



SAVE WETLANDS

Newsletter of the Citizens Committee To Complete The Refuge

Newsletter Issue 41

Fall 2011

The coming year (2012) will mark the 40th anniversary of the passage of the bill to establish the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (1972). This milestone is certainly cause for celebration, but also an appropriate time to reflect on where we go from here.

For many decades the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, with the generous support of our members and friends, has fought to protect wetlands along San Francisco Bay. It began with the noteworthy goal of establishing the Nation's first national wildlife refuge in an urban setting. Not long after, the group realized important habitats were not protected by the original Refuge boundaries and focused upon expanding the original Refuge boundaries. The last twenty plus years CCCR has sought to protect lands within the congressionally approved Refuge Expansion Boundary (and beyond) from development.

We have been tireless in our efforts to protect these wetlands and watersheds as they are vital components of a healthy bay ecosystem. While it's been gratifying to see many thousands of acres of land along the edges of the bay returned to the public, there is still much to be done.

Important parcels within the Refuge Expansion Boundary are under imminent threat of development and the environmental stakes are high (for example, the 1,436 acres of salt ponds in Redwood City and lands of the former Whistling Wings and Pintail Duck Clubs in Newark). These lands either support or are immediately adjacent to existing populations of endangered species and represent unique opportunities to maintain high marsh zones as sea level rises. The upper reaches of the marsh are some of the rarest and most threatened habitats within the bay ecosystem as they are squeezed out by the encroachment of development from the landward side and sea level rise on the other. PRBO's San Francisco Bay Sea-Level Rise Website <http://data.prbo.org/apps/sfbslr/> provides an excellent visualization of the unfortunate fate of mid and high marsh zones as sea level rises. Under the scenario of a 1.65 meter rise within the next 50-100 year interval, with low sediment availability, mid and upper marsh zones will be displaced by low marsh habitat (i.e. the diversity of marsh habitats will diminish).

As we approach the milestone of the 40th anniversary, the question is whether merely "completing" the Refuge, acquiring the remaining lands within the Refuge Expansion Boundary, will be enough to preserve the bay we love. Or, is there now a need to look beyond those boundaries to other low-lying, undeveloped lands to maintain our beloved Refuge and sustain the biodiversity of the Bay in the long-term. We invite your participation as we contemplate the future; send your thoughts and comments to cccrrefuge@gmail.com



What's your preference - this view? Or that of 8-12,000 housing units east of Highway 101 in multistory buildings and complete with traffic congestion? Photo of Pond 10 Redwood City Salt Ponds Courtesy of Matt Leddy

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SaveWetlands In Mayhews

The City of Newark remains undeterred by contaminated soil and groundwater. No matter that the list of contaminants is as long as your arm, the City designates such landscape as residential and retail. So we find Area 2 in north-western Newark earmarked as a transit oriented development. There is no transit planned unless you consider bicycling or hitch-hiking. Two thousand five hundred homes shoe-horned into around 200 acres. Several hundred thousand feet of retail squeezed into multi-story structures.

The City is working hard to convince the MTC that Newark needs a train station. Never mind there is no train planned in the foreseeable future. The south-western part of Area 2 is home to the Plummer Creek Mitigation Site, soon to become part of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Impacts to this wetland mitigation site have been downplayed and ignored by the

City in the EIR and Specific Plan.

The site is planned to discourage auto use with no alternative for future residents than to try and navigate narrow streets in search of the occasional bus. Once again, the City follows its own path and ignores citizen and agency input.

The City has also promised the school district that 3,000 new homes will soon be built in Newark. These imaginary homes are promised as a way for the school district to fund a school bond narrowly passed on the November ballot. Newark has informed district officials that new houses will soon be built on Area 2 and Areas 3 and 4. Wetlands and endangered species habitat are no deterrent. Reality and reason have no place.

Margaret Lewis
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Citizens for Alameda’s Last Marshlands

The Alameda Refuge dream which had its start in 1993 by Arthur Feinstein, myself, and the Golden Gate Audubon is still alive and filled with hope. Determination has not waned. Although we don’t have an official refuge yet, it has become a real refuge and we have managed to keep the property free from development for over 15 years. There is a prosperous least tern colony that for three years in a row (2008-2010) produced the highest number of California least tern fledglings in the world. Numbers are high enough to have spawned a significant new least tern colony in Hayward under the management of East Bay Regional Park District. The final reproduction tally for the 2011 season is not yet available. The 2011 season was challenged with heavy rains during chick hatching days. Crows, peregrine falcons and more found the colony. Even so, a good number of this year’s young terns took to the air and headed out of town. We have volunteers in large part to thank for any success.

