



November 2005

Welcome to the ninth 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. If you would like to unsubscribe from this quarterly update please contact tcorrigan@scc.ca.gov.

1. Project Alternatives To Be Released in December



After two very productive years of planning for the future of the South Bay Salt Ponds — a process which included input from the Stakeholder Forum, the Science Team and National Science Panel as well as local governments and the general public—the project is poised to release a set of restoration alternatives in December. The alternatives will be programmatic in scale, describing the broad goals and objectives for restoration, flood

management and public access at the site. One of the many questions facing the restoration planning process is how much of the site should be restored to tidal marsh and how much should be kept as managed ponds. Tidal marsh provides important habitat for fish and birds and acts a much-needed filter for the Bay. Managed ponds provide important habitat for migrating shorebirds, offering an important resting sites for hundreds of thousands of birds that migrate along the Pacific Flyway each year. The alternatives will include a variety of future habitat scenarios. Regardless of which alternative is selected, project managers expect the project to evolve over time. Adaptive management—the process of capturing lessons learned on the ground and folding them into future management practices—will play a critical role in ensuring that the project achieves the best combination of habitats for resident and migrating species.

In addition to describing Phase I actions for habitat restoration, the alternative package will also describe specific actions for the design and placement of recreation features on the site including trails and interpretive stations as well as flood management actions that should be completed in Phase I. Once the alternatives are finalized in early 2006, they will serve as the basis for the environmental review process.

For more information about the draft alternatives please visit the project web site in December and/or consider attending one of the Stakeholder Forum meetings listed below. All Forum meetings are open to the public and you are encouraged to attend and/or to contact Forum members with your questions and concerns. Please check the project web (www.southbayrestoration.org/Events.html) for up-to-date information about meeting times and locations.

Important Dates	
November 17, 2005	Stakeholder Forum Meeting: Discussion of proposed Alternatives & criteria used for rating alternatives
Mid-December, 2005	Release of Draft Alternatives Package
Mid-January, 2006	Stakeholder Forum Meeting: Seek Consensus on Preferred Alternative

2. Stakeholder Forum Focuses on Public Access



In September and October the Stakeholder Forum and other interested members of the public took time out to focus specifically on the public access and recreation components of the restoration project. In two separate tours – one of the Eden Landing ponds along the Bay’s East Shore and one of the Alviso ponds along the South Western corner of the Bay -- participants took a first hand look at potential sites for trail alignments, boat ramps, duck hunting facilities

and other public access amenities like parking lots and restrooms. Participants followed up the tours with a workshop in October to discuss some of the options facing the project. Project consultants are now folding their comments and suggestions into the design of the project alternatives that will be released in December. For a complete list of Forum members go to http://www.southbayrestoration.org/structure/Stakeholder_Members.html.

3. Project Mangers Continue to Learn From Initial Stewardship Plan



Over the past two years, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and CA Department of Fish and Game (DFG) managers have been opening tide gates and changing water flows to meet the goals of the Initial Stewardship Plan (ISP). The ISP is designed to gradually reverse the salt making process at the salt ponds, in preparation for the launch of the first phase of restoration in 2008. As the Initial Stewardship Plan moves forward both DFG and the US FWS are learning valuable lessons about the pond system that can be applied to the actual restoration. For example, recent ISP levee work is particularly instructive about the cost of levee maintenance in the project site. The USFWS is repairing a three-mile stretch of levees damaged by a winter storm last year. The job, which involves the replacement of rock protection on the outboard side of the levees, will cost the Service about \$500,000. The DFG has also been working to maintain

levees and other infrastructure. Utilizing Cargill's expertise and equipment and funds provided by the Resources Legacy Fund, the DFG recently completed its own \$500,000 maintenance project this year.

The ISP is also helping to inform future protocols for managed ponds at the project site. Project managers continue to wrestle with the problem of low dissolved oxygen levels at the many of the ponds during the warm summer months. Working with the Regional Water Quality Control Board, managers have been experimenting with a variety of mechanisms to counter this problem. If left unchecked, low dissolved oxygen levels pose a serious threat to fish and other wildlife. Key culprits in the problem at the Alviso ponds may be borrow ditches located near the outflow of the ponds. These deepwater ditches tend to accumulate decaying algae and exacerbate the drop in the dissolved oxygen. These and other insights will be taken into consideration when the final management plan is put together. To aid in this effort, the project has been convening pond ecology and pond management workshops.

You can find more information about the status of Initial Stewardship Plan activities by reading the Initial Stewardship Status Report and the annual self monitoring reports prepared by the USFWS and DFG on the project web site at <http://www.southbayrestoration.org/ISPNews.html>

4. Fall Bird Migration- An Excellent Time to Visit the Salt Ponds!



For those who would like a closer look at the restoration site, autumn is a wonderful time to visit the salt ponds. If you hurry, you can still catch a number of migrating birds making their way along the Pacific Flyway, which runs from Alaska to Argentina. Wildlife Stewards continues to offer docent-led tours and slide presentations about the restoration project. Participants can view a thriving tidal marsh and visit a portion of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration site during a walking tour in Menlo Park. Tours are free to the public and suitable for ages 12 years and older. Please visit the project web site for a schedule of tours and call the Refuge Visitor Center at 510-792-0222 to reserve a place on the tour.

If you can't make it to the South Bay for a tour, but would like to get a virtual sense of the project, visit our interactive map on the project web site. The interactive nature of the map enables viewers to zoom out for a regional overview, or zoom in to inspect a particular pond, slough, or other feature. Detailed aerial photography is available as an optional backdrop. To reach the map, go to <http://www.southbayrestoration.org/interactivemap>

5. Project Partners Take First Step Toward Federal Funding With Launch Of South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Study

On October 24th, the State Coastal Conservancy, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Santa Clara Valley Water District kicked off the first study phase of the South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Study. The Shoreline Study is a Congressionally-authorized study to identify and recommend for projects for federal funding. The purpose of these projects can include flood damage reduction, ecosystem restoration and related purposes such as public access. The full Study covers a broader geographic area than the Salt Pond Project and will be implemented in smaller study phases through interim reports. The first phase will include Santa Clara County and the Alviso Pond area.

The Shoreline Study provides an opportunity to secure Federal funding to assist in implementing the Salt Pond Project. If the Shoreline Study successfully results in a project authorized for construction by Congress, Federal funding would be leveraged with State and local funding to implement some or all of the Salt Pond Project.