



To: South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project Team

From: Center for Collaborative Policy

Re: Outcomes from the January 17, 2008 Ravenswood Ponds Working Group Meeting

Background: The South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project held the second meeting of the Ravenswood Ponds Working Group (Working Group) on Thursday, January 17, 2008 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Onetta M. Harris Community Center in Menlo Park. The Working Group has been convened to provide ongoing input and advice to the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project Management Team (PM Team) on Phase 1 restoration and public access implementation.

Meeting Attendance: Attachment 1 lists meeting participants.

Meeting Materials: In advance of the meeting, Working Group members were provided a meeting agenda. At the meeting, a Working Group charter, Phase 1 actions and applied studies handouts were available, as well as copies of slides and an EIS/R Executive Summary. Most presentations will be available on the SBSP Project website (www.southbayrestoration.org). Attachment 2 is the meeting's flip chart notes.

Substantive Meeting Outcomes:

1. Welcome and Self-Introductions

Mendel Stewart, Manager of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex, welcomed everyone and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

He noted that the Project draft EIS/R was completed in December and said the Project is now in a transition period from planning to making changes on the ground, and managers are very excited about that. They are also looking for support from the community. He finished by reviewing the day's agenda.

2. Work Group Charter

Facilitator Mary Selkirk from the Center for Collaborative Policy reviewed the charter the Working Group approved at its previous meeting. The charter is the group's protocol, laying out its roles and responsibilities. Membership is open. Managers are interested in good thinking and good feedback about the project and approaches to outreach in the Ravenswood area. A second 2008 meeting is likely to be held in the fall.

Questions:

One questioner asked how participants can keep track of what is happening in order to provide feedback. Selkirk listed three ways:

1. The project website, www.southbayrestoration.org;
2. Participants can invite one of the Project partners to come to speak to their group – managers need help identifying neighborhood organizations and activist groups that might be interested in a presentation;
3. The project's quarterly e-mail newsletter

Another questioner asked about e-mails. Selkirk said e-mails submitted to the project website go directly to facilitators who make sure they are answered by the right person. Stewart said participants can also contact him or Clyde Morris at the Refuge offices, and they will try to answer. The phone number is (510) 792-0222.

3. Overall Project Schedule and Overview of Final EIS/R

Steve Ritchie, Executive Project Manager, discussed the Project's schedule. The notice of completion of the Final EIS/R appeared in the Federal Register on December 28. The Fish and Wildlife Service has to wait 30 days, until January 28, for comments. The Record of Decision is expected in early 2008, and is essentially the federal government stating what it is going to do. This will include the compatibility determination, what is compatible with the Refuge mission. Managers expect to get permits in early 2008. This is a 30-year program, but the first set of 14 physical actions, a number of which will occur in Ravenswood, will occur from 2008-2010.

Ritchie then gave an overview of the changes that occurred in the Final EIS/R. The basic elements are largely unchanged. The fundamental Project approach has not changed: restoration and public access in combination throughout the Project. Alternative B, in which 50% of the ponds would be converted to tidal marsh, is the minimum considered to be necessary to support recovery of the endangered California clapper rail and salt marsh harvest mouse. Managers would rather have nature do the work, so their preference is for more tidal habitat, maybe up to 90% as called for in Alternative C. Ten percent is the bare amount of managed ponds believed to be needed to support bird species currently using them. The end result will probably be between B and C. There are only minor changes in the planned Phase 1 actions.

Ritchie reviewed the major areas that drew comments from the 114 commenters:

- Relationship to the South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Study
- Scope of the EIS/R
- A Preferred Alternative
- Adaptive Management Plan funding - People questioned if the project can accomplish the monitoring and adaptive management. Managers have committed that if the money isn't available, they will stop, go back and do a traditional planning process.
- Aircraft bird strikes
- Public access and impacts to wildlife - this will be discussed in more detail later
- Wildlife impact significance thresholds, an ongoing scientific discussion

- Flooding - the project will take actions to try to provide flood protection
- Sea level rise
- Hunting - hunters wanted to make sure it will be continued, which is going to happen
- Invasive Spartina and other invasive species

Ritchie then went on to cover the changes in the Final EIS/R.

- The Army Corps of Engineers is no longer a co-lead agency of the project because of slower than expected progress in the Shoreline Study.
- An adaptive management staircase diagram has been added to illustrate monitoring and decision-making on public access, to see if it is being used by the public, and if it is having any effect on the biota. The diagram shows a decision tree. At each step, if there are adverse effects in adding public access, the project will look at possible changes.
- A figure has been added to the EIS/R showing the acquisition boundary of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The boundary is 43,000 acres, of which 30,000 are not part of the Refuge.
- There is a detailing of PG&E facility modifications that will be built into the project process.
- The Project's lawyers advised managers to choose a preferred alternative, so the PM Team chose Alternative C. However, managers are committed to adaptive management and seeing where nature takes the project.
- Invasive Spartina best practices have been added to make sure the project doesn't have ongoing problems with the invasive species. Among these practices, areas identified as tidal marsh with Spartina problems won't be breached for two years to allow time for Spartina treatment.

