

## The South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project

The largest wetlands restoration project on the West Coast of the U.S., the Project encompasses 15,100 acres of former salt ponds located around the edge of South San Francisco Bay bordering Silicon Valley. Its mission is to restore and enhance wetlands in South San Francisco Bay as habitat for federally endangered species and migratory birds while providing flood management and wildlife-oriented public access and recreation.

### Project Partners

- California State Coastal Conservancy and California Department of Fish and Game
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA, U.S. Geological Survey
- Santa Clara Valley Water District and Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District
- Resources Legacy Fund, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and the Goldman Fund

# Annual Report 2010

A yearly snapshot of Project milestones and assessment of progress toward meeting restoration, public access and flood management goals

February 2011

## Thanks to Project Supporters

Since the inception of the South Bay Salt Pond Project, a broad variety of funding organizations have stepped forward to support it, including:

- The State of California Wildlife Conservation Board
- The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
- The Goldman Fund
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- The Resources Legacy Fund
- The Santa Clara Valley Water District
- The Adobe Foundation Fund
- Federal stimulus funds provided through NOAA
- The State of California Wildlife Conservation Board
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- The State Coastal Conservancy
- The U.S. Geological Survey
- The U.S. EPA
- Caltrans mitigation funds
- The City of Menlo Park Bay Account
- The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Leopard Shark Account
- The Santa Clara Valley Water District
- The Alameda County Flood Control District

In 2010, construction work and scientific efforts were supported by:



### Message from the Executive Project Manager

Dear Friend of the South Bay Salt Ponds,

2010 was a banner year for the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project:

- We completed construction work on hundreds of acres of tidal wetlands restoration and pond enhancements;
- Bird life in the South Bay is flourishing as thousands flock to enhanced habitat areas and developing tidal marsh;
- We opened new stretches of public trails, some with breathtaking views of tidal marsh and salt ponds, to walkers, bicyclists and birdwatchers;
- We continue to work with our flood management partners, including the Army Corps of Engineers and the Santa Clara Valley Water District, to work towards identifying and addressing potential tidal flood risks to the Silicon Valley;
- We launched planning for our next phase of construction projects, which will continue progress towards restoring at least 50% of all the salt ponds in the 15,100-acre Project area to tidal wetlands.

All of these efforts in the past year were the result of extensive and tireless collaboration with our partners in the South Bay. Partners, neighbors and collaborating agencies have been key in helping us achieve the progress we've made to date.

We hope you will enjoy learning about the exciting progress in restoring the wild heart of the South Bay.

Sincerely,

John Bourgeois  
Executive Project Manager



# 2010 Year in Review



## Milestones

Restoration of the South Bay Salt Ponds will take decades to complete. After adopting a long-term restoration plan in 2009, the Project is now nearing the end of the first phase of restoration and public access construction. 2010 accomplishments include:

### Tidal Marsh Restoration

- 1 A 1,440-acre muted tidal system, with water flowing through a notched levee, at Ponds A8, A7 and A5.
- 2 360 acres at Pond A6.

### Enhanced Ponds

- 3 30 islands for nesting birds were added to a 240-acre shallow pond complex at Ravenswood Pond SF2. It includes 85 acres of dry salt flats where threatened western snowy plovers can nest.

### Public Access

- 4 A critical 2.2-mile segment of the Bay Trail opened to connect Mountain View to Sunnyvale near NASA's Moffett Field. Includes a rest stop with benches, interpretive signs and a pair of ADA-accessible binoculars for bird watching.
  - 5 A .7-mile length of bayside trail and two viewing platforms at Pond SF2.
  - 6 Interpretive signs at Menlo Park's Bedwell Bayfront Park.
- ▶ The Project restarted its volunteer docent program in the fall. The program allows community members to design and present programs on their favorite topics, such as bird photography and the science of tides.



## Flood Protection

Portions of the Restoration Project cannot be completed unless flood control levees are in place to protect low-lying parts of the South Bay shoreline. Since its inception the Project has been planned and implemented in close coordination with a related but separate effort, the Congressionally-authorized South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Study. This U.S. Army Corps of Engineers feasibility study, conducted with the California Coastal Conservancy and the Santa Clara Valley Water District as non-federal partners, will identify and recommend for federal funding flood risk management and ecosystem restoration projects. A major goal is to provide flood protection for Silicon Valley.

