SAVE WETLANDS

Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge

5 Issue 54 Advocates for the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Fall 2025

Elegant Terns taking flight *at the Elsie Roemer Bird Sanctuary in Alameda. Photo courtesy of Rick Lewis*

During 2025, despite the deep frustration and challenges we have all experienced, CCCR and our partners continue to advocate for the protection and restoration of the habitats of the Bay. We know that they help provide climate resilience for our communities, as well as ecological, economic and societal benefits for the Bay Area and beyond.

So, while in this issue of *Save Wetlands* we report on lands we are fighting to protect and the impacts to our Refuge complex, we are also sharing stories of success, of a better vision for our shorelines, and new tools that are available to those interested in climate resilience for the Bay and for our communities.

Each of us can make a difference by speaking up to protect the habitats that exist within our communities. We encourage you to be a champion for those places you love. Hopefully, you will have the opportunity to get out and experience moments like the one captured in this photo, and realize that your efforts are really important and matter to the plants and critters who have no voice.

Inside

What CCCR Did in 2025

CCCR advocates devoted 4000+ volunteer-hours defending potential and current Refuge lands, special-status species, wetlands, watersheds and more, at meetings and workshops, in project plan analysis, in document and field research, and with written comments, and at times working with expert contractors and nonprofit partners.

SOUTH BAY WEST

- Brisbane Baylands Specific Plan: Joint comment letter with environmental group partners on the project DEIR for a 680-acre development site west of Highway 101 that includes a large tidal lagoon, creek and former landfill
- OneShoreline (San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District): Monitored Board meetings for updates on the Millbrae and Burlingame Shoreline Resilience Project alternatives analysis currently underway; provided input on public outreach plan for the Redwood Shores Sea Level Rise Protection Project which will raise the perimeter levee to meet FEMA standards, address sea level rise, and incorporate nature-based solutions where feasible.
- Redwood LIFE Precise Plan Project (Redwood Shores adjacent to Belmont Slough): Attended community meetings on issues and alternatives, and commented at Redwood City Planning Commission/City Council study sessions and hearings; comment letter on the NOP for the project DEIR included concerns about harm to nearby wetlands and a consultant memo on potential impacts to the integrity of the former landfill on the site
- Cargill-owned ponds, Redwood City: Continued bird observations to document habitat value of ponds
- Monitoring/reporting to Caltrans and Redwood City to prevent debris from entering adjacent tidal waterways that flow to the Refuge
- Menlo Park, West Bay Sanitary District FERRF Project: Monitor
- Menlo Park wetlands (Ravenswood Triangle; Adams/University): Continue monitoring
- SAFER Shoreline levee project in Menlo Park and East Palo Alto: Submitted a response to the NOP for the Draft EIR. Reviewed the Project's early release of the DEIR's Project Description
- East Palo Alto Ravenswood Business District Specific Plan Update: Monitored development proposals introduced under the approved updated Specific Plan.
- Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District: Advisory and monitoring roles of management and planning actions in the Ravenswood Open Space Preserve and the Stevens Creek Shoreline Nature Study Area
- Palo Alto Airport: Continued to monitor airport planning activity.
- Palo Alto Flood Basin Tidegates: Tidegates that were required to address an unauthorized activity not operated as required by USACE special conditions. Monitored project. Valley Water modified its project for Flood Basin Gate operations and maintenance without repairs to Palo Alto's mitigation tidal gates that are meant to maintain salt water flow into marshes.
- Palo Alto Regional Water Facility horizontal levee project: Construction began
- Palo Alto Baylands Comprehensive Conservation Plan: Monitor
- Palo Alto Golf Course: Monitoring status of compliance with regulatory wetlands restoration requirements
- South Bay Shoreline Levee Project: Monitoring; Phase III (Moffett Field/Sunnyvale) USACE Feasibility Study continues

FAR SOUTH BAY

- Alviso: Neighborhood Community Group member
- Alviso Lands Shoreline Levee: Levee construction of Reaches 1-3 (Alviso Marina Park to the Refuge Environmental Education Center) were completed. Monitoring planning process for remaining actions of Reaches 1-3 and start of actions on Reaches 4-5 including restoration of A18.
- Alviso: Monitoring multiple development proposals for housing and data centers at multiple locations including buffer lands of the Regional Wastewater Facility and in the Alviso community.
- City of San Jose Bay Trail Plan: Monitoring and assessing options to protect Salt Pond Restoration actions on Pond A8 from the impacts of short-term build out of the Bay Trail adjoining the top edge of horizontal levee marsh infrastructure that is still in early construction.
- San Jose/Santa Clara Regional Wastewater Facility: Monitor the status of portions of the Plant buffer lands that adjoin Pond A18, Coyote Creek and remnant Artesian Slough wetlands that are suitable for sea level rise adaptation as tidal migration lands.
- Santa Clara County Office of Sustainability Working Group for Climate Resilience, Subcommittee for Sea Level Rise and Flooding: Meetings, comments
- Santa Clara Valley Conservation Council: Member

- Valley Water Proposed Desalination Project: Established informative relationship with Valley Water's Desalination project team and are following the development of the Technical Feasibility Studies
- Valley Water Calabazas and San Tomas Aquino Creeks and Pond A8 Creek Connection and associated Feasibility Study of Pond A4: Continue to monitor project progress
- Valley Water Environmentally-Focused Stakeholder Group: Member
- Valley Water One-Water Guadalupe Watershed Planning Stakeholder: Member
- Valley Water – Water Reuse County-wide planning: Stakeholder

SOUTH BAY EAST

- Mowry Village: Continue to monitor the environmental review process, worked with partners and the community, attended meetings, review of FEIR, comment letters
- Newark Area 4: Continue to monitor, social media posts to further Save Newark Wetlands campaign
- Newark Climate Adaptation Plan: Attended public meeting, submitted written comments on Draft Climate Action Plan update
- Newark Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan: Attended public meeting
- Fremont Amendments to Land Use & Open Space and Conservation Elements: Submitted comments regarding climate resilience, rewilding, and habitat connectivity pursuant to SB 1425 and AB 1889
- Fremont Active Transportation Plan: Submitted comment letter/met with Fremont and MTC/ABAG
- Power the South Bay: Submitted comments on the DEIR for the new transmission line from Newark substation to Santa Clara substation
- Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority: Participated in stakeholder meeting regarding Newark to San Jose Sea Level Rise Adaptation Study for rail climate resilience planning
- Dublin/Fallon 580 Development Project: Submitted comments to the USACE
- Suisun City: Submitted written comments or Highway 12 Logistics Center USACE Public Notice
- Carnegie State Vehicular Recreation Area: Submitted joint written comments with Ohlone Audubon Society for General Plan DEIR
- Tesla Park, Alameda County: Supporting efforts to permanently protect this area through classification of these lands as a State Reserve due to many listed and special-status species and habitats and sensitive cultural resources