Questions:

In regards to public access, a Working Group member asked if there is coordination occurring, as there is a desire that the Bay Trail run along the shoreline rather than along University Avenue. Clyde Morris, consultant to the Fish and Wildlife Service, said it is not the Project's decision. It's a question of how to get public access over the San Francisco PUC's Hetch Hetchy pipeline at the shoreline. There are ongoing discussions. The PUC, for security reasons, prefers to isolate the pipeline from people. It is working on a tunnel project that went underground the pipe. There is also the Dumbarton Rail project in the area. Managers are involved in the discussions and recognize the need to coordinate with these other projects.

An audience member asked about a 20- to 30-acre SFPUC parcel of marshland, asking if it would become part of the project. He said it is an ongoing mosquito problem. Ritchie said it might be part of the discussion in the tunnel project.

Another questioner asked whether there are talks with the C/CAG TAC, which is putting together regional traffic improvements, about the Bay Trail. Ritchie said he wasn't aware if there had been discussions on that.

A member asked about the preferred alternative. Ritchie said, under NEPA, it is considered the environmentally superior alternative. Alternative C was chosen because it relies more on natural processes. It allows nature to do its work, rather than manipulating water through artificial means.

Another questioner asked how the project will work if it does not receive expected flows. Does the EIS/R cover this? Ritchie said, within certain bounds, managers could rely on the existing environmental document. It is possible they might have to do additional environmental review tiered off of this programmatic document.

One questioner asked whether this site could be isolated in the event of future oil spills. Ritchie said managers can close structures to protect ponds. But for open tidal marshes, there's not that much they can do. The best they can do is to get restoration going to allow the system to become more resilient to handle crises.

In response to a question on where species would be cared for in a future oil spill. Ritchie identified the current facility, which is in Vacaville. The Refuge mobilizes in the event of an emergency.

Concerns:

One commenter said the cracks in the mud are a problem for vector control. Even without vegetation, the algae in the cracks are a breeding source for salt marsh mosquitoes.

4. Refuge Public Use Compatibility Determinations

Mendel Stewart discussed the Fish and Wildlife Service's mission of "wildlife first," and how public uses must be determined to be compatible with that mission before they are allowed. Federal rules state that the "big six" wildlife-dependent recreational uses, hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation, are appropriate and are something the FWS should be striving to allow. In determining whether a public use is compatible, the FWS considers biological impacts, consistency with the refuge purpose and mission, the potential for conflicts among uses, the availability of funding and resources, the public's safety and the quality of the experience.

How will this process occur? The EIS/R contains a list of "preliminary Phase 1 action compatible uses," which are wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, environmental interpretation, hiking and jogging. The FWS will perform a compatibility determination for each of those potential uses, and consider potential restrictions on the uses to make them compatible. For example, Clyde Morris said, the FWS determined that a trail at Bair Island next to endangered species habitat would only be compatible if the public stayed on the trail. Under the determination, the FWS installed a symbolic fence to keep the public on the trail. If it is determined that people won't stay on the trail, the trail would be closed down.

Questions:

A questioner asked if management actions are considered public uses. Stewart said actions such as mosquito abatement would have to be found to be compatible. The Service usually does, he said, with certain restrictions.

Another questioner asked to what extent design and compatibility decisions had already been made in the EIS/R. Stewart said the FWS has been thinking about compatible uses for five years, but the determination process will occur after the EIS/R and before the Record of Decision. There were no designs in the EIS/R, only design concepts. Design work is occurring now.

Stewart was asked if bicycle commuting has been determined to be noncompatible. He responded that it's not part of the FWS mission, and the trails are not meant to be commuter highways. In addition to the proposed uses, existing hunting in Ravenswood will continue.

5. Phase 1 Actions in Ravenswood

Clyde Morris presented the latest designs of the Phase 1 actions in Ravenswood, with the aid of PowerPoint slides and handouts. The actions will focus on two areas over the next few years: building a viewing platform in Bayfront Park, and converting Pond SF2 from the moonscape it is now to a high-density shorebird pond with public access.

Pond SF2 Restoration Actions:

Morris referred participants to the revised Figure 2-21 handout, which shows the new snowy plover habitat area in the southwest portion of the pond. The FWS will put in a series of water control structures, an outlet channel and an inlet channel to circulate water from the Bay. A combination of circular and long nesting islands will be built for species such as Forster's terns, avocets and black-necked stilts. The water level will be manipulated to favor the majority of species, and will be maintained at about 6 inches. It is expected there will be thousands, if not tens of thousands, of birds there during the season. The snowy plover habitat area, while it looks empty to people, provides cover for the birds, brine flies as food and gives predators no place to hide.