The Corps of Engineers this year completed a "Without Project" baseline for the Shoreline Study, which quantifies the potential economic damages from flooding, both now and 50 years in the future, accounting for sea level rise, if no action is taken. The next stage is for the Corps to analyze options for minimizing flood risk to those in the project area.

## Science

During Phase 1, under the leadership of Lead Scientist Laura Valoppi, the Science Program has collected baseline data to establish a "before" picture prior to Phase 1 actions, as well as "after" construction data so that we can better understand the impacts and benefits of the restoration actions.

A major accomplishment in 2010 was the completion of the first year of Projectwide satellite imagery-based vegetation and sediment maps. The maps are a cost-effective way to track long-term and large-scale habitat changes in the South Bay, and quantify Project habitat achievements.

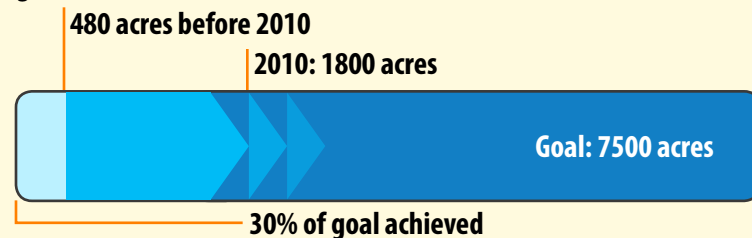


## Progress Toward Our 3 Goals

### Goal 1: Restore & Enhance Habitat

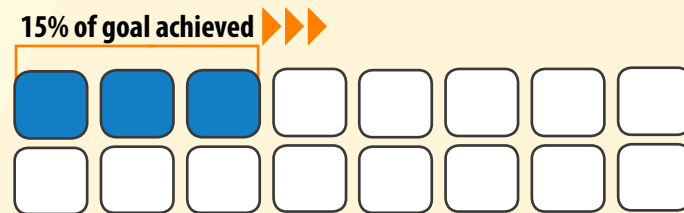
**2280 Acres of Habitat Restored**

2010 was a banner year for wetlands habitat in the South Bay, as multiple restoration efforts in the Project's first phase neared completion. Under the 50/50 scenario of 50% wetlands and 50% managed ponds, 7,500 acres of former salt ponds will be restored to tidal marsh. The Project has accomplished about 30% of that goal.



### 240 Acres of Ponds Enhanced

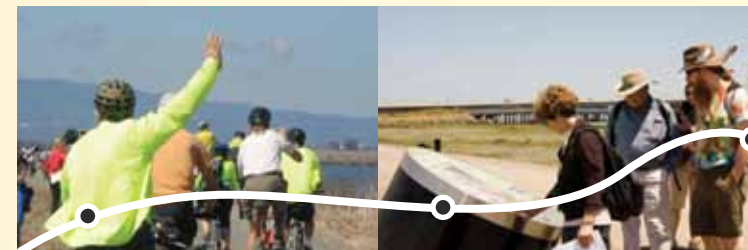
At the other end of our adaptive management strategy, the Project's 90/10 scenario of 90% wetlands and 10% highly managed ponds calls for 1,600 acres of former salt ponds to be improved to provide optimal habitat for a variety of avian species. The more birds that our ponds can provide for, the more ponds we will be able to restore to tidal marsh.



### Goal 2: Provide Public Access

**2.9 Miles of Trails Opened**

The Project has identified myriad trails and other public improvements to build. The vision: establish an interrelated system of trails; provide opportunities for views and interpretation; create small watercraft launching points, and allow for waterfowl hunting.



### Goal 3: Provide Flood Management

**Flood Protection Progress Maintained**

A goal of the South Bay Salt Pond Project is to provide for flood management, with the objective of maintaining or improving existing South Bay area levels of flood protection. Project managers are committed to ensuring that flood hazards to adjacent communities and infrastructure do not increase as a result of the restoration. Tidal marsh restoration completed to date will increase scour in existing channels, thereby increasing flood flow capacity. However, tidal marsh restoration in flood-critical parts of the Project area will not occur until inboard flood protection is established.

