

# South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project



*Restoring the Wild Heart of the South Bay*

## July 2008

Welcome to the eighteenth 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 (or to unsubscribe from this publication) please visit our web site at [www.southbayrestoration.org](http://www.southbayrestoration.org).

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### **1. Next Steps: Ravenswood Working Group Meets in July, New Trail Opens This Fall**

The Ravenswood Working Group will meet on Thursday July 17<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Menlo Park Library. The Ravenswood Working Group is one of three different Groups representing the major pond complexes in the project. During their July meeting the Group will review and give feedback on the close-to-final design for Phase 1 habitat restoration

and public access improvements, get briefed on the outcomes of the Science Team's recent technical workshop on the interaction of public access and wildlife in the SBSP project area, and learn about an exciting scientific collaboration underway at the Ravenswood ponds between the US Geological Survey and Sun Microsystems, whose corporate headquarters border the Ravenswood ponds. You can view a schedule of


Working Group meetings as well as agendas and notes from previous meetings on the [Events and Meetings](#) page of the Project web site. All Working Group meetings are open to the public and you are welcomed and encouraged to attend.



The four-year planning process for the Salt Pond has involved more than a dozen state and federal agencies and the tireless commitment of hundreds of individuals like you who have taken part in public meetings and submitted comments about the restoration. As we transition into the implementation phase of the project, we are working to complete the final permitting process for the restoration. Now that the federal and state environmental documents are complete, three agencies with regulatory authority over activities in the Bay must approve the restoration plan. The Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission are expected to review the restoration plan at meetings this summer and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers review should be complete soon thereafter.



One of the first steps on the road to implementing the restoration will take place this year with the opening of a new trail connection near Moffett Federal Airfield. The new 2.5 mile trail will link two sections of the existing San Francisco Bay Trail between Mountain View and Sunnyvale. The trail will use existing levees with some minor improvements. The new trail is expected to open with a celebratory ribbon cutting this Fall.

Although it will take several decades to complete all of the restoration and public amenities planned for the ponds, below is a summary of what we expect to accomplish during Phase One, between now and 2011. The summary is organized by geographic area. To view a detailed map of Phase One restoration activities for each of the three pond complexes please visit the [project web site](#).

<b>2008 – 2011 Implementation</b>	
<b>Ravenswood Pond Complex</b>	
	Enhance 240 acres of ponds for nesting and resting shorebirds and snowy plovers.
	Construct 0.7 miles of trail near the Dumbarton Bridge.
	Create interpretive displays and build 2 new viewing platforms near pond habitat and historic salt marsh areas.
	Create an overlook in Menlo Park's Bayfront Park with views of the Ravenswood ponds.
<b>Alviso Pond Complex</b>	

	Enhance 250 acres of shallow ponds with 50 nesting islands for migrating shorebirds.
	Connect 900 acres of ponds to the Bay, creating new marsh and shallow water habitats for pelicans, cormorants and ducks.
	Open 2.5 miles of new Bay Trail between Mountain View's Stevens Creek and Sunnyvale.
<b>Eden Landing Pond Complex</b>	
	Restore 630 acres of tidal habitat for endangered species.
	Create 230 acres of pond habitat for a variety of species including ducks and snowy plovers.
	Build 3.8 miles of new trail including a seasonally restricted loop trail.
	Build an interpretive site with raised walkways and viewing platforms overlooking the remnants of the historic salt works.
	Create a new kayak launch on Mt. Eden Creek.

## 2. Monthly Public Tours to Start in July!

New to the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project? Want to introduce your family to the project and its wetland resources? Please join us for a new set of public tours of the project starting this summer. Join SF Bay National Wildlife Refuge Ranger Jennifer Heroux for an overview of the historic restoration project and an on-the-ground view of what is to come. Saturday tours will begin indoors at the Refuge Environmental Education Center near Alviso and will move outside for a close up view of one of the salt ponds. The programs last about an hour and include a short quarter mile boardwalk trail near the ponds, perfect for family members of all ages. Please call 408-262-5513 ext. 101 for reservations and directions and remember to wear a hat or bring some sunscreen!

<b>Summer Public Tours</b>			
	Date	Time	To Reserve a Spot Please Call:
	Saturday July 19, 2008	11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon	408-262-5513 ext. 101
	Saturday August 16, 2008	11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon	



### **3. Faces of the Restoration: DFG Manager John Krause**

Over 5,500 acres of the restoration project are managed by the California Department of Fish and Game and almost all of that responsibility falls on the shoulders of one talented manager, John Krause. John, pictured here with his family, is an Associate Wildlife Biologist, and has been with the Department for a little over seven years. He currently serves as the Department's only full-time staff person at

the Eden Landing Ecological Reserve near the eastern side of the San Mateo Bridge. When John isn't in the field opening tide gates, or managing new planting and construction projects, he's monitoring bird and wildlife behavior at the site or working on something wildlife related in Marin, Contra Costa or Alameda County. Once in a while you'll see John at a public meeting where he provides up to the minute information about the progress at Eden Landing. We caught up with John as he was shifting between one of his many responsibilities.

#### ***What were you doing before you started working with the Department of Fish and Game?***

I worked as a district biologist for Caltrans for 2 1/2 years primarily on projects in coastal San Mateo County.

#### ***How long have you worked specifically at Eden Landing?***

While my DFG duties include managing the ponds acquired in 2003, the original 835 acre Eden Landing project began in 2000. I actually started working at Eden Landing when I was with Caltrans, because the site was being used as mitigation for the Dixon Landing Road interchange project, which I was asked to help with. That mitigation project successfully controlled pepperweed and created a pond for shorebird foraging within a portion of diked marsh adjacent to what's now the Eden Shores housing development.

