



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

May 22, 2024

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

New Dates, New Venue, Same Great Program!



After the extremely disappointing last-minute cancellation of the State of the Estuary Conference in March, we are pleased to have been able to reschedule at a different location. [Registration is open](#) for the rescheduled State of the Estuary Conference on May 28-29 at the Oakland Scottish Rite Center.

Don't miss Chair Tom Mumley's plenary presentation on 30 years of the Estuary Partnership! We hope to see you there!

National Estuary Program Meeting in DC

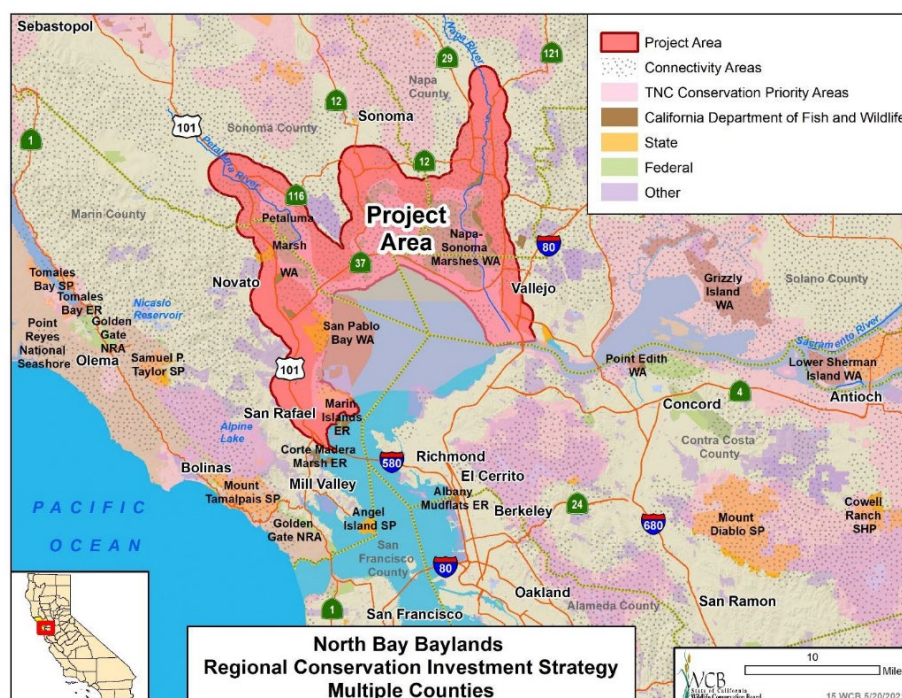
I spent the week of May 29th in Washington, DC for the annual National Estuary Program Training Workshop hosted by US EPA. In addition to several days with EPA staff and other Directors sharing information on a variety of topics including water quality monitoring, climate resiliency and equity, I took the opportunity to meet with staff from eight congressional offices to inform them about the work of the San Francisco Estuary Partnership. Our Bay and Delta Representatives expressed great support for our work and the Association of National Estuary Program's efforts to fund the National Estuary Program at its fully authorized level of \$50 million (providing \$1 million to each NEP).

Vision for Conservation in the North Bay Completed

The North Bay Baylands Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (North Bay Baylands RCIS), produced by Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Caltrans, San Francisco Estuary Partnership, Sonoma County Transportation Authority, and other partner organizations, with support from scientists, public agencies, and members of the public, was approved by the California Department of Fish and

Wildlife on May 1st, 2024. The RCIS outlines a conservation strategy along the San Pablo Bay and historic baylands, where sea level rise is expected to substantially change the ecological landscape over the upcoming decades.

The North Bay Baylands RCIS covers portions of Marin, Sonoma, Napa, and Solano counties and includes sensitive tidal marsh, freshwater marsh and upland areas that provide important wildlife habitat. The RCIS will benefit conservation organizations, land managers, project proponents, municipalities, regulatory agencies and others by providing information to inform actions to advance wildlife conservation and the resiliency of the habitats to climate change. Future habitat restoration and infrastructure resiliency projects will benefit from this holistic regional plan that outlines strategic conservation investments that can be implemented to reconnect and improve marsh habitats and build landscape resilience.