REGIONAL

- BCDC Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan (RSAP): Served on the Advisory Committee; monitoring
- BCDC: Met with staff about proposal to administratively permit restoration projects of up to 1,000 acres
- BCDC Updated Environmental Assessment for Operations & Maintenance Permit for solar salt ponds/ review by the BCDC Engineering Criteria Review Board: CCCR submitted comment letter
- CPUC Proceedings: Continued to monitor for new commercial ferry operator applications for expansion of service in sensitive areas
- Friends of the Estuary: Served as Board Member
- Living Shorelines Collaborative: Attended meetings
- Plan Bay Area 2050+: Monitor, attended stakeholder meeting; submitted NOP comment letter, reviewed DEIR and submitted comment letter
- San Francisco Bay Joint Venture: Implementation Committee Member
- Sierra Club, Bay Alive: Contributed as topic advisors and program presenters
- South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project Stakeholder Forum: Member, updates
- State of the Estuary: Sponsor
- USACE Nationwide Permit Regional Conditions: Reviewed and submitted comments to the San Francisco District Regulatory Division

STATE

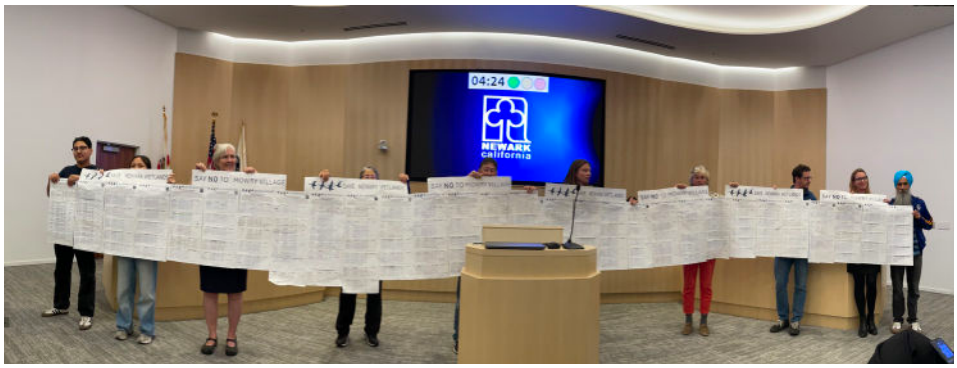
- Senate Bill 71 California Environmental Quality Act exemptions related to transit projects: Sent letters of opposition to author/committees unless the bill was amended to exclude construction/operation of new ferry terminals; unamended bill was signed into law
- Senate Bill 79 Transit-Oriented Housing Development: Sent letters of opposition to author/committees unless the bill was amended to exclude state-mandated housing in areas vulnerable to sea level rise; bill was amended and signed into law
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): Signed onto comment letter urging state legislators to protect and preserve the Act

FEDERAL

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: Submitted comments to the Corps regarding proposal to Reissue and Modify Nationwide Permits
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District: Commented regarding lack of figures provided with Public Notices; District again began providing figures
- Public Lands Alliance Field Trip to Ravenswood Ponds and Bair Island: Tour leader and speaker

Say NO to Mowry Village

On October 23, 2025, CCCR and some of our partners – Save the Bay, Greenbelt Alliance, and the Tri-City Ecology Center – delivered to the Newark City Council 2,755 signatures on the "Say NO to Mowry Village" petition. 777 of the signatures were from Newark residents. The banner of signatures was thirty feet long and five petition sheets deep!



Some of the 2,755 petitioners asking the Newark City Council to reject the proposed Mowry Village Project. *Photo by Sam High.*

For five years CCCR has been reporting on the proposed Mowry Village Project located west of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks near the terminus of Mowry Avenue. The proposed development would include 196 single family units and a 31-unit apartment complex consisting of 30 affordable housing units and one manager unit. The final decision on whether to deny or approve this project may be made December 11, 2025.

Since CCCR first met with developer Integral Communities in March 2020, our message has been consistent: **"This is not an appropriate place to locate housing or any other type of development."**

The reasons should be obvious from the photos on these pages. The Mowry Village project is located within Subarea D of the Areas 3 & 4 Specific Plan, bounded by the Union Pacific Railroad tracks to the east, Mowry Avenue and Line B flood control channel to the north, Mowry Slough to the west, and Line D flood control channel to the south. In other words, this relatively low-lying land is surrounded by water and wetlands. Mowry Slough, a tidal channel, flows into the Bay.

The proposed Newark development *would develop bayland with water on three sides.*

Not the right place for development

With 10-12" of sea level rise and a 100-year storm, a large portion of Subarea D is projected to flood. And with just 10-12" of sea level rise, groundwater could be emergent over an even larger portion of the site. Sea and groundwater levels are projected to rise higher than these modest projections!

The developer proposes to raise the development site with imported dirt by as much as 9' depending on the existing ground elevation. A retaining wall would be built around the perimeter of the development to hold the fill in place.

There are several important reasons this development makes no sense:

- As shown in the photo on the opposing page, the lands surrounding the site are already wet and will only get wetter as sea levels and groundwater levels continue to rise and storms get more intense with climate change. This development could become an island at some point in the future, with the burden of protecting these 227 housing units from flooding falling to the entire community and taxpayers.
- A 2023 study released jointly by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Association of Bay Area Governments , and San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, *"Sea Level Rise Adaptation Funding and Investment Framework Final Report"* has estimated the cost of protecting existing development and infrastructure at approximately $110 billion, with a $95-105 billion shortfall. Given the costs and shortfall of protecting existing development, it does not make sense to be placing new development in harm's way.
- Mowry Avenue is the only public road to the proposed development. The road crosses the Union Pacific Railroad tracks at-grade, where existing passenger rail and freight trains run. The Capitol Corridor Joint Planning Authority (CCJPA) is planning to increase the frequency of passenger rail as part of the South Bay Connect project. Response

Proposed Mowry Village Project location *looking northwest towards the Newark Cargill salt ponds and San Francisco Bay. Existing wetlands surround much of the site. Photo courtesy of Derell Licht.*

times for emergency personnel may be lengthened when trains are crossing the tracks.

- Development of the elevated building pad will contribute to coastal squeeze by constructing a barrier – the fill surrounded by the retaining wall. The project will eliminate the potential to preserve, remediate and restore 29 acres of zoned park and open space land where tidal wetlands could migrate as sea levels continue to rise.

A different vision and path forward

This site, and the rest of Area 4, represents a tremendous opportunity for Newark and the region to fight the impacts of climate change if it is instead restored to tidal wetlands.

The City of Newark Conditional Use Permit (CUP) that grants Pick-n-Pull the right to conduct its auto wrecking business expires in 2034. The Newark CUP and Alameda County Department of Environmental Health, require that all of the autos, dismantled parts, and unpermitted buildings be removed before the business closes, and that a clean-up closure plan be developed and reviewed and approved by all appropriate agencies, and site clean-up be implemented in accordance with the approved clean-up plan.

The site, once cleaned and remediated, could be restored to tidal wetlands as part of Newark's or Alameda County's strategy for adapting to rising sea levels. As required by Senate Bill 272, these shoreline adaptation plans will be due no later than 2034, and those plans that are submitted earlier will be prioritized for climate resilience funding that has been made available through Prop 4 funds, and other programs.

Tidal wetlands are globally recognized as some of the most important habitats acre-for-acre because of their climate resilience, ecological, economic, and societal benefits.