Pond SF2 will help answer some essential scientific questions, Morris said, and applied studies will examine the effect of a variety of island shapes and densities, vegetation types and densities and the impacts of human presence on the nearby trail and viewing platform on the wildlife.

Pond SF2 Public Access Actions:

A Bay Trail spur trail will be opened from the existing parking lot by the Dumbarton Bridge, going along the shoreline on the outside levee to two viewing platforms. The public will not be allowed beyond the second viewing platform. Managers are seeking the audience's input, as they are now in the middle of designing these public access features. The levee will be raised two feet for flood protection. There will be a gate to block motorcycles. There will be a kiosk, chemical toilets and some benches. The trail surface will be ADA-accessible crushed granite. The viewing platform would be 3 feet

above the trail over the pond, and would allow for looking out over the Bay from one side. BCDC wants the platform to be like an island floating out over the water. There would be a rampway to enter it. There would be a grating "window" on the platform providing a view to the water below. The tops of railings would be slanted to allow for bird books and would have space for spotting scopes. There would be spaces between the benches for wheelchair-users to put up spotting scopes. Some have suggested a second loop ramp for romantic couples to escape herds of kids. Also, some are suggesting that the platform be painted orange, to reflect the color of the old salt ponds. Managers are also interested in hearing if people prefer wood, recycled wood, metal or plastic building materials.

Questions:

Morris was asked if abatement vehicles would be able to get access for treatment. He said there will be a gate to allow vehicles onto the levee. A more difficult issue will be the ponds, which will have water.

Another questioner asked how the FWS was handling subsidence. Morris said the islands will be built in two steps, to allow the first deposit time to subside.

A questioner asked about security features, including lighting, policing and emergency call boxes. Morris said the intent is for day use – there will be no lighting, and there will be policing. The Refuge has tried emergency call boxes, but in the last year, nobody has used them.

Someone asked if there is an applied study for the snowy plover area. It is not planned yet. There is an ongoing snowy plover reproduction success study. Lead Scientist Lynne Trulio said the scientists will give this a second thought.

Input:

- The romantic escape route seems unnecessary
- The hole seems unnecessary and unnatural
- One participant preferred recycled wood products, and has concerns about the amount of chemicals used on natural wood
- As an applied study, the Refuge might consider a blind-type structure for one of the platforms, and compare impacts on birds of the two structures. Trulio and Ritchie clarified that there will be low or no impact on nesting birds from the platform, which would be about 30 x 40 feet in size and will be 300 feet from nesting islands.
- The deck hole sometimes allows small children to see wildlife, if birds wander under the deck, but there are sunlight and vegetation considerations.
- One participant preferred a natural color rather than orange
- One person was concerned that the hole might collect garbage, and that the lovers' ramp would block the 360-degree view.
- Metal might make more noise, and the sound is not natural. The wood would be better, less irritating to animals.

- The blind concept is interesting and could have viewing openings for photographers.
- One person suggested unisex restrooms.
- Another stated a preference for natural materials and saw no need for recycled wood in a featured environment. Suggestions include epi or teak. He likes the state park look, a timber motif.
- One person liked the places for binoculars.
- The hole could be moved to the south edge, and designers should consider the southern aspect and light going underneath the platform at an angle.
- One person urged against any motor transport, just walkers and wheelchairs – this should be a respite with nature. Clyde Morris said the Refuge will put the draft compatibility determination on the website and seek public input.
- The design might extend the platform 3-4 feet toward the Bay to create a separate viewing area.
- It would be best to choose materials that a lot of people will think are appropriate: visitors ask, why isn't it recycled? What was the cost to taxpayers?
- One person prefers the natural look of the recycled materials that have been used.

Bayfront Park Overlook Public Access Actions:

Clyde Morris said the viewing platform will take advantage of the view of Greco Island, the largest tidal wetlands left in the South Bay. It will be a smooth area with interpretive signs and benches. It would not be raised above the ground. It would be made of colored concrete with embedded artifacts from the salt ponds. The site would be planted with native bunch grasses, with a planting of coast live oaks uphill.

Input:

- A multi-level, amphitheater-type space would allow a larger number of people to see the view when the site is crowded. Interpretive panels could be placed higher up
- The overlook needs a gradually rising trail for less-abled people. In addition, there could be many families on the trail with strollers.
- The path should be redesigned so people won't cut the corner
- The narrow shape of the platform was questioned
- One person liked the native bunch grasses
- There may not be enough soil to support the oaks
- Another person seconded the idea of a layered structure
- One person asked if it was possible to have grasses that support butterflies

Clyde Morris said the next level of design will be added to the website, and the public will be asked for responses and input.

