

**South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project
Long-Term Restoration Planning**

**State Coastal Conservancy,
California Department of Fish and Game,
and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

**Response to Summary of Recommendations from
National Science Panel Meeting
July 10-11, 2003**

Introduction

This report provides a response to the written summary of recommendations provided by the National Science Panel (NSP) after their July 10-11 meeting. These responses were developed by the Project Management Team (PMT) members from the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC), California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for the Executive Leadership Group's consideration at the Executive Leadership Group approved these written responses at their September 23, 2003 meeting.

Responses to Recommendations

The following are responses to each recommendation of the NSP, with an indication of whether the PMT recommends to the Executive Leadership Group (ELG) adopting the recommendation in whole, adopting some version of the recommendation, or not adopting the recommendation.

Role of Science in the Restoration Planning Process

The PMT recommends adoption of the NSP's recommendations about the role and function of the NSP, as follows, with italicized comments indicating differences from NSP recommendations:

- The role of the NSP should be to provide broad oversight to ensure the appropriate use of science in restoration planning, not to conduct detailed review of technical documents.
- The NSP should meet twice per year, on a schedule that corresponds with project milestones.
- The NSP should make recommendations directly to the ELG.
- There should be written responses to the NSP recommendations, *written by the PMT and approved by the ELG*, particularly on those recommendations not being implemented.
- The Lead Scientist should brief the NSP at each meeting and the Lead Scientist and NSP chair should coordinate in advance of meetings.

- Scientific presentations on relevant research topics in the South Bay should be made at each NSP meeting, by members of the science team, outside researchers and scientists not directly involved with the restoration project, *or by researchers conducting work as part of the South Bay Salt pond Restoration Project.*
- Members of the NSP may undertake individual research, advisory or review contributions to overall South Bay restoration efforts, provided that such efforts are funded independently of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project.
- Individual members of the NSP can provide more detailed review of technical documents, but this work should not be done in conjunction with NSP meetings and will not be endorsed by the NSP as a group.

Science Team

The PMT recommends adoption of the NSP's recommendations about the structure of the Science Team, as described below, with italicized comments indicating work conducted by the PMT to date to implement the NSP recommendations:

- The PMT should hire a Lead Scientist, *Lynne Trulio from San Jose State University*, to guide formulation of a Science Strategy and provide ongoing leadership.
- The PMT should establish a Restoration Science Strategy Group to develop a Science Strategy (referred to as a Strategic Thinking Group in the NSP recommendations) that will consist of five scientists (*John Callaway, John Takekawa, Frederic Nichols, Jessica Lacy, and Edward Gross*) led by the Lead Scientist.
- A Restoration Science Team (referred to as a Science Board in the NSP recommendations) should be formed upon completion of the Science Strategy, will consist of 12-15 scientists (including the five Restoration Science Strategy Group participants), and will be chaired by the Lead Scientist.
- A standing pool of qualified individuals should be kept on call for peer review, participation in working groups, and preparation of specific deliverables. The Request for Qualifications issued in April 2003 has generated over 90 responses and those deemed qualified by the PMT will make up this standing pool. The RFQ will remain on the web site and the PMT will continue to accept responses.
- Steve Ritchie and URS Corporation (or equivalent entity) should provide communication and interface between the Restoration Science Team and Lead Scientist, the NSP, and the PMT, as well as provide technical and administrative staff support to the NSP, Restoration Science Team, and Lead Scientist.

Project Management Team

The PMT recommends adoption of the NSP's recommendations about the structure of the project management team and the addition of the following functional roles, individuals, or agencies, with italicized comments indicating differences from NSP recommendations:

- Chair (*or Executive Director*)
- Program Manager

- DFG representatives
- SCC representatives
- FWS representatives
- Lead Scientist
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers *and local flood management agencies (as advisory members)*

The PMT recommends that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers should be involved in the project, under a Support for Others Memorandum of Agreement negotiated with the SCC. The Corps should conduct tasks needed to develop a Feasibility Report for the project or divisible components of the project. Prior to completion of the Feasibility Report, the SCC may enter into a cost share agreement with the Corps or may work with Congress to pass legislation allowing the SCC to submit the Feasibility Report directly to the Secretary of the Army to pass onto Congress for consideration, without the existence of a cost share agreement for Feasibility.

The PMT will describe the roles or job descriptions of the various PMT participants in greater detail and make this information widely available. The PMT will continue to develop budgets and schedules, and will manage consultants in the development of restoration, public access, and flood management plans and associated environmental compliance documents. The PMT will interface with the Science Team and NSP to ensure that the Science Strategy is fully integrated.

Science Strategy

The PMT recommends adoption of the NSP's recommendations regarding the Science Strategy. The first task of the Science Team (specifically the Lead Scientist and Restoration Science Strategy Group) should be to develop a Science Strategy prior to the next NSP meeting that:

- corresponds with milestones in the restoration planning and implementation process,
- identifies scientific needs of each milestone,
- outlines the process to meet the scientific needs of each milestone,
- outlines a process for developing and refining conceptual models,
- outlines a process for identifying and prioritizing major uncertainties,
- outlines peer review procedures for key project documents, and
- includes a Conceptual Model of the environments, habitats, and process linkages to be encompassed by the restoration effort.

Principles, Objectives, and Conceptual Model

The PMT recommends adoption of some of the NSP's recommended revisions to the Mission Statement, Guiding Principles, Goals, and Objectives, as described below, with italicized comments indicating differences from NSP recommendations.

- The mission statement should show "publicly supported" as the most important characteristic of the plan, and should include the concept of sustainability.
- The order of the first two principles should be switched, so that public involvement comes first.

- The objectives should be divided into three main issues: habitat for fish and wildlife, flood management, and public access.
- *While the PMT agrees with the NSP that some of the issues are constraints rather than objectives (such as vector control), the PMT recommends leaving them in the list of objectives, in order to recognize their importance.*

Other Feedback

- The NSP recommends integration between the Long-Term Restoration Planning and Initial Stewardship Plan. The PMT agrees that this should happen *to the extent feasible*. The primary purpose of the Initial Stewardship Plan is to allow for sustainable management of the ponds. The Initial Stewardship Plan is being developed under a very tight schedule, so that DFG and FWS can take over operations and management of the ponds once Cargill meets the discharge criteria for ponds. It is estimated that Cargill will meet this criteria for many of the South Bay ponds within one to two years after the acquisition, which closed in March of 2003. The Long-Term Restoration Planning will consider the infrastructure installed under the Initial Stewardship Plan, as one of the many opportunities and constraints to be considered in the development and selection of alternatives.
- The NSP recommends that the PMT or Lead Scientist consider hosting a scientific forum on South Bay issues relevant to the restoration project. The PMT did host a datagaps workshop in March, 2003 that was well attended and provided the PMT with considerable information. The PMT agrees that one (or more) additional forums should be held to discuss issues, processes, determine the state of knowledge, identify data needs, and assist with development or implementation of the Science Strategy. The PMT does not think that it can be held in conjunction with the State of the Estuary conference in October, 2003, due to logistical considerations, but does want to conduct a forum in the near future.
- The PMT agrees with the NSP that the restoration planning should be conducted at a regional scale, consider future environmental changes, explicitly address the sediment deficit issue, and apply adaptive management techniques. To be determined is the role of experimentation within the restoration project and the identification of reference sites and areas for experimentation. The PMT will consider this recommendation as alternatives are developed.