excessive sand mining disrupts the Bay's ecosystem and contributes to erosion of Ocean Beach.

Beaches outside the Golden Gate like Ocean Beach are naturally replenished by sand that washes out of the Bay over time. Ocean Beach is eroding in part because sand mining already exceeds the amount of sediment flowing out the Golden Gate from upstream sources in the Delta and Sierra Mountains. Further erosion from increased sand mining could threaten the Great Highway, cause a major city sewer line to rupture, and wash away sensitive habitat for shorebirds.

Excessive sand mining not only contributes to erosion of coastal beach habitat, but also disrupts the Bay's ecosystem by impacting bottom-dwelling invertebrates and shellfish. The mining area is mostly between the San Francisco waterfront and Angel Island, which is used by juvenile Dungeness crab, sturgeon and other important Bay species.

The approval by the California State Lands Commission came despite recent findings by scientists at the U.S. Geological Survey that allowing this level of sand extraction would exacerbate the already-serious problem of erosion at Ocean Beach. "The State Lands Commission relied on poor science and inadequate environmental review when they made this decision," said Ian Wren, Staff Scientist at San Francisco Baykeeper, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting the Bay. "Plus, erosion at Ocean Beach has been an issue of concern for years, yet regulators have failed to connect the dots back to sand mining in the Bay."

Baykeeper had urged the State Lands Commission to take the recent scientific findings into account, and to set sand mining limits that would reduce habitat disruption.

Instead, the State Lands Commission decided to allow more than two million cubic yards of sand to be mined from the Bay per year. Currently, less than 500,000 cubic yards of sand are removed per year, which already exceeds the natural replenishment rate of sand deposited in the Bay from upstream sources in the Delta and Sierra Mountains.

Additional agencies, including San Francisco Bay Development and Conservation Commission (BCDC) and the Army Corps of Engineers, must also approve mining operations in the Bay. Without this legal challenge, however, Baykeeper says these agencies would have likely relied on the same flawed analysis used by the State Lands Commission.

“We urge regulators to insist on sustainable rates of sand mining that won’t deplete the Bay’s sand, impact Dungeness crab nurseries or cause erosion of Ocean Beach,” said Wren. “Activities within the Bay have major consequences for not only the Bay’s ecosystem, but also for the coast and ocean. We want to make sure the State Lands Commission is protecting these resources for the public’s benefit.”

San Francisco Baykeeper is the Bay’s pollution watchdog, using science and advocacy to enforce clean water laws and hold polluters accountable. For more information, visit us at www.baykeeper.org. ###