The South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project

The largest wetlands restoration on the U.S. West Coast, the Project encompasses 15,100 acres of former salt ponds located around the south edge of 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 for flood management and wildlife-oriented public access and recreation.

Thanks to Project Supporters

Our progress is due to the efforts of a broad array of supporters and partners, from those who have volunteered their labor to plant natives or give tours, to those who given funds or other contributions.

In 2013, construction work, Shoreline Study planning, and scientific efforts were funded by:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- California Wildlife Conservation Board
- State Coastal Conservancy
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- U.S. Geological Survey
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. EPA
- Santa Clara Valley Water District
- Alameda County Flood Control District
- City of San Jose
- Resources Legacy Fund
- Ducks Unlimited
- Beahrs Environmental Leadership Program, UC Berkeley

In addition, the Project has benefited since its inception from major support from other organizations, including:

- California Department of Water Resources
- California Division of Boating and Waterways
- Caltrans
- Cargill Salt
- City of Menlo Park
- David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
- Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Leopard Shark Account
- Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund
- William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project
Restoring the Wild Heart of the South Bay

To find out more about us: **www.southbayrestoration.org**
www.facebook.com/southbayrestoration

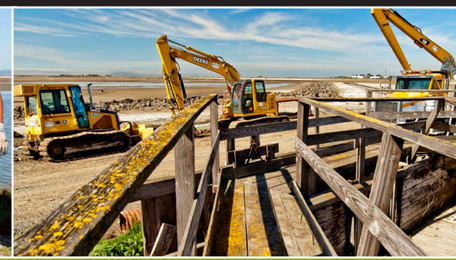
South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project Partners:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service · California Department of Fish & Wildlife · Coastal Conservancy · Santa Clara Valley Water District · Flood Control & Water Conservation District · NOAA · US Army Corps of Engineers, San Francisco District · USGS science for a changing world · East Bay Regional Park District

2013 Annual Report
South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project

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



DEAR FRIEND OF THE SOUTH BAY SALT POND RESTORATION,

JOHN BOURGEOIS
State Coastal Conservancy, South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project Executive Project Manager

Restoring the wild heart of the South Bay

In 2013, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of our multi-decade Project. With 10 years under our belt, we've made plenty of on-the-ground changes:

- Mudflats and stands of marsh vegetation are forming on thousands of acres formerly devoted to industrial salt-production ponds;
- Remaining ponds are teeming with wildlife, as we carefully manage water levels to suit the needs of birds, fish and other species;
- The public is enjoying new trails, new viewing spots and new informational signs.

As we enter our second decade in an era of fiscal scarcity, we are working hard and creatively to achieve more with less, to partner with other agencies to save tax dollars, and to pursue innovative approaches.

On the ground, work is underway to create trails and maximize ponds for wildlife. In our offices, we are working with our consultants to plan a second phase of projects to fast-track marsh restoration so it can sustain itself in the face of sea level rise. The projects will also allow more people to get close to the Bay. And we are investigating with partners ways to protect nearby Bayside homes and businesses from future floods, with levees, landmasses and marsh.

We continue as well with the scientific experiments we must undertake to find the right path forward amid many uncertainties and the future impacts of climate change.

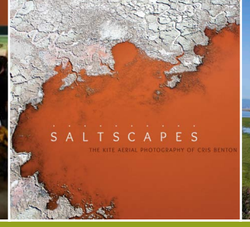
If you'd like to learn or help, you can look at www.southbayrestoration.org for maps, videos, and information on tours, volunteer days and ways to donate.

Our decade of accomplishments came to pass because of many partners, donors, collaborators and interested members of the public who got involved—we give you our thanks!

See inside for charts and details on this year's key milestones. » » »

Sincerely,
JOHN BOURGEOIS

2013 Year in Review



Milestones

SOUTH BAY SALT POND RESTORATION PROJECT

Enhanced Ponds

1 We built 16 new islands for nesting birds at 240-acre Pond A16 in Alviso. We also redesigned the pond and added a fish screen so we can keep water levels optimal for shorebirds while protecting threatened fish. The end of this construction means Phase 1 is complete for both Alviso and Ravenswood.

2 Workers at Eden Landing carved mud and installed pipes, nearing completion on a suite of ponds designed to provide a menu of saline options for shorebirds.

Tidal Marsh Restoration

3 Save The Bay launched a new vegetation restoration effort at four acres in Eden Landing. Over two years, staff and volunteers will plant about 10,000 native shrubs to create transitional habitat along our developing tidal marsh at former Pond E9.

4 Mother Nature has been hard at work building mudflat and carving channels at Alviso Pond A17, breached on Halloween 2012.

Public Access and Participation

1 Alviso Pond A16 now boasts a platform for viewing and a set of new interpretive signs. Workers also reconfigured the Mallard Slough loop trail to make way for wetlands. Nearby Pond A17 has interpretive features at the end of that trail, and both areas have bike racks.