Volunteers are the foundation of Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge (FAWR). They sustain the future of the least tern colony

and refuge dream. In the 2010-2011 (September to September) season we had 131 volunteers put in 419 hours of colony habitat enhancement. A preliminary assessment of USFWS’ Tern Watch program had some 28 volunteers put in 456 hours (3 hour shifts) this season monitoring the colony. Twice monthly all bird surveys and data entry took 255 hours between 5 volunteers (authorized to do this work). Our third grade in-class program done by Chris Bard takes about 20 hours of preparation for some 400 students. A grand total of more than 165 volunteers spent at least 1,150 hours keeping our dream alive and well. This does not take into consideration those who help with outreach, computer assistance, creating an effective committee, and watching for the challenges putting the dream at risk. GGAS, the FAWR committee (and even the critters and special plants at the “Alameda Wildlife Refuge”) feel deep gratitude for our volunteers and supporters for keeping the faith. We have high hopes for 2012.

Leora Feeney, co-chair FAWR
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Charleston Slough

Charleston Slough as we know it will be totally reworked by incorporating it as a part of a much enlarged tidal wetland unit. Conceptual planning, as laid out by John Bourgeois, would accomplish this by breaching the dike between the slough and Cargill salt pond #1, the latter now controlled by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

City of Mountain View officials were in agreement with the initial concept, which included a new location of the inlet to the Sailing Lake, and a complete rerouting of the extensive (and expensive) computer-controlled plumbing system. Approvals by the Corps of Engineers and BCDC are in the far-off future.

The restoration of Charleston Slough has been one of our major goals, dating back to 1975. It has been a complete failure on our part to interest hydrological talent to dig in and find out why the inner slough has failed to vegetate. What does that augur for the performance of the new concept? While it is good that the slough at mudflat stage is attractive to great flocks of birds, it does not erase the 36 years of failure to re-establish what was once a thriving and beautiful expanse of native cordgrass and prime California clapper rail habitat.

Philip D. LaRiviere
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Rose Foundation



We’d like to express our deep appreciation to the Rose Foundation for their continued and generous support of our efforts to protect lands along the edges of the Bay. Since CCCR is a volunteer-based organization, all donations go directly to support environmental programs. The generous grant received by the Rose Foundation has provided the means of continuing our efforts of educational outreach and environmental advocacy and to hire legal expertise in our efforts to protect listed species and the habitats that support them. Thank you Rose Foundation!

Fremont

What to do with a giant hole in the ground? That’s the question confronting the City of Fremont and the East Bay Regional Park District. Initial plans were to fill the former quarry pit just north of the Dumbarton Bridge with water, creating one of the deepest bodies of water in the U.S. (300 feet deep), however, access to water appears to have dried up. Instead this enormous pit will be refilled with “suitable” fill material. We’ll post updates on the status of the Dumbarton Quarry site restoration as they become available.

The Fremont Planning Commission received an update on the status of the Patterson Ranch project as required by the Development Agreement this December. Bioremediation of on-site toxaphene is being “mitigated” by treating the soils with Terra Bella and testing is tentatively set to occur in January or February 2012. Concerns remain that testing for the presence of toxaphene breakdown products will not occur. These can persist and some have been reported to be as toxic as the original toxaphene. We will post an alert if the Department of Toxic Substances holds a public comment period for Patterson Ranch. Geotechnical testing of the soils is also ongoing. There

are hopes that some of the lands west of Patterson Slough will be transferred in 2012. We have been informed the transfer of lands to EBRPD will likely occur over a period of years for tax purposes. The fate of the lands between Ardenwood Blvd. and Patterson Slough remain unclear. Ten acres have been proposed for construction of churches and associated parking lots, and approximately 8 acres will be transferred to the City of Fremont - we hope the remaining lands will be donated to EBRPD.

Alameda Creek Alliance has just announced Caltrans signed a settlement agreement that will terminate the approval, permits and contracts for Phase One of its road widening project in scenic Niles Canyon. To date approximately 100 mostly native trees have been cut down. Still lurking is Caltrans’ environmentally devastating plan to chop down almost 500 more in Phase Two All this tree cutting, road widening and curve straightening is purportedly in the name of increasing safety...other methods exist that may be more effective and aren’t environmentally destructive. Go back to the drawing board Caltrans.

Carin High
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BaylandsConservation Committee

After years of trying to see Byxbee Park through to completion, we had a huge setback when less than half of eligible voters voted and agreed to undedicate 10 acres of Byxbee Park by about 9000 to 4500. Over \$12,000 of developer money funded their war chest of about \$30,000. They hired a lobbyist from Oakland to run their campaign and managed to inject partisan politics into this totally non-partisan issue.