6. Funding Opportunities

Steve Ritchie listed five potential funding sources for the Actions, including:

- FWS carryover funds: \$.5 million has been set aside

- There is \$4-\$5 million in fiscal year 2008 federal appropriations allocated for the SF2 project. It is a major accomplishment for the FWS to receive money for restoration.
- The City of Menlo Park has money from mitigation fees on the Marsh Road landfill from the 1980s in an account administered by the Peninsula Open Space Trust. Under agreement with BCDC, the money is to be spent for acquisition of open water or marsh areas, but land has been too expensive. The Project managers are in discussion with the City and BCDC about using funds for the Bayfront Park project. It would require actions by the City, the District and BCDC to make the funds available.
- Caltrans has a residual obligation to fund public access mitigation for the new Dumbarton Bridge. Talks are underway for the agency to provide all or part of the public access at SF2.
- There is possible State Coastal Conservancy grant money for the two projects.

With these potential sources, Ritchie said the Project is in fairly good shape to go forward. Managers are interested in hearing any other funding ideas.

7. Schedule and Upcoming Activities for SBSP Project

Steve Ritchie noted, in response to the question about participants' opportunities to provide input, that there will be public processes in which the Project's actions will be considered. The Project will be considered at a March 11 BCDC Design Review Board meeting and BCDC and Water Board hearings in April or May. In addition, members of the public can give feedback during the compatibility determination process, in April or May, on what uses they believe are, or are not, compatible. The designs are expected to be completed in May, and construction to begin in the summer. The website will be updated with the new information, the next round of designs and compatibility determination process. The City of Menlo Park will also hold public processes during consideration of the Bayfront Park project.

Construction activities for 2008 will include starting construction of SF2 interior work and installation of water control structures, followed by construction of public access features. In 2008 and 2009, it is likely construction of all these items would occur.

Final Questions and Discussion:

One participant said there is a high percentage of Spanish-only speakers at Bayfront Park, so bilingual signs would be helpful. In response, Steve Ritchie said the Project may have an interpretive sign workshop.

The participant asked if there could be alternative designs, so that an ADA trail alternative for Bayfront Park could at least be priced out.

One attendee suggested that the compatibility determination process consider dogs; if allowed, there should be bags and waste receptacles. In addition, SF2 today has a terrible litter problem. Steve Ritchie responded that managers will install a low fence to keep honest people out of habitat, to keep chicks from straying into the road and to catch trash.

They are working with Save The Bay and other groups on how to collect trash and keep it out of the ponds.

8. *Next Steps*

Mendel Stewart thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting was then adjourned.

**Attachment 1:
Ravenswood WG January 17, 2008 Meeting Attendance**

Name	Organization/Affiliation
Jon Archer	Triton Marine Construction
Michele Bevelhimer	
Nancy Borgeson	Friends of Bayfront Park
Cooper	Cooper Crane
Louis Deziel	Menlo Park Planning Commission
Anthony Docto	City of East Palo Alto/Public Works
Herb Fricke	Cascade Design
Jane Lavelle	SF Public Utilities Commission
Jim Levey	Art Anderson Associates
Eileen McLaughlin	CCCR
Kevin Murray	San Francisquito Creek JPA
Peggy Olofsen	Spartina Project
Chindi Peavey, Ph.D.	San Mateo Co. Mosquito Abatement Dist.
Donna Plunkett	EDAW, Inc.
Bob Power	Santa Clara Valley Audubon
Kent Steffens	City of Menlo Park
Kirsten Struve	City of San Jose/Envir. Services
Karen Sundback	

Attachment 2: Flip Chart Notes Ravenswood Ponds Working Group

The following is public feedback captured at the Working Group's January 17, 2008 meeting.

Feedback on Public Access Design

Pond SF2

Romantic "escape" not necessary

Hole/grate not necessary √√

Like the hole/grate

Like recycled wood √

Wood √ Epi (high quality, durable)

? Blind vs. open structures √√

↓

2 different platform designs: blind/non-blind

Applied study

Natural color

Like 360° view

"Timber" motif

Like birder-friendly seating

Consider exposure when siting grate - but not really necessary

No motorized vehicles

No bikes

Create extension toward bay

Choose appropriate materials

Fence for trash

Bayfront Park

Prefer multi-level feature √√
- step down w/ benches

Need an accessible access trail

Prefer a "half-moon" shape, amphitheater-like (wind-break)

Like native bunch grasses

Look into grasses that butterflies like

Can oaks actually grow?

Signage should be multilingual

Add trash cans!

Account for dog use (waste receptacles)

Both Projects:

FWS should establish its own look/materials to feature FWS-like nice wood
- whole lifecycle cost » durable wood cheap