Flood Protection

The Project cannot breach too many more additional levees at Alviso to create tidal marsh until flood protection levees are erected. The Congressionally authorized **South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Study**, a partnership of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, State Coastal Conservancy and the Santa Clara Valley Water District, is analyzing Alviso-area flood risk management options, as well as ecosystem restoration scenarios. In 2013, work continued on an Army Corps-directed environmental analysis of tentatively selected Alviso-area levee alignments and new habitat restoration.

Science and Adaptive Management

5 Studies have indicated that seasonally opening ponds with a history of mercury contamination may be creating conditions that increase mercury levels in water and fish. The results have prompted managers to seek regulatory approval to keep Pond A8, a pond with mercury-tainted sediments, open year-round in order to benefit wildlife.

Leopard sharks have responded well to our recent breaches by gorging on increased populations of fish, crabs, and other species inside the ponds.

Symposium 2013 Highlights:

- The number of waterbirds at the Project has doubled since 2003, from less than 100,000 to more than 200,000 in 2012.
- Studies of the endangered western snowy plover found that predation is the leading cause of nest failure. Placing oyster shells on dry ponds, where the birds nest, may reduce predation by camouflaging eggs and chicks.
- Managers and engineers are starting to use information gathered by scientists on pond features such as island configuration and quantity, and water depth and salinity, that are most attractive to nesting, resting, and feeding birds to optimize use by a wide variety of bird species.

6 After our 2010 breach at Pond A6 flooded a large colony of nesting California gulls there, about half of the birds moved to ponds just to the east.

Other News

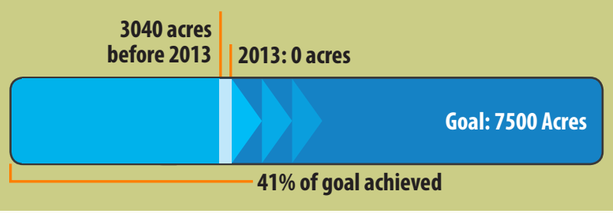
- Members of the public provided thoughts on our Phase 2 plans and their environmental review, and consultants are busy completing the environmental analysis of plans for Alviso and Ravenswood.
- The Project now has a "donate" button on our website to offer an easy way to support our work, at www.southbayrestoration.org/donation.
- The US Fish and Wildlife Service completed its tidal marsh recovery plan for Northern and Central California, a voluntary effort to aid 17 imperiled birds, plants and animals.
- Cris Benton, whose graceful images have helped us track and show off our changing South Bay landscape, is featured in a newly published book, Saltscapes: the Kite Aerial Photography of Cris Benton, published by Heyday.

Progress Toward Our 3 Goals

Goal 1: Restore & Enhance Habitat

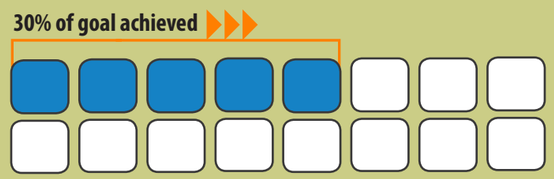
3040 Acres of Habitat Restored

To date, we have opened 3,040 acres of former industrial salt ponds to the Bay so nature can recreate wetlands. We are now planning our second phase of restoration work, which could include restoring thousands of additional acres to salt marsh. Our initial goal is to restore half of our land, 7,500 acres, to tidal marsh, with the other 50% in managed ponds.



We Doubled Enhanced Pond Acres

With our completed pond construction work at 240-acre Pond A16 in Alviso, the Project now has 477 acres of ponds that have been enhanced for wildlife use. Project goals call for achieving 1,600 acres.



Goal 2: Provide Public Access

Alviso: New Spots to View and Learn Created

The Project's public access vision: establish an interrelated trail system; provide viewing and interpretation opportunities; create small watercraft launch points; and allow for waterfowl hunting. The project to date has created 2.9 trail miles. In 2013, we erected a viewing platform and new interpretive signs at Pond A16 in Alviso.

Goal 3: Provide Flood Risk Management

Flood Protection Progress Maintained

A goal of the Project is to provide for flood risk management, maintaining or improving existing flood protection levels. 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 and existing channels, thereby increasing flood flow capacity. Tidal marsh restoration in flood-critical parts of the Project area will not occur until inboard flood protection is established. In 2013, planning for new levees near Alviso continued.

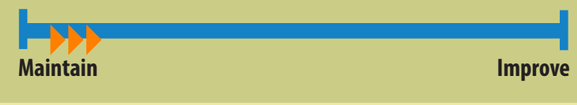


Photo credits: Alex Baranda, Cris Benton, Nick Buckmaster, Judy Irving, Ben Young Landis, McMillen LLC, USFWS