#### ***Do you have anyone else on staff with you?***

No, DFG has tried to get permanent staff added to help with baylands management but has not yet been able to get their request approved. Last year, I was able to hire a scientific aide to help with the summer monitoring season and winter waterfowl season, but that person wasn't able to continue this year due to the demands of finishing college. I'm still looking for a good candidate for this year. Know anyone? I do have two dedicated volunteers who help me with the waterfowl season and with general maintenance. Without them, I'd be faced with even more challenges.

#### ***What is your favorite part of the job?***

That's a tough choice. I love making seasonal changes in the managed ponds. For example, re-flooding seasonal ponds and watching wildlife respond to a newly created resource is very gratifying. At the same time, once all the associated preparation is complete, it's exciting to get excavators out to breach a levee and see the tides return to an

area, knowing that in decades to come it will be a thriving marsh.

***What is more difficult for you?***

Making enough time and finding the resources to address the many management challenges facing Eden Landing.

***What has been the most exciting moment for you so far on the restoration project?***

Probably the most exciting moment was in April of 2005 when we made the first levee breach at Eden Landing. The breach restored tides to one mile of historic slough channel and prepared the site for a second breach into the south half of the original Eden Landing project the following year. The breach also enabled us to start managing two other salt ponds systems between Mt. Eden Creek and Old Alameda Creek.

***There are many challenges to the restoration project, which one are you most interested in solving right now?***

I am interested in understanding pond management dynamics-- that is how management actions such as adjusting intake and discharge gates affect overall pond water quality and biological productivity. How can we most successfully manage ponds to provide a range of salinities and the greatest diversity of beneficial uses? What is the best way to manage ponds for a suite of species?

***What is your favorite place to visit along the edge of the Bay?***

Eden Landing, of course! But in all seriousness, I really enjoy seeing the relatively rapid evolution of tidally restored areas, from channel morphology to vegetation colonization in an area like the North Creek marsh area. And then immediately adjacent to that I love seeing how a managed pond is used by various water birds. I also love going to places like Muir Beach to enjoy the beauty of the coast and have fun in the sand with my family and friends.

You've had two children since the project has started—do you ever think about what the place will look like, when your kids are teenagers?

I think about that all the time. Since many aspects of the project will be more visible on a time scale of decades, the work I'm engaged in now won't be fully appreciated for ten years or more. I look forward to coming to the South Bay Salt Ponds with my daughters and saying, "This area was restored about the time you were born, and it's going to continue to change over time just as you will." Maybe I'll even come back to Eden Landing with my grandchildren and show them a fully restored and managed tidal marsh and pond complex-- complete with all the resources needed to maintain it!



#### **4. Science Update: Recreation Impacts, California Gulls and a Science Symposium**

On Tuesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, Bay Area scientists and a few members of the public gathered for a special workshop to review existing data about the impact of public

recreation on wildlife behavior. The question is an important part of the restoration's Adaptive Management Program – the process of measuring changes on the ground and folding that new information back into the management process. The Project Science Team is now working to incorporate the advice they received into a series of ongoing studies that will examine the impacts of public recreation as new trails are opened at the project site.

In other news, researchers at the San Francisco Bird Observatory (SFBBO) have completed the first phase of a study of gull use at three garbage landfills in the South Bay. Their study is the first step to understanding the behavior of predatory California gulls, whose population in the Bay Area has exploded from less than 1,000 breeding birds in 1982 to more than 30,000 in 2007. California gulls often occupy habitats to the exclusion of other species and have been known to eat the young of other birds. These characteristics could prevent the project from supporting populations of avocets, stilts, terns and snowy plovers- a major restoration objective. The first batch of data from the study indicates that California gulls use different landfills at different times of the year. At Newby Island in Milpitas for example, California gull numbers peaked in April and declined in May when birds are spending more time on the nest. However, researchers observed a different pattern at the Tri-Cities landfill in Fremont where California gull numbers peaked in April and then stayed high through May and June (surveys were not conducted there in July). Very few California gulls were counted at the Palo Alto landfill.

Currently, select landfills use gull abatement pyrotechnics including canons, pistols, and whistles, as well as dogs and falcons. SFBBO biologists are studying the short and long-term effects of these abatement practices on gulls at the landfills and how this may affect their movement and breeding success in and around the Salt Pond Restoration site.

You can learn about this and other scientific research at the bi-annual South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Science Symposium. This year, the Symposium will take place on Thursday, September 25, 2008 on the campus of California State University, San Jose. The daylong conference will bring together wildlife biologists and scientists from a variety of fields to discuss their latest findings regarding South Bay environments and the need for future research. Details will be posted to the [Events and Meetings](#) section of the project web site as the date approaches.

## **5. South Bay Shoreline Study Update: Floodplain Maps Coming Soon**



Where would all the water go in the event of an extreme tidal flooding in the South Bay? A team of engineers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is closing in on the answer to that question. Over the last 18 months, staff at the Corps Engineering Research and Development Center in Mississippi and Florida, as well as the Corps San Francisco District office, have been grappling with modeling this kind of event. The Corps plans to complete their

floodplain maps by October as part of the South Bay Shoreline Study.

These floodplain maps are not the same as those generated by FEMA for the purpose of defining areas that must be covered by flood insurance. Instead, these maps will show the existing and future flood conditions faced by communities in the South Bay if the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project were halted after Phase I. The maps are designed to illustrate what would happen if neither flood protection nor habitat restoration measures beyond Phase 1 of the project were implemented. Any proposed project that results from the Shoreline Study will be weighed against these baseline conditions to determine the level of federal government investment in the solution. For more information please visit the [South Bay Shoreline Study](#) web site.

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