The final North Bay Baylands RCIS is available at [RCIS Baylands Project](#).

Petaluma River Watershed Sediment Reuse Strategy Workshop

Estuary Partnership staff worked with SFEI, Sonoma Water, and the City of Petaluma to plan and host a sediment reuse workshop for regulators, local partners, and sediment experts. The half day workshop included presentations from local and regional partners as well as a breakout session where participants engaged in tabletop mapping and scenario charettes.

This workshop was intended to build off of BCDC's ongoing regional sediment reuse work. Information from this event will be used to draft a sediment reuse strategy for the Petaluma River Watershed that can be implemented over the next decade. The draft report is expected in early 2025.

NEW FUNDING

Anticipated Funding for the Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program

The US EPA selected SFEP to receive a Wetland Program Development Grant of \$498,762 over three years for the San Francisco Estuary Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program (WRMP). These funds will go towards advancing the WRMP's equity and engagement strategy in partnership with community-based organizations and aligning the WRMP's data products with the information needs of regulators and restoration project implementers.

In addition, the WRMP Program has been granted a non-competitive exception by the EPA's new San Francisco Bay Program Office that is anticipated to provide up to \$17,000,000 over five years, to be split between the WRMP's co-managing organizations, SFEP and SFEI. SFEP is developing an initial 3.5-year workplan for the first \$5,000,000 of this funding, which will focus on WRMP program governance, collection and analysis of data about human dimensions of the region's wetlands, and advancing the WRMP's equity and engagement strategy in partnership with community-based organizations and Tribes. Partner organization SFEI will concurrently submit a complementary \$5,000,000 workplan for the WRMP focused on establishing the monitoring site network, collecting and analyzing biophysical and geospatial data about the region's wetlands, and data management.

COMPLETED PROJECTS

Lower Walnut Creek Restoration Project

The Contra Costa County Flood Control & Water Conservation District completed a project that restored and enhanced wetlands and associated habitats in Lower Walnut Creek. The Lower Walnut Creek Restoration Project was partially funded from an Integrated Regional Water Management grant from the Department of Water Resources, specifically supporting implementation for the North and South reaches.

Project objectives included improving ecological function and habitat quantity, quality, and connectivity, maintaining appropriate levels of flood protection, and allowing for future public access. The total project has restored or enhanced approximately 217 acres of tidal and non-tidal wetlands, tidal and non-tidal waters, and transitional and upland areas. Over 128 acres were directly restored by reintroducing tidal flows, and over 78 acres of existing poor-quality tidal and seasonal wetlands were enhanced by increasing the availability of tidal flows.

Habitat restoration was achieved by the planting of over 30,000 native plants that are now in the second year of their three-year establishment period as seen in the picture below.



COMMUNICATIONS

Horizontal Levees in the News

Check out this great story on ABC-7 highlighting nature-based solutions and featuring many IC members and partners!

[How horizontal levees protect shorelines in San Francisco Bay](#)



Partnership Staff Represent the Estuary at the National Adaptation Forum

The National Adaptation Forum was held the week of May 13th in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Heidi Nutters presented on a panel titled “Satisfying the Appetite for Nature-Based Solutions: Shifting Strategies to Meet Public Demand,” and James Muller presented on a panel titled: “Queer and Preventing Danger: Recognizing 2SLGBTQIA Vulnerabilities and Leveraging Strengths in a Changing Climate.”



STAFF CHANGES

Two New Fellows Join the Partnership

The Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program is pleased to welcome Hannah Kempf, a California Sea Grant State Fellow, to the team. Hannah recently graduated from UC Davis, earning a Ph.D. in Earth and Planetary Sciences. Her dissertation focused on how California shellfish respond to climate change and ocean acidification. In her free time she enjoys walking her dog, baking sourdough, hiking, and reading novels.



We're excited to have Lila Bowen join the Estuary Partnership as a California Sea Grant Fellow supporting the Priority Conservation Area Grant Program. A recent graduate of Cal Poly Humboldt with a Masters in Natural Resources and Wildlife, Lila's thesis research focused on the effects of human disturbance on nesting seabird populations. In her free time, Lila is excited to explore all the good food, culture, and open spaces the Bay Area has to offer.