Now the park and the landfill need to be redesigned to accommodate the excavation of about 7-8 acres of old garbage at a cost of \$5-10 million. Measure E forces are also asking that digested sewage sludge be added into the windrow composting on this recently expunged parkland, so it will be a lovely odour that wafts over our long awaited pastoral open space park.

Measure E supporters are already beating the drums to keep the landfill operations going longer, including the windrow composting, which has nothing at all to do with dry anaerobic digestion and so-called Green Energy - a cornerstone of their campaign. Staff is now extending the existing composting operation indefinitely while they gather information on how to proceed from here. This also means that next year’s completion of the park will also be delayed.

It’s a bad day at Black Rock.

Emily M. Renzel, Coordinator
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Friends of Redwood City

Redwood City continues to wait for the revised Saltworks project description promised by Cargill/DMB. It is unknown to what extent the plan will be modified, but important details about the project should finally be provided. After the new project description is submitted, the City will issue a second Notice of Preparation and there will be another opportunity for the public to provide scoping comments on this development plan for the Cargill salt ponds.

Meanwhile, opposition to the Saltworks Project is growing. Two key water districts, Alameda and Santa Clara, have now publicly stated that they will not participate in the complex water transfer needed to bring DMB’s Kern County agricultural water to the Saltworks site in Redwood City.

On the local front, Redwood City residents have formed a new grassroots opposition group called Redwood City Neighbors



United, Responsible Growth - Not Saltworks (RCNU). While a number of organizations are focusing on the important Bay and wetland issues, RCNU will give voice to the serious concerns residents have about the project’s potential impacts to the city and their quality of life. Traffic gridlock, uncertain water supplies, economic harm to local businesses, and increased costs to maintain the necessary infrastructure are all key issues. Check out their website for more information: rcnu.org

And finally, it gives FORC great pleasure to watch the truckloads of soil being delivered to inner Bair Island for the ongoing restoration project. Each delivery brings us that much closer to the day when we can have a Redwood City levee breach celebration - hopefully, next year!

Gail Raabe and Matt Leddy
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The pictures provided by Matt Leddy here and on the front page provide irrefutable confirmation of the ecological value of the Redwood City salt ponds. Contrary to the proclamation of the sign, waterbirds in the thousands use these ponds for roosting and feeding from late fall to early spring. Resident shorebird species also utilize the site during the summer months to roost, forage, and nest. The site in its current condition provides habitat values analogous to mudflats. That in itself is significant.

However, what is unique about this site is its ecological potential as sea level rises. Few areas along the central and south bay will provide such an economically feasible and practicable opportunity to sustain high marsh.

The close proximity of the Port of Redwood City and the need to maintain a navigation channel provide th perfect opportunity to utilize dredge material to build up the marsh plain as sea level rises - especially important if natural processes of sedimentation cannot keep up with rising bay levels. This is of environmental significance to endangered species like the California clapper rail and salt marsh harvest mouse. A core population of California clapper rail exists just across Westpoint Slough at Greco Island, one of the area’s few remaining historic tidal marshes (naturally occurring) that is now inundated during high tides.

In addition to the significant ecological reasons for protecting this site from development as proposed by Cargill/DMB, are the significant adverse impacts to the quality of life for residents of the region including traffic congestion, impacts to local businesses, water supply and treatment issues, and aesthetic impacts -- to name just a few.

*Photos of shorebirds and Pond 10 taken January 2010
Courtesy of Matt Leddy*

Edie Wilkie



It is with deepest sadness, we tell you of the death of Edie Wilkie earlier this year. She was the wife of Congressman Don Edwards for thirty years, and devoted much of her life as an advocate for peace and human rights. She served as executive director of the bipartisan congressional Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus for seventeen years. She supported our work with warmth and enthusiasm. She loved the marshes and wildlife of the lands named in honor of her husband. She was a remarkable woman. We miss her and send our love to Mr. Edwards.

Fly Your Watershed



Enjoy a Birdseye View of Your Watershed!
If you love maps, creeks, and have a computer that can run Google Earth, there is a new website for you. In our increasingly urbanized environment, it’s difficult to visualize where our creeks used to flow or how freshwater flows now make their way to the bay. Soon there will be a way to take a virtual flight over your neighborhood enabling you to see the network of streams, flood channels, and even the underground pipes that now have replaced our historic creeks. WOW!