Tidal wetlands sequester carbon at rates as much as 10 times higher than forested lands. They act as buffers against storm surges and protect communities from flood inundation. In addition, tidal wetlands provide a myriad of other benefits including improving water quality, supporting biodiversity, serving as nurseries for fish, birds and other organisms (e.g. crabs, shellfish), providing food and habitat for resident and migratory species, offering opportunities for recreation, and so much more.

With the growing recognition of the important role tidal wetlands play as natural infrastructure that helps combat the impacts of climate change while providing resilience for our communities and the Bay, development of this site just does not make sense. The proposed Mowry Village Project does not serve the greater good of the public.

The City's final decision will come after this newsletter has gone to print, but we will provide new information on our website, and in our bi-monthly *CCCR Update*.

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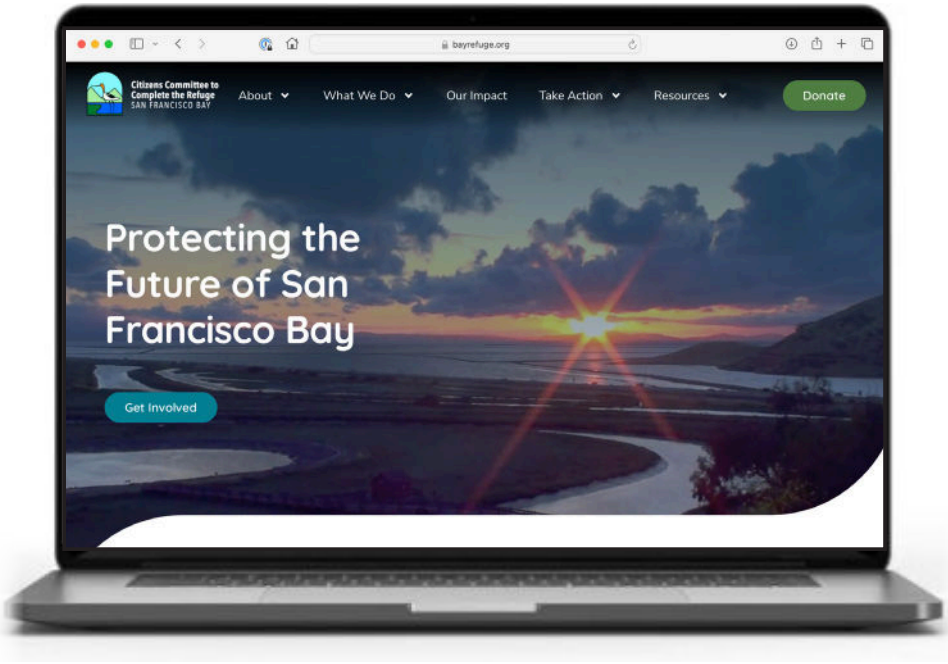
CCCR Has a New Website – Same Address, New Look!

www.BayRefuge.org



CCCR's website has a new look!
We've been quietly working over the past year to completely overhaul and modernize our website, and couldn't be more excited to share it with everyone!

The website address is still the same – **www.BayRefuge.org** - but we've updated the organization, content and imagery to make it more accessible.

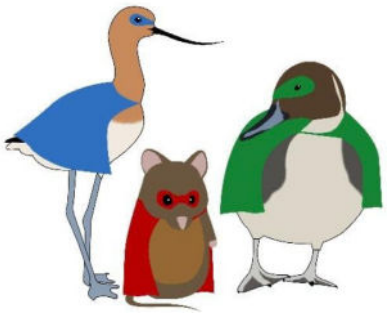
We've added a timeline of our history and information on current threats to the Bay and Refuge that we are focused on, and updated information that may be of value for fellow advocates.

If you haven't done so already, please take a look — you can learn more about our work, sign up for our annual *Save Wetlands* newsletter or our email updates, volunteer, or make a donation. Let us know what you think!

Be an Environmental Superhero – Volunteer!

For over 50 years, the work of CCCR has been driven exclusively by volunteer leaders, who are passionate about protecting the Bay, its wetlands and wildlife, and in completing the vision of the Refuge. Are you ready to contribute your talents and energy to support the Bay's wetlands and wildlife?

Volunteer



Make a Donation to CCCR

Give wildlife a voice! Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge relies on donations from individuals like you who are interested in protecting wetlands and wildlife in the San Francisco Bay Area to support our education and advocacy work.

Support CCCR

Volunteer with CCCR!

Interested in dedicating your time to protecting the Bay, it's wetlands and wildlife? We could use your help! As an all-volunteer organization, CCCR has always been powered by dedicated activists from around the Bay.

Learn More

Protecting Undeveloped Baylands from Development

Prioritizing the Bay in Sea Level Rise Resilience Planning

Fragmentation of Wildlife Habitat & Urbanization

Information for Advocates

Baylands Conservation Committee

Measure E Site Still in Limbo

In 2011, Palo Alto voted to undedicate 10 acres of Byxbee Park for an anaerobic digester. If 10 years passed without building it, the parkland could be rededicated. Now, fourteen years later, four years beyond the 10-year time limit, the Council still has NOT taken action to rededicate this vital habitat corridor.

Byxbee Park Horizontal Levee Project, Palo Alto

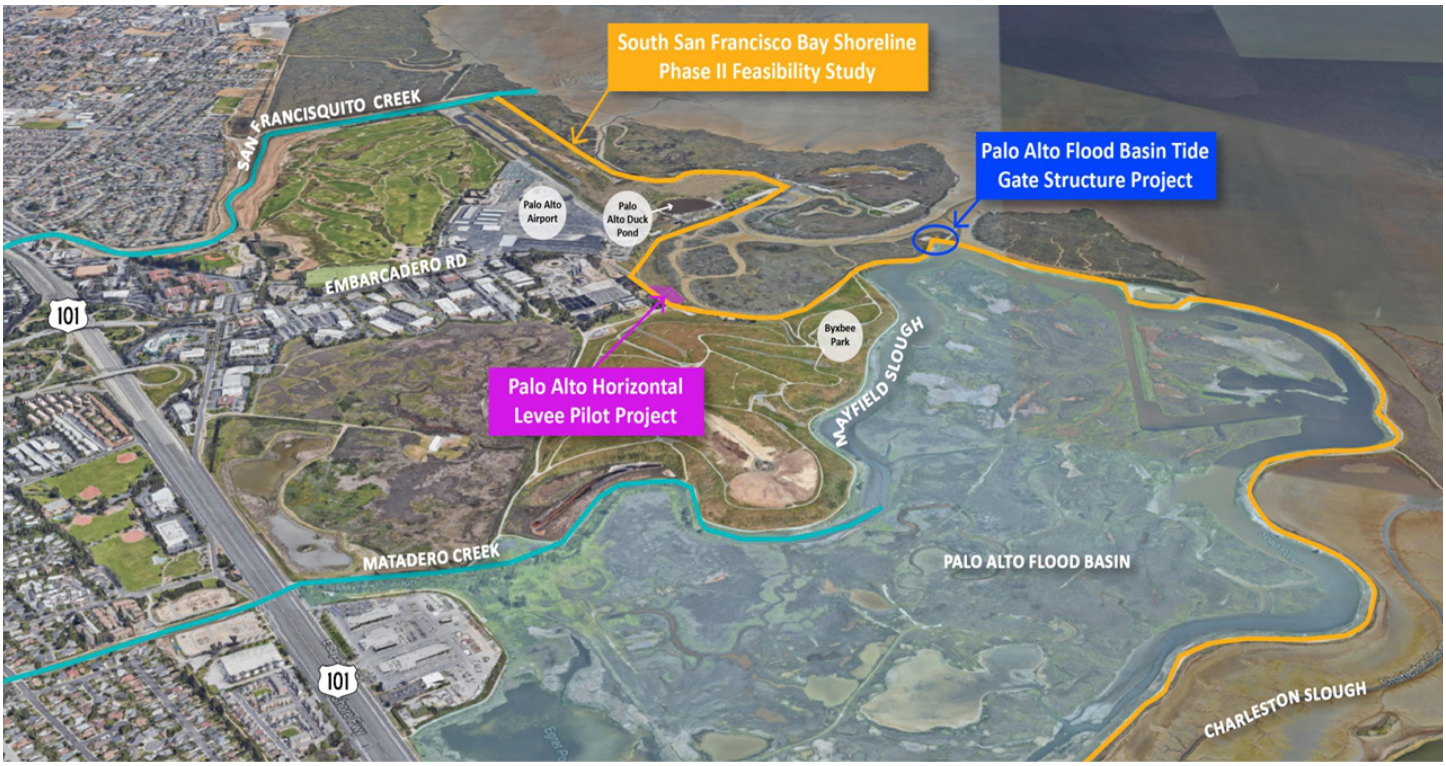
Construction is underway on a Horizontal Levee Project in Byxbee Park in Palo Alto. This will involve filling some Harbor Marsh wetlands that are next to the road to Byxbee Hills. The purpose is to address sea level rise and resiliency for the Palo Alto Regional Water Quality Control Plant. Once the earthmoving is done, over 3,000 native plants will be planted to create upland habitat.

