



Open Space Authority Urban Grant Program

06-28-2020

Re: Letter of support for San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory OSA Urban Grant Proposal

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory's (SFBBO's) proposal to plan a facility upgrade that will substantially increase its benefits to the community.

SFBBO's Coyote Creek Field Station represents a unique resource in the area. Public banding demonstrations and group visits allow community members, including children, to observe scientific work in action, and offer a rare opportunity to see wild birds in the hand. Volunteers at the station engage in up-close-and-personal encounters with the local ecology, receive specialized training in bird handling and scientific data collection, and contribute to the continuation of a decades-long avian monitoring program. College and graduate students from area institutions acquire crucial field skills and carry out scientific projects at the station.

Marshmallow Minds is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We have designed unique, well-rounded, and affordable STE(A)M programs that are freely accessible to partner schools. Marshmallow Minds partners with schools (and parents) and introduce students to well known real-world problems. We teach the students how to empathize with these problems. We empower them to take ownership of the problem and guide them to become confident and creative problem-solvers applying STE(A)M and Design Thinking. Since 2016, Marshmallow Minds has delivered quality Design Thinking and STE(A)M programs to thousands of students in public schools. In April 2020, Marshmallow Minds [announced a new collaboration with San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory teaching students environmental problem-solving skills via STE\(A\)M](#). Through this partnership, SFBBO scientists are sharing information about the real-world issues birds face so Marshmallow Minds can develop a set of design inspired STE(A)M curriculum for students in grades K-8 that gives them the chance to explore solutions to the environment, bird conservation, and watershed stewardship problems. As part of the learning experience, students will be taking field trips to the Coyote Creek Field Station and interact with the bird scientists

and observe their scientific research work. Marshmallow Minds would be happy to consider future collaborations with SFBBO as well.

The proposed planning will center on improvements to Coyote Creek Field Station to increase its capacity to provide these benefits to the community, and will empower SFBBO to center feedback from stakeholders in designing the facility and its future programs. Goals for the upgrades under consideration will include planning a larger, more functional, and more sustainable station building and designing a more accessible demonstration area to allow more outreach programs to take place. The banding station's location in diverse San Jose, CA makes it well-suited to serving traditionally underserved communities. Because Coyote Creek Field Station is one of very few banding stations located in an urban area, it represents a particular opportunity to expose young people to nature and science without requiring them to travel far. The planning proposed here, which will allow the facility improvements to be extensively informed by consultation with teachers and youth group leaders, will ensure that the upgraded banding station is tailored to programs that serve local needs.

I support this proposal because Coyote Creek Field Station will serve as a great learning resource for students. With the proposed upgrades it will allow larger groups of students to access the facility and be sensitized to challenges and opportunities in their own surroundings and thus enabling a greater impact in environmental education outreach.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Harini Senthilvasan', with a long, wavy horizontal line extending to the right.

Harini Senthilvasan
Founder & CEO, Marshmallow Minds