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Grand Opening of Enhanced Wildlife Habitat, Trails, Kayak Launch, and 19th Century Salt-Making Ruins Marks Milestone for San Francisco Bay Restoration Work

On May 6, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) will mark a major milestone in the decades-long effort to restore San Francisco Bay wetlands. As part of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, CDFW will open 230 Hayward shoreline acres to the public, unveiling newly enhanced waterbird ponds and providing access for the public to new trails, kayaking opportunities and views of the Bay, wetlands and remains of 19th Century salt-making structures.

The opening at the Eden Landing Ecological Reserve (Eden Landing) completes the first phase of a 50-year South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project effort to restore 15,100 acres of former industrial salt-making ponds along the southern rim of the Bay. CDFW and its Project partners have now restored or enhanced about 3,750 acres of wetlands from Hayward to Menlo Park.

“We have lost the overwhelming majority of our wetlands here in California. It is our responsibility to protect and restore the areas we do have,” said California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird. “This project is a great example of what can be accomplished with cooperation and long-term vision. The restoration of these wetlands will provide much needed habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife, while also providing a buffer for some of the effects of climate change and moving California toward a healthier ecosystem.”

The ceremony will begin at 10 a.m. sharp. Speakers will include California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird and John Donnelly, Executive Director of the California Wildlife Conservation Board, followed by an inaugural boat launching by local kayak organizations. From 11 a.m. to noon, CDFW and other agency staff will explore the site with participants. The Reserve is located at the corner of Eden Landing Road and Arden Road in Hayward.

Reporters and photographers are advised to arrive at the Eden Landing Ponds Ecological Reserve before 9:45 a.m. in order to park and prepare for the opening ceremonies.

The ceremony marks the opening of 230 acres in the heart of Eden Landing to the public. The newly opened area along Mt. Eden Creek and ponds E12 and E13 includes:

- A new launch facility, allowing non-motorized boat access into Mt. Eden Creek and the Bay.
- About 3.8 miles of new trails, including a seasonal loop around ponds E12 and E13 and a year-round spur of the Bay Trail along Mt. Eden Creek, providing views of the Bay, nearby wetlands and historic salt-making remains.
- The year-round trail joins a boardwalk into the 19th century Oliver Saltworks historic site, providing information and views of the ruins as well as views of wildlife and scenic vistas. The trail also links to additional historic structures, 1870s-era wind-driven pumps called “Archimedes screws.” Eden Landing is home to one of the Bay’s oldest salt-making operations and most intact remnants of historic salt production areas.
- Enhanced Habitat (Ponds E12 and E13): Workers have reconfigured the ponds to provide shorebirds and waterbirds with more prey and nesting habitat. The pond now has numerous cells with a variety of saltiness to offer different prey options to birds and test which salinity levels may be most productive for birds. Workers installed about 30 water control structures to manipulate salinities, water depth and habitat characteristics. They also built mounds, ditches and varied topography to improve available habitat for shorebird roosting and foraging; and constructed new shorebird nesting islands with a variety of different surfaces to improve nesting habitat quality for species such as snowy plovers, terns, avocets, and stilts.
- An additional 50 acres within nearby Pond E14 has been enhanced for threatened snowy plovers by scattering 13 truckloads of oyster shells to provide better camouflage from predators for the light-colored birds, their nests and chicks.

“This pond enhancement project can be seen as an experiment in habitat management to help determine how we can maintain the same suite of bird species and relative abundance within a smaller footprint of pond area, as other ponds are being restored to full tidal action and salt marsh reestablishes,” said John Krause, the CDFW Wildlife Biologist who manages the Reserve. “The public access features completed in this project more than doubles the area of the Reserve now open to the public daily. It’s a very unique landscape and a significant resource for wildlife. People can experience the area and benefit from the outdoor experience and learn from interpretive features.”

The \$7.9 million construction work was funded by the State Wildlife Conservation Board. The State Coastal Conservancy provided administrative support and funding for planning and related science studies. Ducks Unlimited, Inc. completed the design, plans and specifications and managed construction for CDFW.

Eden Landing is part of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, a collaborative project managed by several federal, state and local agencies to enhance and restore large areas of industrial salt ponds formerly owned by Cargill. The Project includes not only CDFW's Eden Landing Ecological Reserve, but also the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

About the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project

The South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project is the largest tidal wetland restoration project on the West Coast. When complete, the restoration will convert thousands of former commercial salt ponds to a mix of tidal marsh, mudflat, managed pond and other wetland habitats. The project will also provide for flood management and opportunities for wildlife-oriented public access and recreation. The 15,100 acres of ponds were purchased from Cargill in March 2003 using state and federal funds as well as private funds from the Hewlett, Packard, Moore and Goldman Foundations. The California Wildlife Conservation Board contributed \$72 million of the \$100 million purchase price from Proposition 40 and Proposition 50 bond funds. Shortly after the property was purchased, the Project launched a five-year public process to design a restoration plan for the property. The final plan was adopted in 2008 and the first phase of restoration, now complete, began in 2009. For detailed information about the project, please visit www.southbayrestoration.org.