Palo Alto Flood Basin Tide Gate Repair

In the 1970's, Palo Alto unlawfully dumped trash on acres of wetlands. The City was required to mitigate the loss by providing damped tidal fluctuation in the 600-acre Flood Basin to create some new salt marsh. One of the 16 tide gates was modified to allow limited tidal action and, after some adjustments, the mitigation resulted in increased salt marsh. The automated tide gate failed a few years ago, and staff has been manually operating it, creating a situation fraught with potential wildlife impacts. Valley Water's plans to rebuild the tide gates have been delayed, but Palo Alto is still working on the mitigation gate which is their responsibility. Stay tuned for more information.

San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority, SAFER Bay Project

This project proposes to protect the shorelines of East Palo Alto and Menlo Park as the seas rise, in an area that includes **substantial acreage of the Refuge**. Actions will include protection and enhancement of Western Snowy Plover habitat, creation of ecotone slopes in the Ravenswood ponds and protection of the Faber and Laumeister marshes.



The location of the tide gate replacement project and other projects *mentioned in this article are shown in this figure from Valley Water presentation on the Palo Alto Flood Basin Tide Gate Structure Replacement Project.*

CCCR has been monitoring the planning process during its years of development, attending meetings, and submitting a response letter to the Project Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report. At this time, Project staff anticipate releasing the Draft Environmental Impact Report on December 1, 2025 for public review and comment. CCCR will be submitting a comment letter.

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Save Wetlands in Mayhews

The City of Newark is working on two climate-related planning projects right now. Newark initiated an update to its *2010 Climate Action Plan* (CAP), and the development of a *Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment* in 2024. In September 2025, the City released the proposed updates to the CAP, in its draft *Climate Action Newark* (Draft CAN).

While CCCR and others expressed our concerns with elements of the Draft CAN in comments to the City, there is one element in particular that we supported – the inclusion of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) in the overall strategy to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GGEs).

Of particular interest to CCCR was the inclusion of strategy NBS-3: *Protect, restore, and enhance natural areas, wetlands, and ecosystems*. Sounds good, right? Tidal wetlands are extremely good at removing carbon from the atmosphere and locking it up in the plants and soils. Some reports state that tidal wetlands are up to 10 times more efficient at sequestering carbon than forests.

However, wetlands seem to be a source of angst for the City of Newark, because while the strategy sounds laudable, the metrics against which successful implementation of the updated CAN would be measured don't include "protection" of wetlands, and there was no acreage provided for "protected" or "restored" wetlands. So even though Newark has some idea of where wetlands exist, as documented in a figure provided in the plan, and some idea of the acreage of existing habitats, as reported in the General Plan, there is no acreage target provided in the Draft CAN for wetlands protection or restoration.

Moving from wetlands to pollinators, the Draft CAN also includes strategy NBS-1 – *Maintain and expand the city's urban tree canopy*. As part of the actions included under NBS-1, Newark proposes to create habitat corridors throughout the city. These corridors would be found on public property, private property or rights of way. Signs would be included to educate the public about pollinators and native plants. However, there are no details on how this plan will actually be implemented or coordinated within the City. In years past, small vacant lots with California poppies were mowed when the poppies were in full bloom.

The second planning project is Newark's *Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment,* which includes a *Flood Modeling Report* and a *Vulnerability and Risk Assessment Report*. The drafts of these reports were issued in January and April 2025. Newark will need to submit a Subregional Shoreline Adaptation Plan (SSAP), for sea level rise adaptation, to the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) by 2034, and these reports will provide much of the information required in the development of Newark's SSAP.

For now, the City's reports and planning efforts seem to be in conflict with what is happening on the ground. On the one hand, Newark welcomes wetlands as a buffer against the effects of flooding and praises the ability of wetlands to store and release water. Newark is also assessing the community's vulnerability to groundwater rise. Some areas of the city already have a high water table, making any increase in the level of groundwater as sea level rises problematic.

On the other hand, the City is considering projects like the Mowry Village that would add more housing in areas that would be impacted by not only sea level rise but also the effects of rise in groundwater.

If none of these plans excites you, you might be interested in two adoption scenarios listed in the *Climate Action Plan*. You can sign up to adopt a storm drain. Your job would be to keep it free of debris and prepare reports to the City if problems occur. If a storm drain is not to your liking, you can adopt a tree, several trees or a large group of trees and provide the care and nurturing to keep your tree or trees healthy and happy. Your tree or trees will thank you.

Stay tuned to Newark's website (www.newarkca.gov/departments/green-newark) for more details and timelines for *Climate Action Newark* and the *Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment*.

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Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Reserve

FAWR's advocacy and educational efforts continue in the Island City of Alameda on San Francisco Bay's shores. Our group has been invigorated in 2025 with additional volunteers lending their energy to our efforts.

Least Terns in the Reserve *with a successful catch. Photo by Rick Lewis.*

We were very active in monitoring activities and proposed projects that would affect the Alameda Wildlife Reserve-VA (AWR-VA) and other bird habitats in Alameda. Two projects in 2025 included participation in the Oakland-Alameda Adaptation Committee (OAAC) – Sea Level Rise Shoreline Adaptation Plan. The second project we're concerned about is a proposed surf park at Alameda Point, Neptune Beach Surf Club.

We continued to support Tern Watch at the Least Tern nesting site on the Reserve, with members of our group volunteering with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff. The terns had another banner year with high success rates fledging young thanks to the vigilance of the Wildlife Services staff along with volunteers.

