



February, 2004

**Welcome to the second issue of the quarterly electronic newsletter of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project (SBSP).** The restoration process is being managed collaboratively by the [California State Coastal Conservancy](#), the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#), and the [California Department of Fish and Game](#). The purpose of this newsletter is to provide you with a brief update on our effort to restore more than 15,000 acres of former commercial salt ponds in the South Bay which were purchased by state and federal agencies in March of 2003. For more detailed information about the restoration project please visit our web site at [www.southbayrestoration.org](http://www.southbayrestoration.org). If you would like to unsubscribe from this quarterly update please contact [tcorrigan@scc.ca.gov](mailto:tcorrigan@scc.ca.gov).

### **Public Encouraged to Participate in Work Group Meetings**

There are numerous ways for you to stay informed about the Restoration Planning Project. In addition to reading this newsletter and regularly checking the project web site for updates, we encourage you to join us this fall for the next set of annual public workshops.

In the meantime, there are plenty of other opportunities to weigh in on the development of the restoration plan. The cornerstone of the Restoration Project's collaborative planning process is the 28- member Stakeholder Forum which meets regularly to provide ongoing, publicly derived input to the Project Management Team on the restoration plan. All of the Stakeholder Forum meetings are open to the public. In February, the Stakeholder Forum will begin meeting in small Work Groups to analyze and provide detailed feedback on issues related to planning and implementing the restoration program. The Work Groups are designed to involve more public representatives than can be accommodated on the Forum and to enhance the diversity of participation in the restoration program. If you have extensive knowledge or are simply interested in one of the following topics related to the South Bay Salt Ponds, we encourage you to participate in the Work Group meetings. Work Groups will meet on a monthly and bi-monthly basis as the plan develops this year. Below is a list of current Work Groups:

1. Habitat Restoration
2. Public Access
3. Flood Management

Work Groups will include members of the Stakeholder Forum, government agency staff, and other interested members of the public as well as members of the Science Team. If you would like to be notified of upcoming Work Group meetings and receive copies of meeting notes please contact Jennifer Krebs at 510-622-5686 or via email at [jak@rb2.swrcb.ca.gov](mailto:jak@rb2.swrcb.ca.gov). All Work Group meetings are open to the public. The Habitat Restoration and Public Access Work Groups will have their first meetings on Wednesday, February 18th in Hayward following the regularly scheduled Stakeholder Forum meeting. For more information about Work Groups and/or the Stakeholder Forum please visit the project web site (<http://www.southbayrestoration.org/Events.html>)

### **Local Government Forum Scheduled For March**

In an effort to keep local government elected officials and staff apprised of developments in the restoration planning process, the Restoration Project will host regular local government forums. The first of these will take place on Thursday March 18 for local government staff. Please mark your calendar now, we will be contacting city and county staff once the logistics are confirmed.

### **Copies of Environmental Review Documents for Initial Stewardship Plan Now Available**

Copies of the Initial Stewardship Plan and the associated EIR/ EIS documents are now available for public review. The Initial Stewardship Plan for the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration outlines a process to reduce the salinity of existing salt ponds and to manage the site while the long term restoration plan is being developed. Once Cargill reduces the salinity in the ponds to a level set by the Regional Water Quality Control Board, the company will transfer management of the ponds to the USFWS and CDFG. The process, which will take one to five years to complete, involves circulating bay waters through the pond system and restoring a limited number of ponds to tidal influence. The goal of initial stewardship plan is to protect the existing habitat values of the acquired ponds and to maintain the property until the long-term restoration plan is complete. The deadline for submitting comments on the State EIR is February 5 and the deadline for commenting on the Federal EIS is March 8. A public meeting to receive comments on the document is scheduled for February 4 at the Don Edwards Refuge. For more information please visit the documents section of the project web site <http://www.southbayrestoration.org/Documents.html> . On February 25, the Regional Water Quality Control Board will host a public workshop on the proposed waste discharge permit for the Initial Stewardship Plan. The date is Wednesday, February 25, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm and it will be held in Room 2, Second Floor, Elihu Harris State Office Building, 1515 Clay Street, Oakland. For more information, check the Board's website at <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb2/index.htm>

### **Restoration Project Selects Design Consulting Team**

The Project Management Team has selected a consulting team to develop and evaluate restoration, flood management, and public access alternatives for the project. The

consulting team will be led by Philip Williams & Associates and includes Brown and Caldwell, EDAW, and H.T. Harvey and Associates, along with several other firms and individuals. The team's work will include: developing restoration, flood management, and public access concepts and alternatives, evaluating the alternatives using hydrodynamic modeling and other assessment techniques, producing a joint EIR/EIS, assisting with regulatory permitting, and eventually conducting the engineering and design work for Phase 1 of the selected alternative. The consulting team will work closely with the Project Management Team, Science Team, Regulatory Agency Group, Stakeholder Forum and Work Groups throughout the process.

### **PRBO Studies Habitat Issues Related to Restoration**

Since 1999, the Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO), in collaboration with the U.S. Geological Survey and the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, has been studying how the South Bay salt ponds are used by birds. In an effort to understand how the restoration effort might affect the Bay's bird populations, PRBO studied the frequency with which birds used the salt ponds in the winter months of 1999 through 2001. The team found the salt ponds were used extensively by a variety of water birds. PRBO has expanded its research and is now modeling how various habitat changes in the South Bay could impact bird populations. The models will help the restoration effort identify the most valuable salt pond habitat characteristics for bird populations in the Bay. The research will be integrated into the restoration design process to help maintain viable water bird populations. For initial results of PRBO's research please visit their web site at <http://www.prbo.org/cms/index.php?mid=131&module=browse>.