

1 [Urging the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission to Expand Public Access to the
2 Peninsula Watershed Lands]

3 **Resolution urging the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission to provide enhanced**
4 **public access to existing roads and trails in the Peninsula Watershed Lands consistent**
5 **with the goals of protecting the water supply and the environmental quality of the area.**
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7 WHEREAS, The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's (SFPUC) Peninsula
8 Watershed encompasses approximately 23,000 acres of land in San Mateo County and is a
9 state-designated Fish and Wildlife Refuge; and

10 WHEREAS, The Peninsula Watershed (Watershed) is a component of the Hetch
11 Hetchy Regional Water System and home to the highest concentration of native, rare,
12 threatened, and endangered species in the nine-county Bay Area region; and

13 WHEREAS, As one of the region's unique natural habitats, the Peninsula Watershed
14 provides significant and valued recreational and educational opportunities for the community
15 throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and Northern California through the use of its public
16 trail system; and

17 WHEREAS, The United States Department of Interior has a 19,000 acre Scenic
18 Easement on the western portion of the Watershed and a 4,000 acre Scenic and Recreation
19 easement on the eastern side of the watershed administered by the GGNRA; and

20 WHEREAS, Access to open space for both San Francisco residents and other
21 residents of the Bay Area has been a longstanding concern of the City; and

22 WHEREAS, The Peninsula Watershed's two regional trail systems are the Crystal
23 Springs Regional Trail, operated and maintained by San Mateo County Parks, and the Bay
24 Area Ridge Trail, operated and maintained by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
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1 and connecting the Sweeney Ridge Trail operated by the Golden Gate National Recreation
2 Area (GGNRA); and

3 WHEREAS, These regional trails, and related connectors, provide 31 miles of existing
4 trail access to the Peninsula Watershed; and

5 WHEREAS, In 2001, the SFPUC adopted the Peninsula Watershed Management Plan
6 (PWMP) and the PWMP Final Environmental Impact Report, and this context provides the
7 policy and environmental compliance framework in which future management actions on the
8 Peninsula Watershed are considered; and

9 WHEREAS, Other Bay Area water districts, including the Marin Municipal Water District
10 and the East Bay Municipal Utility District, allow public access to their lands and that the
11 public regularly shares service roads with maintenance vehicles in these and other public
12 lands; and

13 WHEREAS, The SFPUC, San Mateo County Parks, and the GGNRA have all declared
14 support for opening the existing Whiting Ridge Trail to public access, but no concrete plans
15 have been developed; and

16 WHEREAS, In its 2015 General Management Plan, the GGNRA, the administrator of
17 the Scenic and Recreation Easements over the watershed, has encouraged construction of a
18 new multi-use trail on watershed lands from Cañada Rd to Skyline Boulevard North of the
19 Phleger Estate unit of the GGNRA and South of CA-92; and

20 WHEREAS, As an alternative to constructing a new multi-use trail, the SFPUC is
21 working with the GGNRA and the San Mateo County Parks Department to use existing trails
22 to connect the Crystal Springs Regional Trail to the Bay Area Ridge Trail through the Phleger
23 Estate; and

24 WHEREAS, The SFPUC recognizes that additional educational opportunities can be
25 increased, consistent with the goals and objectives of the PWMP with the construction of new

1 recreational trails combined with improvements to existing trails and appropriate staffing and
2 maintenance of the Watershed Trail System; and

3 WHEREAS, Currently public access to the Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail is available only
4 through a docent-led program three days a week; and

5 WHEREAS, The SFPUC's Bay Area Ridge Trail Extension project plans to provide an
6 additional sixteen miles of trail access and to implement a well-controlled and closely
7 monitored annual permit system that would allow public access beyond the current docent
8 program; and

9 WHEREAS, The SFPUC is working with the Planning Department on an initial study of
10 environmental review of the Bay Area Ridge Trail Extension and of implementing an annual
11 permit system, and any permit system would be developed in full compliance with a certified
12 California Environmental Quality Act document; now, therefore, be it

13 RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors strongly supports increased
14 recreational access to the Peninsula Watershed for educational use that is compatible with
15 protecting both drinking water quality and threatened and endangered plant and wildlife,
16 consistent with the PWMP; and, be it

17 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors strongly supports the PUC's
18 current efforts to develop a permit system for public access to the Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail
19 consistent with the PWMP; and, be it

20 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the SFPUC to expedite
21 implementation of this permit system for the existing portion of the Cahill-Fifield trail by the
22 summer of 2017 instead of waiting for the construction of the extension to the Ridge Trail;
23 and, be it

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1 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the SFPUC to continue
2 the docent program alongside of the permit system to provide educational opportunities for
3 the public to learn more about the watershed; and, be it

4 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the SFPUC to work in
5 collaboration with the San Mateo County Parks Department, the GGNRA, and the California
6 State Parks System to focus on closing gaps on the Bay Area Ridge Trail and other regional
7 trails on the Peninsula Watershed, which includes the following:

8 - the operation of the entire 16 miles of the Bay Area Ridge Trail on SFPUC
9 property, which includes constructing the Bay Area Ridge Trail south of CA-92 to the GGNRA
10 Phleger Estate and taking the trail easement from the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council for the 2
11 mile section north of Highway 92 through Skylawn Cemetery to Cemetery Gate on Cahill
12 Ridge; and

13 - the design and construction of the North San Andreas Trail Connector; and, be it

14 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the SFPUC to develop a
15 report on the feasibility of providing additional access to the watershed beyond what is
16 included in the current PWMP, subject to necessary environmental review and developed in
17 coordination with all of the interested agencies, organizations, and individuals, including the
18 following:

19 - working with the GGNRA and San Mateo County Parks to determine what steps
20 are necessary to open the Whiting Ridge Trail to public access, subject to necessary federal
21 and state environmental review and approval requirements;

22 - considering possible routes for further public access to existing service roads
23 focused connections to the Crystal Springs Regional Trail, the Bay Area Ridge Trail, the trail
24 system in the Corral de Tierra unit of the GGNRA, and other trail alignments in the San Mateo
25 County Trails Plan; and be it

1 - considering the opening of other such routes north of Highway CA-92 that would
2 permit access to a variety of scenic loop routes for hikers and riders; and

3 - considering the reopening of Old Cañada Road on the west side of Upper
4 Crystal Springs Reservoir and the construction of a new multi-use trail on watershed lands
5 from this road to the Ridge Trail south of CA-92; and, be it

6 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors requests the SFPUC to report
7 on its progress developing these plans, including the projects already approved as well as the
8 potential revisions to the PWMP listed here, by March 31, 2017.

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