FAWR also continued surveying nesting sea birds – cormorants, herons, egrets, and osprey – utilizing the data collection standards used by San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO). There was an incident with an osprey nest near the USS Hornet at Alameda Point which required intervention with a crane company and Golden Gate Bird Alliance. Sadly, the osprey nest failed at that site, though there were several other sites that succeeded around the city.

Two dedicated volunteers continued to do twice-monthly surveys at AWR-VA, adding to the body of bird survey data kept since April 2004. This important effort is a long-running record that is vital for documenting the importance of this bird habitat and any changes resulting from climate change or development.

Educational efforts included school programs, articles published in the local online news outlet, and monthly walks at Corica Park on Bay Farm. Elementary school groups encountered water birds at Crab Cove and at Elsie Roemer Bird Sanctuary with FAWR volunteers to assist and encourage them. We successfully fundraised through a local church to be able to purchase a classroom set of binoculars. Students created bird identification reports for further study back at school. Monthly articles were published in the Alameda Post about our bird species and conservation efforts with excellent photos from our members.

FAWR volunteers continued to lead monthly bird walks at Corica Park Golf Course, a site where a bald eagle pair nested

Our popular monthly bird walks *are a great chance to interact with members of the public and educate visitors of all ages. Photo by Rick Lewis.*

in 2023. Unfortunately, the eagles haven't returned to this nest site since then. The walks allow the public to have access to a restricted area and allow us to collect data for the bird species found there. The walks are well attended. Plans for a brochure to identify common birds at the golf course are underway.

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Resources for Those Advocati

2025 has been an exciting year for anyone interested in learning more about the health of the Bay, its habitats, and its species.

These are just a few of the noteworthy reports and resources released this year that advocates for Bay habitats will find useful.

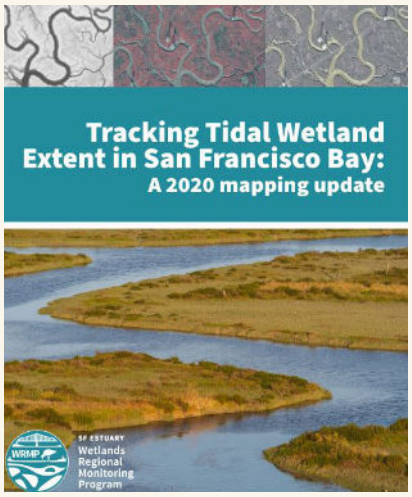
BCDC Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan Atlas

> **rsap-atlas.bcdc.ca.gov**

The SF Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) has released a beta version of its useful Regional Shoreline Adaptaion Plan (RSAP) atlas. Pursuant to Senate Bill 272, all local governments along the shoreline of San Francisco Bay must submit a Subregional or Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan (sea level rise adaptation plans) to BCDC for their approval. This online tool is meant to help local governments and interested members of the public access information essential to the development of these plans. The data and maps can be sorted by jurisdiction, by RSAP elements, and by RSAP topics. The user can create maps, tables, summaries, etc. that can be incorporated into a Regional or Subregional Plan.

Whether you are a planner or member of the public interested in participating in your community's sea level rise adaptation plan, we encourage you to check out this website.

Tracking Tidal Wetland Extent in San Francisco Bay



> **tinyurl.com/TrackingWetlands**

This report and its associated maps provide an important update to the 2009 map of the Bay's habitats. This mapping is essential to our understanding of whether we are on track to achieving the regional goal of protecting and restoring 100,000 acres of tidal wetlands. It also helps to determine how tidal wetlands are responding to climate change and other stressors, as well as the efficacy of restoration efforts.

The Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program (WRMP) provides an informative introduction to the report at tinyurl.com/WRMPintro.

State of Our Estuary 2025 Report

STATE OF OUR ESTUARY

Reporting on the Health of the San Francisco Estuary

> **www.ourestuary.org**

This report is now online! It provides the latest information available on the health of the San Francisco Bay Estuary. It presents information on "Indicators" including fresh water flows and harmful algal blooms, selected wildlife species, habitats, habitat migration space and issues of concern to the human population using the Bay and its resources. Additional data is still being collected and analyzed for some of the "Indicators", but that information will be updated as soon as it becomes available. We encourage everyone who is interested in the Bay to check out this useful resource.

ng for Resilient Bay Habitats

Bay Adapt Currents Dashboard

> **www.bayadapt.org/bay-currents**

The San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission was tasked with the development of guidance for the preparation of the RSAP/SSAP plans, and is responsible for reviewing and approving these plans.

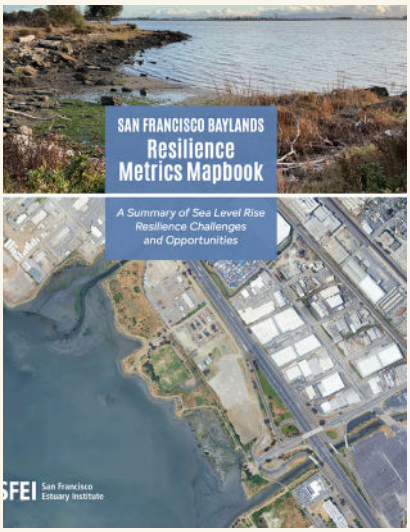
BCDC has developed a series of tools to aid local governments in the preparation of these RSAP/SSAPs, such as the Bay Adapt Currents Dashboard. This particular tool is meant to provide up-to-date information on everything from the latest research on sea level rise in San Francisco Bay to local government responses to sea level rise adaptation planning and implementation, and metrics and monitoring of sea level rise adaptation projects.

San Francisco Bay State of the Birds

> **sfbaystateofthebirds.org**

The update to the San Francisco Bay State of the Birds has just recently been released online. The report provides data on the status of suites of bird species by habitat type. Within each habitat type, the status and trends of indicator species of birds is reported. For each habitat, a list of actions needed to improve habitat health and resilience are also provided, and success stories of habitat restoration are shared.

Resilience Metrics Mapbook



> **tinyurl.com/ResilienceMapbook**

This invaluable publication by the San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI) provides insights into nature-based solutions that can be implemented within each of the Bay's 30 Operational Landscape Units (OLUs). The guidance identifies measures that could provide climate resilience for shoreline habitats and all the ecosystem services they provide as sea levels continue to rise.

The Mapbook is extremely easy to read, includes a helpful glossary of terms and links to other important publications, and includes figures and graphics for each OLU. The corresponding online map is at tinyurl.com/SFEIMap.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY
CITIZENS COMMITTEE TO COMPLETE THE REFUGE

You can find links to all of these reports, information about our partners, and more to help you speak up for the Bay on the Resources section of our website.

> **BayRefuge.org/archives-resources**

Citizens for East Shore Parks

A hazy landscape at Point Molate. *Photo by Jack Scheinman.*

CESP Turns 40 and Chalks up Another Major Park Win

On August 26, 2025, our colleagues at the East Bay Regional Park District closed the deal on purchasing land at Point Molate for a Regional Park, fulfilling a decades-long project of CESP.