With a click of the mouse, you are able to transport yourself back to the 1850s to see what the landscape with its extensive tidal marshes, ponds, and creeks looked like. Along with the basic stream and drainage network, the map will provide information regarding public access points, history, special status species, stream stewardship projects, and pollutants.

“WOW!” stands for “Watching Our Watersheds,” a name coined by local CCCR member Trish Mulvey, expressing her reaction upon seeing the Google Earth map developed for Western Alameda County.

This mapping project is being built by the Fugro-WLA cartographers who created the popular Creek & Watershed Maps series published by the Oakland Museum of California.

As Save Wetlands readers know, understanding and visualizing local watersheds is a necessary step toward changing attitudes and behaviors and promoting better public stewardship of our creeks and baylands.

To see the Western Alameda County map, go to www.museumca.org/creeks, click on downloads and then click on Western Alameda County under Google Earth Version. The Santa Clara Valley maps will soon be available free to any interested party to download on this and other sites early in 2012.

We appreciate your  Help

Thank you for your past and continued support. All donations go directly towards our efforts to protect the biodiversity of habitats, plants, and wildlife of the San Francisco Bay area. With your generous support we have been able to hire CEQA and NEPA consultants, talented specialists such as hydrologists, botanists, and lawyers, and continue our educational outreach. One form of educational outreach includes co-sponsoring the Habitat Means Home Poster Contest, a contest for K-6 public school students in Fremont, Newark, and New Haven School Districts.

We know economic times continue to be tough, but threats to the remaining undeveloped low-lying lands along the edges of the Bay continue unabated. Any amount you donate is deeply appreciated.

Whistling Wings and Pintail Duck Clubs



Panoramic view of the duck clubs. Mowry Slough is the dark meander on the left.

As we have previously reported, CCCR filed a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lawsuit last year to correct the flawed environmental review of the approved specific plan for the lands that once supported the Whistling Wings and Pintail Duck Clubs. For the first time in our history, we appealed to our members and friends for support and your response was overwhelming. Our efforts on the legal front continue. Recently, CCCR agreed to enter into mediation. We will provide additional information as soon as we are able.

Our interest in protecting these lands has persisted for several decades and volumes have been written describing from an ecological perspective why these lands are deserving of such devotion. However, nothing can surpass the moving description provided in 1990 by CCCR member and former Whistling Wings Duck Club hunter, Wally Peters:

“It is easy to recall our one room hunting shack at Whistling Wings Duck Club, surrounded by a carpet of pickleweed, saw grass and other marsh grasses. At certain times of the year the patches of orange dodder were brilliant. The surrounding area was primarily farm land. We were located on Mowry Slough and

had a great view of Mission Peak.

The South Bay I saw was home to thousands of migratory waterfowl as well as countless other migratory shorebirds. Of course, the marshes were the permanent home of mice, owls, hawks, muskrats, reptiles, marsh wrens, etc. I remember fall days when pintail ducks would drop into our fresh water ponds by the hundreds. And, of course, the teal, spoonies, widgeon, gadwall, and an occasional canvasback were all present as well.

In the spring, the teal would nest in the grasses and the mallards on the higher ground. We did not take our retriever dogs to the marsh at this time of year as they would disturb the nests. There was a small family of deer on the slough. We had several badgers, and of course, raccoons. When I see the deer that live at Coyote Hills Park today, I catch myself hoping that they may include the offspring of our local “duck club deer herd.”

It is difficult for me to comprehend that the things I was privileged to see and live among were only a shadow of the days, just 250 years ago, of waterfowl-blackened marshes and overwhelming natural resources - days when man was sure there would be enough to last till the end of time.”

Save Our South Bay Wetlands

Little that happens on the Alviso shoreline does not require citizen vigilance, on the spot or as watchful caveats for years to come. All hands are needed!

Early in 2011, San Jose completed its Water Pollution Control Plant Master Plan and launched the CEQA process for a programmatic EIR that will be the umbrella for some 200 projects over the coming 30 years. That includes proposals of substantial, inappropriate development and a new bridge over Coyote Creek. The draft EIR is expected in 2012.

In the meantime, the Plant pushed forward a CEQA-inadequate mitigated negative declaration for the old Nine Par Landfill adjoining Artesian Slough. It did so without officially or technically closing the landfill. The result is that the facility proposed by Zero Waste Energy (Green Waste/Zanker) is delayed while Regional Water Board landfill-requirements are met.

