

December 01, 2017

Board of Trustees
College of Marin
835 College Avenue
Kentfield, California 94904

Dear College of Marin Board Members,

The Bolinas Lagoon Advisory Council (BLAC)¹, is writing to you in support of the College of Marin's (COM) continued ownership and restoration of its Bolinas Marine Laboratory. The BLAC is an advisory committee to the Marin County Board of Supervisors, successor body to the Bolinas Lagoon Technical Advisory Committee that was established in 1973 to assist the county with the management of the Bolinas Lagoon Open Space Preserve.

The BLAC has long recognized the unique contribution the marine lab has made to COM education, supporting a rich experience that is afforded by few other community colleges. The lab also has been used collaboratively with other educational and research entities working on the lagoon and in the surrounding area, increasing its value to our communities and the county. The BLAC shares the community's concern over the abandonment of this facility, and joins the local community, which recently met with county and COM staff, in support of rehabilitation and maintenance of the structures and further development of the COM's marine studies program. The Marine Lab is a jewel of the College of Marin educational experience that offers the college an exceptional opportunity to showcase its fine faculty and academic programs.

Bolinas Lagoon received international recognition as an important ecological site, with its designation as a "Wetland of International Importance" in 1998 pursuant to the Ramsar Convention. The fortuitous location of the marine lab, at the edge of Bolinas Lagoon, but also near other estuaries and varied outer coast habitats, offers the college many opportunities to engage in education, research, and conservation of marine and estuarine environments. Additionally, the lab and the college's marine sciences program provide a nexus for the college's engagement with some of the pressing issues society faces, such as climate change and associated accelerated sea level rise. Given these imperatives, this may be a strategic time for the college to consider an expansion of its marine science education program.

The experiences afforded at the marine lab, and by the COM's Marine Sciences faculty, to the education of students who go on to further studies in ecology, conservation, evolutionary biology, marine sciences and other advanced disciplines, are well described as "inspirational." These students have gone on to careers as diverse as those of Professor Beth Okamura, an evolutionary biologist and ecologist at the Natural History Museum in London; educators at local non-governmental organizations who pass on their enthusiasm and insights to school children and adults; and researchers who currently work on wildlife conservation issues in California. The reach of COM's Marine Science program, due to inspirational faculty and extraordinary experiences students have had at of the marine lab, is indeed long.

¹ BLAC member include representatives from College of Marin, Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Point Reyes National Seashore, the communities of Bolinas and Stinson Beach, the Bolinas Rod and Boat Club, the Seadrift Property Owners Association, Audubon Canyon Ranch, and Point Blue Conservation Science, with one additional member at-large.

Another important concern is for the continued public use of the College of Marin's Wharf Road dock and pier, which is one of the few public access points to the Bolinas Lagoon. Local fishermen, kayakers, canoers, and wildlife viewers use the dock daily. Additionally, the dock is frequently used by County staff and scientific organizations for research and lagoon restoration projects. There is strong Bolinas community and public interest in keeping the dock available for public use. If the College of Marin were to close the dock to the public, there would be no safe, public lagoon and ocean access for boats near the lagoon mouth.

Therefore, the Bolinas Lagoon Advisory Council strongly supports, along with the local communities, the College's continued use of the Marine Lab as an educational campus, either on its own or in concert with other suitable organizations. Please let us know if we can provide you with any information that would be useful in addressing the future of the Bolinas Marine Lab facility.

Sincerely,

Ralph Camiccia, Chair
Bolinas Lagoon Advisory Council

cc: Supervisor Dennis Rodoni
James Raives, Senior Open Space Planner, County of Marin