Our thanks to the millions who voted for shoreline parks, to the hundreds who devoted years of their lives to make this happen (CESP members and their brilliant allies, including Point Molate Alliance), to our wonderful friends at the East Bay Regional Park District who never gave up on the dream to make this a park, to our local elected officials who honor open space, to our friends at the Coastal Conservancy who helped shepherd this through, to the amazing Senator Nancy Skinner who pushed through a $36 million park allocation to make this happen, to Governor Gavin Newsom for supporting this budget allocation, and to the legal team (Stuart Flashman, Robert Cheasty, Norman La Force) who won the environmental victory that saved Point Molate.

Point Molate is a unique 410-acre bayfront site next to the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, with spectacular views and recreational opportunities. The renowned ecologist Professor Katharyn Boyer, Ph.D., describes its ecological significance:

"Point Molate hosts the healthiest eelgrass in San Francisco Bay, which sustains the Bay ecosystem. Eelgrass provides habitat and spawning grounds for the Bay's herring run, Dungeness crab, sea hare, leopard sharks and even habitat for river otters. This amazingly robust eelgrass is a donor site for reintroducing eelgrass throughout California and is itself a subject of multiple studies both domestic and international. Point Molate provides a home to osprey, owls, and multiple other aviary species including regular sightings of soaring bald eagles, not to mention all the native plants and trees."

Point Molate fits within the 30x30 goals for the state of California to provide nature, parks and open space to all, including under-resourced communities such as Richmond. Moreover, this land is traditional Ohlone land, is home to multiple sacred sites and is treasured by the descendants of the Ohlone and their community. Point Molate contains one of the few remaining presences of an early Chinese shrimp camp dating back to the 1800's and a nearby whaling station – the last active whaling station on the West Coast. Point Molate's Winehaven Castle housed the world's largest wine shipping facility before the Prohibition and Point Molate served as a major refueling depot and landing craft facility for the U.S. Navy from before World War II until its closure in the 1990's.

Golden Gate Fields

In June of 2024, Golden Gate Fields Race Track in Berkeley closed. As might be expected with its location along the shoreline, numerous proposals for the future of the site have

emerged. CESP has a different vision, one that could provide sea level rise resilience for critical infrastructure (e.g. Highway 80, etc.) and the community, and for the ecological health of San Francisco Bay. This vision should be incorporated as an important element of the local Subregional Shoreline Adaptation Plan for addressing sea level rise that is required of all shoreline communities, and must be submitted to the Bay Conservation and Development Commission by January 1, 2034.

CESP's goal is to bring the Golden Gate Fields' property into McLaughlin Eastshore State Park. With expected sea level and groundwater rise, CESP is advocating for the temporary use of the site as recreational space, and later, restoration to habitats that can provide natural and nature-based resilience to rising sea levels. CESP and SPRAWLDEF commissioned Jeremy Lowe of the San Francisco Estuary Institute to develop a Conceptual Restoration Plan for the Golden Gate Fields location. Assessing historical conditions, current ground elevations, creeks and other drainage features, future sea level rise projections, and adjacent land uses, Jeremy developed a plan that would restore a suite of baylands habitats ranging from beaches and tidal wetlands, to upland areas. This suite of habitats would provide resilience for the developed areas to the East, while seizing a significant opportunity to provide resilience for the Bay ecosystem. Stay tuned for more information as we continue to champion the use of these lands to implement natural and nature-based solutions to the issue of sea level rise.

***Concept Plan for the future shoreline at the Golden Gate Fields**, utilizing nature-based solutions to provide climate resilience for the community, infrastructure and the Bay ecosystem. Graphic from San Francisco Estuary Institute.*

CESP Elects New President

In July of this year, CESP faced the formidable prospect of replacing our President, Shirley Dean, who had served admirably for 10 years. We turned to the multi-talented Arthur Feinstein who successfully served in so many pivotal positions, including as Program Coordinator at CCCR. He has served as member, Chair, President, and Executive Director on many Boards including Golden Gate Audubon Society, Sierra Club SF Bay Chapter and San Francisco Bay Habitat Joint Venture. In his first role as a Conservation staff person working for CCCR, he was part of the successful effort to expand the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Arthur is a magnificent visionary who succeeds a string of dynamic leaders of CESP.

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***Great Blue Heron at Point Molate.** Photo by Jack Scheinman.*

Friends of Redwood City:
Proposed Redevelopment Project on Former Landfill Raises Concerns

Redwood City is currently studying plans for a massive redevelopment project on the Redwood Shores Peninsula at a life science campus that was built atop a former unlined landfill at the edge of the Bay.

In September, CCCR submitted scoping comments in response to the City's *Notice of Preparation* (NOP) of a *Draft Environmental Impact Report* (DEIR) for the *Redwood Life Precise Plan*. CCCR voiced serious concerns about potential significant and adverse impacts to a portion of Belmont Slough which has been designated by the State as the Redwood Shores Ecological Reserve and the Redwood Shores State Marine Park.

The environmentally-sensitive tidal marsh, mudflat and open water habitats within this reserve are managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). Federal and state listed species of fish, birds and mammals reside in this area, including the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse and Ridgway's Rail, and thousands of migratory shorebirds forage on the slough mudflats.

The greatly intensified redevelopment plan would demolish existing two-story buildings on the 84-acre site and **construct over 2.7 million ft² of space in 12 buildings five to six stories tall**, and four parking garages up to eight stories tall. The Project also includes improvements to the property's section of the flood protection levee and Bay Trail which directly abuts the marshes along Belmont Slough.

CCCR is especially concerned that the massive new Redwood Life Plan could compromise the integrity of the former Westport Landfill that underlies the Project site, potentially leading to off-site movement of landfill contaminants into the wetlands and waters of Belmont Slough, and ultimately the Bay.

The Redwood Shores location of the proposed Redwood Life Precise Plan redevelopment project *(outlined in yellow) and nearby Belmont Slough. Image from Google Earth.*

Potential Impacts to Integrity of the Former Westport Landfill

Like numerous other former landfills ringing San Francisco Bay, the site of the Westport Landfill was originally historic tidal marsh until the early 1900's. According to information on the City's project website, the area was first diked and filled for pastureland and hog farming, and a portion of the site was a municipal landfill from 1948 until 1970. About 50% of the site is underlain with a refuse layer that ranges from 3-35 feet deep, and another 40% has sporadic areas of refuse 6-36 inches deep.

After closure of the landfill and prior to building the existing 1998 development, a protective two-foot clay landfill cap was installed, and a two-foot-wide vertical clay wall connecting to the young Bay Mud beneath the landfill was also constructed around the perimeter to ensure that waste, leachate and landfill gas do not migrate from the site. A system to capture landfill leachate, formed when rainwater filters through the waste, was created and the contaminated leachate accumulating at the bottom of the landfill is sent to the municipal sewer system for treatment and disposal.

To help inform our Project scoping comments, CCCR retained an environmental consultant with expertise in engineering, compliance, operations and management of landfills. The consultant reviewed available Project technical information and reports and identified issues warranting further analysis or study in the DEIR related to impacts that could possibly compromise the integrity of the landfill and result in movement of highly toxic landfill contaminants off-site into sensitive habitats and the Bay. Below are some key concerns outlined in our letter that the City should address in the DEIR analysis and prior to any project approval.