The expansion of the Newby Island landfill, proposed in a 2009

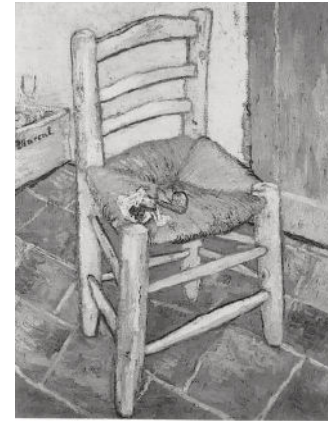
draft EIR, is nearing final EIR publication and City Council rubber-stamp approval, without recirculation of its badly-flawed original document. As this is written, the City is looking at a December/January release.

Nearby, downstream of the 2010 Alviso Marina Park boat ramp, monitoring of boaters’ actions still does not meet the wildlife-protection terms of the ramp’s federal permits.

Fortunately the Refuge gets better and better. The Environmental Education Center’s entry road is now enhanced with rich, native-vegetated landscapes. For this change we must give great thanks to years of back-bending labor by a Tuesday crew of committed volunteers led by Charlie Moore.

Eileen McLaughlin
CCCR Shoreline Watch for San Jose
408-257-7599

The Uneasy Chair



Cheers to The Bay Institute for the honor it bestowed on us this year! On a beautiful clear night at the Maritime Museum in San Francisco, overlooking the luminous Bay, the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge was presented the first ever Heroes of the Bay award. It was a splendid event, with educator-editor David Loeb of Bay Nature, and Journalist Carolyn Jones of the Chronicle sharing the honors.

Keynote speaker Congresswoman Jackie Speier set the stage for a legislative program recognizing climate change, and vowing that we WILL NOT have offshore drilling on the California Coast.

John Frawley, CEO presented us with an engraved award, featuring a lovely photograph of a California clapper rail peering guardedly over some marsh vegetation.

My little acceptance speech was warmly received. Our own emphasis was, not surprisingly, on the fact that the Refuge is not complete, and that those lands so painstakingly mapped in 1990 are still to be acquired--our unwavering goal.

In November, the Santa Clara County Creeks Alliance held its annual Creeks Conference in Mountain View, on appropriately, a rainy day, for the creeks ran that day. They presented us with a charming wooden plaque beautifully engraved. This was a

Editor's notes: Due to limitations of space, acknowledgements were not provided next to the delightful art work of Sam High. “Thank you!” Sam.

Any photos without captions were provided by Carin, Sam or Kate High.

I’d like to extend a huge “Thank you!!” to my proof-readers and volunteer editors - Howard and Sam High, Florence and Philip LaRiviere, and Gail Raabe. ~ Carin High,

wonderful event, bringing home to us again the important connection between the creeks that feed the Bay and the wetlands they debouch into.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has failed to finalize a template for Annual Funding Agreements. The first such agreement was one signed by the Service and the Consolidated Salish Kootenai Tribes to allow devided staffing of Montana’s National Bison Range. After successful lawsuits were brought by PEER (Professional Employees for Environmental Protection) and the Blue Goose Alliance, a federal judge negated the agreement. Apparently the Service is considering similar agreements with numerous other refuges and other federal lands, but as yet they have not done so.

A Year of thank yous-- As always, we salute Congressman Don Edwards, still our hero and guardian angel for all Bay wildlife. We also salute each person on our Board of Directors, for they understand and fight for every single acre of Bay shoreline. Just as devoted is a stalwart group of people who attend our monthly meetings, plus the myriad other meetings that Bay advocacy demands--Evelyn Cormier, Matt Leddy and Gail Raabe, Libby Lucas, Eileen McLaughlin, Linda and Virgil Patterson, Jana Sokale, and Marc Holmes.

Thank you to Senator Ellen Corbett for her continued support of the Habitat Means Home Poster Contest, for displaying the winning posters in her district office, and for holding an ice cream social for the families of the poster contest winners.

There is a special group that helps me each month to ensure that the mailings go out and the agenda is planned--Gwen and David Jeong, Jean and Franklin Olmsted, Jane Stone and Wayne Miller. No group can compare with them. Thank you!

My deepest gratitude to all of you who generously support this all-volunteer organization. We could not function without you!

Florence LaRiviere
florence@refuge.org



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<input type="checkbox"/> \$10 <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____	
You may use my name as a donor to CCCR <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
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Thank you for your support -- you make it all possible!!	

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Save Wetlands!

Newsletter Issue 41
Fall 2011



Save Wetlands is the annual Newsletter of the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, an all-volunteer nonprofit public benefit corporation.

The mission of the Committee is to save the Bay's remaining wetlands by working to place them under the protection of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and to foster worldwide education regarding the value of all wetlands.

Support is welcome from anyone interested in saving wetlands, and a tax-deductible contribution of \$10 per issue would be appreciated.

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