



San Francisco Group of the San Francisco Bay Chapter

December 9, 2025

To: Streamlining Task Force  
Cc: Mayor Lurie  
SF Environment

Dear Streamlining Task Force,

On behalf of the Sierra Club San Francisco Group and our over 5,000 members, I write to strongly urge you to maintain the Commission on the Environment as a decision-making body with full authority. We firmly believe that it will be worse for the climate, environment and worse for the city if the task force reduces the Commission's authority.

Through decades of grassroots organizing and advocacy, we have learned that meaningful environmental progress requires institutions with real power to enforce commitments and hold decision-makers accountable. The environment commission is able to hold the Mayor and agency staff to a higher standard, keeping the focus on doing what is right for the environment and not compromising our values to appease donors or to try to win the next election.

The Environment Commission has that power because it can compel action, allocate resources, and enforce environmental standards, powers that an advisory body does not have.

The Commission on the Environment also seeks out the voices of communities affected by environmental degradation. Through its public hearings and transparent decision-making, the Commission ensures that residents and frontline communities, not just corporate interests or city insiders, shape environmental policy.

The Environment Commission was created by voters as part of the City Charter amendments approved in 1995's Proposition E. Any downgrade in its status will have to be as part of another ballot measure. The Sierra Club would almost certainly fight any ballot measure that strips the Environment Commission of its status.

In 2024 Measure E effectively created the streamlining task force. The official proponents' argument for 2024's Measure E sent to all San Francisco voters warned that, "there is a wrong way to reform our commissions, Prop D." The argument continued to explicitly say that Prop D would eliminate "essential and effective commissions" "like the Environment Commission". For the task force to then strip the environment commission of its power would be to have misled the voters.

For nearly three decades, the San Francisco Commission on the Environment has had the Charter-granted authority to serve as a public forum and organizer for many of the City's most important environmental advances: establishing our zero-waste goals and first-in-the-nation plastic-bag and composting policies; crafting the Precautionary Principle and integrated pest management rules that cut toxic exposures; helping close dirty power plants; driving solar-on-new-buildings and EV-ready codes; investing millions in environmental justice grants;

and shaping the Environmental Code, Climate Action Plan, and green building standards that other cities now emulate.

As a volunteer-driven organization that relies on building strong partnerships with decision-makers, we recognize the critical role the Commission plays in creating a forum where diverse stakeholders can come together to advance shared environmental goals. This collaborative structure has been instrumental in San Francisco's environmental achievements.

The Commission on the Environment also plays an important coordinating role, bringing together the PUC, Public Works, MTA, Planning, and the Department of Environment in a public forum. This reduces redundancy and ensures that environmental considerations are integrated across city operations. This coordination function would be lost if the Commission lacked enforcement authority.

With decades of environmental advocacy experience, we understand what it takes to achieve lasting change. The Commission on the Environment, with its full decision-making power, is essential infrastructure for that work.

Thank you for considering our perspective. We stand ready to work with you to ensure strong environmental outcomes for San Francisco's future.

Respectfully,

Charles Whitfield  
Chair, San Francisco Group  
Sierra Club