Leachate collection system: Determine if the existing system is effectively preventing leachate contaminants from moving off-site in all perimeter areas, especially along the western portion of the site (nearer Belmont Slough) where there are no leachate collection trenches; and, if the system would withstand any potential impacts from predicted groundwater rise.

Differential settlement: Since construction of the existing 2-story buildings, the site has experienced 3.5 - 5 feet of differential settlement, calling into question possible damage to the landfill cap that should be explored. The large number of more massive structures in the proposed Project and decades-long heavy construction activities will add additional stress to the system, potentially contributing to increased risk of damage to the cap from differential settlement.

Risks to integrity of clay landfill cap and perimeter barrier wall: These protective barriers and the landfill waste enclosed within are already deemed to be at risk from scour erosion from storm events that are predicted to become more frequent and intense with climate change. The Project's heavy construction activities throughout the site could also damage the cap or the perimeter wall, and the numerous cap penetrations from the piles driven into the landfill from construction of the multi-storied buildings/parking garages could compromise this clay barrier.

Penetration of unlined base of landfill: The base of the landfill is unlined and currently has a large number of foundation piles driven to depths of 125 feet below ground surface to support two story buildings. The proposed Project calls for many more new piles to be driven for the much larger and taller structures. The sheer number of piles, existing and proposed, are a concern that must be evaluated as each new penetration through the waste can potentially create a migration pathway for contaminated leachate to reach a low permeability zone connected to groundwater or the Bay.

CCCR Recommendations for DEIR Alternatives

Providing that any new construction would not compromise the integrity of the landfill under existing and reasonably foreseeable future conditions, CCCR recommended that Project alternatives included in the DEIR should consider:

- Setting back structures nearest to Belmont Slough, or reducing the height, to avoid shadowing of the nearby tidal marsh habitat and to help minimize light, construction noise and pile-driving vibration impacts on wildlife.
- Implementing "natural and nature-based" SLR adaption measures by pulling the new levee and Bay Trail back from Belmont Slough to avoid levee incursions into wetlands, and provide space for SLR marsh migration on the outboard levee slope.
- Adding a restoration component to the Project's section of new levee by removing the invasive iceplant on Project and State land and reestablishing "high marsh" native vegetation along Belmont Slough in collaboration with CDFW.

For more information, visit www.planredwoodlife.org.

Gail Raabe and Matt Leddy
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Belmont Slough and tidal marsh *along west side of Redwood Life project site during low tide. The section of the flood protection levee/Bay Trail located on the Redwood Life property is on the right side of the photo. Photo by Matt Leddy.*

Far South Bay

Yes, another year has gone by while we have monitored multiple projects in the far south Bay.

Valley Water Desalination Project

Last year we reported significant concern about the concept plans produced in this project's first phase report, largely literature-based. Our concerns persist about any desalination plant in the shallow South Bay.

South Bay Shoreline Levee Project, Alviso

Recently the media featured the agencies involved, celebrating the completed buildout of the levee structure for reaches 1-3 of this project. Reaches 1-3 extend from Alviso Marina Park to the Refuge's Environmental Education Center. Planning is now underway for Project completion actions: the levee for reaches 4-5 (Artesian Slough to Coyote Creek),

***Dave Halsing, Executive Project Manager**, South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, explains Phase 2 work at Mountain View Ponds A1 and A2W. Photo by Carin High.*

However, we are pleased that the VW project team invited us to several meetings that provided opportunities to ask questions and have them answered, in addition to receiving periodic updates about the status of their initial investigations. By late last year, the project had proceeded into Feasibility studies that involve appropriate preliminary engineering and scientific studies needed to evaluate which, if any, options may be feasible. At this time, the Feasibility Report is projected to be released in early 2026.

restoration in Pond A12, tide gate structures for Artesian Slough and the UPRR rail line, a pedestrian bridge crossing the rail line and restoration of Pond A18. No construction schedule has been published to date for these elements of this decades - long project.

South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, Phase 2

Earth moving activities to restore Mountain View Ponds A1 and A2W began in 2024 and as the restoration activities continue, results are becoming visible. Building outward from the Bay Trail, a gently-sloped ecotone levee designed to support

***Horizontal levee being constructed in Pond A1.** Photo by Carin High.*

transitional wetland habitats is taking shape in Pond A1. Actions this year along Pond A2W will include breaching and bridging the trail along the slough where Stevens Creek meets the Bay. Further east, the project continues its partnership with Valley Water's Creek Connection Project that is designed to meet the Bay through the Refuge's Pond A8 complex, hopefully delivering sediment for elevating the subsided pond's floor.

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, Stevens Creek Shoreline Nature Study Area

A wetland at the mouth of Stevens Creek, historically known as Crittenden Marsh, adjoins Stevens Creek and an emergency services training facility. The threatened Western Snowy Plover has found suitable habitat for nesting at this location and is doing so with considerable success.

The District (Midpen) is taking action to enhance the land to preserve its value to the plovers. CCCR has had the opportunity to meet with staff during project planning and review of implementation. Unfortunately, the initial success of plover breeding has been threatened by increased predation. We applaud the actions of Midpen and encourage their continuing efforts.

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Warm Springs Unit of Don Edwards SF Bay National Wildlife Refuge

This year CCCR reviewed and commented on three different projects that could impact the Warm Springs Vernal Pool Complex Unit of the Refuge located in the southwestern portion of the City of Fremont.

This area supports three federally listed species, the California tiger salamander, Contra Costa goldfields, and vernal tadpole shrimp, and critical habitat for the goldfields and tadpole shrimp. It also supports numerous rare plants as well as rare and unusual birds. Due to the sensitivity of this important habitat, the Warm Springs Unit is only open to the public via guided public tours, usually in the spring when the vernal pool plants are in bloom.

City of Fremont Active Transportation Plan

CCCR submitted comments on the Draft ATP to staff, and later to the Fremont Planning Commission expressing concerns about the impacts of a proposed recreational trail through the Warm Springs Unit and along salt pond A-22. Vernal pool habitats and wildlife are extremely susceptible to degradation resulting from human disturbance, such as trampling, damage or harassment from pets, the spread of invasive exotic plants and/or wildlife, nuisance species, changes in hydrological regime, etc. In addition, CCCR expressed concerns regarding adverse impacts to Western Snowy Plover, a federally-listed threatened species.

This issue remains open — CCCR has been sent back and forth between the City of Fremont and Bay Metro staff working on the Bay Trail, but there does not seem to be a timeline for further analysis of the recreational trail included in Fremont's ATP.

Power the South Bay

CCCR submitted comments for the Power the South Bay Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). The Power the South Bay project involves the construction of a new 230-kilovolt (kV) alternating current (AC) transmission line from the existing PG&E Newark substation to the existing Silicon Valley Power Northern Receiving Station Substation in Santa Clara. As part of the proposed project, the lines will cross the Warm Springs Unit either suspended under the Cushing Parkway Causeway, or undergrounded alongside the causeway. CCCR commented that due to the significance and sensitivity of vernal pool habitats, proposed open trenching to underground the utility lines along the Cushing Parkway Causeway should be avoided in favor of the alternative that attaches the utility lines to the underside of the causeway. Open trenching will alter soil structure, can alter ground elevations, alter the hydrological regime of the vernal pool complex, and could also impact connectivity between the eastern and western portions of the Warm Springs Unit.

The Contra Costa goldfield *is one of three federally listed species at the Warm Springs Unit. Photo by Carin High.*

The next opportunity to provide comments may be after the release of the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR).

Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA) Alviso Railroad Adaptation Planning Study

CCCR participated in a recent Stakeholders meeting regarding the second phase of a study evaluating potential alignments to increase passenger rail capacity and sea level rise resilience. The CCJPA is reviewing the Coast subdivision segment of Union Pacific Railroad track from Newark to San Jose. Three potential alternative routes are currently being studied. One of the alternatives would be located adjacent to, but east of the existing railroad tracks through the Warm Springs Unit. In addition to other comments regarding alternative routes through the Refuge, CCCR commented that coordination with Refuge staff must occur early in the analysis of the three alternatives, and that CCJPA must analyze, and should avoid, impacts to federally listed species that occur adjacent to the existing rail line.

This is the beginning of the Phase 2 analysis. An in-person meeting is tentatively scheduled in February of 2026, with additional virtual workshops to follow.

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Goodbye and Thank You to These SF Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex Staff

This year has been especially challenging for the National Wildlife Refuge system, and we've seen the impacts close to home. Funding and staffing are always a challenge, and even more so this year. We know that at its highest point, the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex had

Some of the experience the Refuge has lost this year. *Clockwise from above left,* ***Ann Spainhower*** *(photo courtesy USFWS),* ***Tia Glagelov*** *(photo by Steve Nguyen), and* ***Ivette Loredo*** *(photo by Howard High).*

35 full-time employees across the entire Refuge Complex from the San Pablo NWR, to the Salinas River NWR. Now the Refuge Complex is down to 13 full-time staff. It's absolutely mind boggling that so few staff are expected to manage such a broad array of habitats, spread over such a large geographic region. It's a herculean task that is accomplished with unwavering skill, dedication and perseverance. It is heartbreaking to consider the institutional knowledge and experience we lose each time a staff member departs. This year we are sad to report the loss of a number of Refuge staff to early retirement or transfers. We wish them all the very best and send along our deepest appreciation.

Thank you for your service!

Chris Caris, Wildlife Biologist for Salinas River and Ellicott Slough NWRs, retired in October.

Casey Evans, Fish & Wildlife Officer, accepted a new position and relocated to Hawaii in April.

Juan Florez, Maintenance Worker for the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR, retired in May. Juan had worked at the Complex since the mid 1990s, and his knowledge of the pond complexes and water control structures was critical for managing Refuge ponds and hunt areas.

Tia Glagolev, Environmental Education Specialist for the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR, will be retiring at the end of December. Tia has been instrumental in developing Environmental Education Programs, Summer Camp programs, and Habitat Heroes across the Complex.

Ivette Loredo, Wildlife Refuge Specialist for the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR, retired in February. Ivette served in this position since 2009, and her work helped lead efforts at the Warm Springs and Bair Island units.

Ann Spainhower, Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Manager from 2022-2025, retired in June.

Ellen Tong, Administrative Office, will retire from federal service at the end of December.

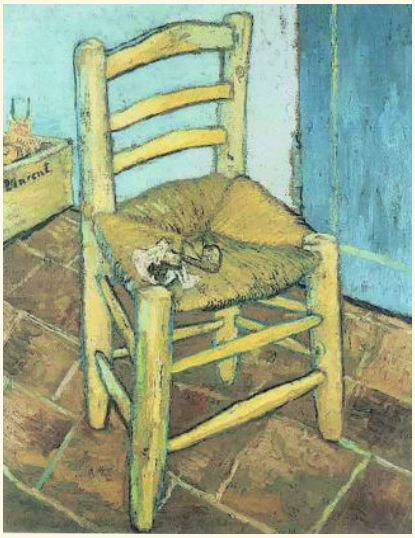
Nicholas Vieira, Seasonal Maintenance Worker for the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR, completed his seasonal appointment in November. Nick was critical in addressing trash removal, weeding, and other ground maintenance activities.

On a positive note, Joe Kahrnoff was hired as Fish & Wildlife Officer and he is currently completing his Fish & Wildlife Officer training program.

With the departures to date, the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge has been left with an acting Refuge manager and just one Wildlife Biologist, one Botanist, one Park Ranger, and 1 Maintenance Worker to manage over 30,000 acres of Refuge lands and 38 miles of trails.

We encourage all who appreciate the Refuge to keep an eye out for opportunities to volunteer for clean-up days, weed-pulling parties, and other volunteer activities.

The Uneasy Chair



This December I will celebrate my 102nd birthday. Surely, I can be allowed to mention my joy in spending part of 50 years with the people who describe their work in this newsletter you hold in your hand.

Arthur Ogilvie, at his desk at the Planning Department in Santa Clara County, put a notice in the paper that he had an idea — if we could get a national wildlife refuge in the South Bay, the tidal marshes would be protected forever.

Why did that matter to me?

When my husband and I moved to Palo Alto from the foggy Berkeley hillside, to make the warm evenings acceptable we took our kids and a picnic basket to the edges of the bay in Palo Alto. The road ended where the Harbor Master's house is now.

There was one broken down picnic table and nothing but marsh beyond. It was probably that first night that we became enamored of the bay wetlands. It was such a magic place we couldn't even hear the sound of Bayshore freeway. Watching the Black-necked Stilts with their long, bright red legs jumping into the air enchanted us.

We were aware of course, of the vast marshes that had been obliterated by airports, sewer plants, garbage dumps and every other form of development that had destroyed marshes. We were however shocked and dismayed to learn that at our very doorstep, at the Palo Alto baylands, a huge development was planned.

That is why Mr. Ogilvie's message goaded us into action.

I cannot imagine any place where the people could have responded with more acuity to our hastily prepared slide show of the beautiful tidal marshes of San Francisco Bay.

We had equally effective photos of the destruction of that beauty for wildlife and mankind. When the word got out we had a show to present, we were invited not only to every environmental group that had meetings, but also to other organizations that needed speakers. This is how we knew how much people cared about the Bay. When Don Edwards submitted his bills to Congress, every representative from the Bay Area, regardless of political affiliation, signed immediately. And we had our Refuge. One of the very first and largest national wildlife refuges in an urban setting.

Now, most remarkable to me, from that small beginning has developed the most intelligent, knowledgeable and devoted group of wetland advocates. This small group is as effective as any that has served the Bay without the benefit of financial reward, and its eye is not only on every acre of the Bay, but far beyond.

Thank you to my dear CCCR family for all the work you do on behalf of the Bay, to my many faithful and patient readers who help me to keep abreast of all that is going on, and to my daughters, Anne, Celia, and Ginny.

Florence M. LaRiviere
Uneasy Chair Emerita

Wildlife in the wetlands abounds! *Above, American Avocets at Pond SF2 (photo by Carin High). Below, L-R: Black-crowned Night Heron in Charleston Slough (photo Sam High), White pelicans in Alviso EEC (photo Carin High), and feeding Northern Shoveler in Charleston Slough (photo Sam High).*

Save Wetlands is the annual newsletter of the **Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge**, an all-volunteer nonprofit public benefit corporation, federal tax ID 77-0518777.

Our mission 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; a tax-deductible contribution of $20 per issue is appreciated.

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