



# DIRECTOR'S REPORT

August 7, 2024

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### State of the Estuary Conference a Success!

After a (very) bumpy start with a last-minute cancellation, the 2024 State of the Estuary Conference was successfully held on May 28-29 at the Oakland Scottish Rite Center. Thank you to everyone who made the pivot with us – the Conference Steering Committee, speakers, moderators, poster presenters, sponsors, attendees and everyone else who made the rescheduled conference a great success!



*Photo Credit: Joey Kotfica*

#### Conference by the Numbers:

Attendees: 655  
Scholarships: 83  
Speakers: 123  
Posters: 119  
Community Tables: 11

The conference archive of session slides, poster abstracts, etc. can be found on the Estuary Partnership website: <https://www.sfestuary.org/soe-archive/>

Check out the great video summarizing the conference:  
<https://www.sfestuary.org/soe-videos/>

KneeDeep Times published excellent coverage of the conference, if you would like to review some highlights and dive deeper in sessions you may have missed:  
<https://www.kneedeep.com/sizing-up-progress-on-nature-based-infrastructure/>

## Welcome to our New IC Chair, Keith Lichten



Keith Lichten is chief of the Watershed Management Division at the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, which manages work including the Board's storm water, creek and wetland fill, and water recycling programs. Keith has been with the Water Board for 27 years.

He received his Bachelor's in environmental engineering from MIT and completed a Master's in Landscape Architecture at UC Berkeley, studying environmental planning and green infrastructure.

## Restoration Authority Grant Round Open

The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority's latest [grant round](#) is open! The Authority can fund proposals that are: a) Habitat projects that aim to restore, protect, or enhance natural habitats on the shoreline in the San Francisco Bay Area; b) Flood management projects that are part of habitat projects; or c) Public access projects that will provide or improve access or recreational amenities that are part of habitat projects. The Authority is particularly interested in supporting projects that address equity and include benefits to economically disadvantaged communities and California Native American Tribes (See the [Equity Guidelines](#) and [Tribal Engagement Recommendations](#)). More information on project eligibility, eligible grantees, and prioritization criteria can be found in the [Request for Proposals](#). It is recommended that all applicants complete a pre-application and request a consultation with Authority staff by September 20, 2024. Full proposals are due October 4, 2024.

The [Community Grants Program](#) provides an alternative application pathway for projects led by community-based organizations in economically disadvantaged communities. Applications can be submitted at any time and are reviewed on a rolling basis. The maximum amount for a Community Grant is \$300,000. Community Projects needing a larger amount of money can apply to the competitive grant round mentioned above.

To learn more about the 2024 Grant Round and Community Grants Program, please see the [recording](#) and [slides](#) from the July 23, 2024 webinar.

## Regional Sea Level Rise MOU Executed

The seven regional and state public agencies have now executed the new [memorandum of understanding](#) committing each agency to a joint work program to address increased threats of flooding and sea level rise in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area region. The agencies participating in the agreement include the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG); the Bay Area Air Quality Management District; the California State Coastal Conservancy; Caltrans District 4; the

Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC); the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board; the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC); and the Bay Area Regional Collaborative (BARC). Estuary Partnership staff were very engaged in the development of MOU which is intended to align the partners' efforts, expertise and core functions to deliver priority, multi-benefit projects to reduce flooding risks in vulnerable communities along the San Francisco Bay shoreline.

## NEW FUNDING

### EPA Water Quality Improvement Fund – Wildcat Creek (\$6,102,000)

The Restoring Wildcat Creek: Community-Led Watershed Health Update and Priority Project Implementation project, seeks to create a watershed-scale restoration action plan, and implement critically needed restoration in the lower part of the watershed. The project will create design plans to address the gaps in the Wildcat Creek Trail that prevent underserved communities from accessing the shoreline and the planned improvements there. Key studies have identified or summarized sediment production for the overall watershed and for separate portions of the watershed, but additional work is needed to generate a holistic plan for sediment dynamics and restoration in this active system. This project will align riparian management efforts throughout the watershed by identifying and prioritizing restoration projects informed by data collection and analysis. SFEP will partner with the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), Urban Tilth, The Watershed Project, Contra Costa County, and West County Wastewater District, along with other regional partners, to achieve this work.



*Wildcat Creek During High Flows. Photo Credit: The Watershed Project*

## EPA Water Quality Improvement Fund - Pivot Points (\$4,524,870.00)

The Pivot Points project continues work that meets significant environmental outcomes for San Francisco Bay, including continued progress to restore 830 acres (about the area of Central Park in New York City) of tidal marsh, getting the First Mile Horizontal Levee to a shovel-ready state, and reducing nitrogen loads to the Bay thereby ensuring improved habitat health, higher water quality, and protecting communities from sea level rise.

As an expansion of vital work to support environmental outcomes, this project also advances nature-based solutions (NBS) to support a foresighted approach for a resilient shoreline that includes filling important gaps in taking NBS from planning to the implementation stage. To remedy these gaps, it will apply holistic methods that include addressing permitting barriers, establishing long-term governance and management plans, and ensuring technology transfer. The application of NBS in this project will increase regional expertise in how to apply Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) to support sustainable solutions to environmental challenges. To accomplish these goals, SFEP will partner with the East Bay Discharge Authority (EBDA), East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), Save the Bay and other regional partners.

Press coverage on the two awards:

*EPA Awards Estuary Partnership \$10.6 Million For Bay Area Watershed Projects*  
<https://www.sfgate.com/news/bayarea/article/epa-awards-estuary-partnership-10-6-million-for-19603623.php>

*San Francisco Estuary Partnership receiving \$10.6 million to restore East Bay watersheds*  
<https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/san-francisco-estuary-partnership-receiving-10-6-million-to-restore-east-bay-watersheds/>

*Wildcat Creek gets \$12.2M for restoration, flood mitigation*  
<https://richmondstandard.com/richmond/2024/07/29/wildcat-creek-restoration-gets-12-2m-for-restoration/>



# COMPLETED PROJECTS

## Alameda County Water District Fish Passage Project

We are pleased to have closed out another project in the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Prop 1 Round 1 Grant. The Alameda County Water District (ACWD) received \$3,346,992 of IRWM funding that they used to build a fish ladder and fish screens in the Alameda Creek Flood Control Channel. The project will allow steelhead volitional access to 26 miles of high-quality spawning and rearing habitat in the upper watershed through the removal of two physical barriers to fish passage. The project will also modify ACWD's creek operations to make new flow bypass releases through a fish ladder, maintaining minimum 5-25 cubic feet per second of bypass flows, and enhancing migration opportunities downstream of project area. In addition, the project monitoring plan will be incorporated into a larger multi-agency watershed-wide steelhead recovery monitoring plan. The project will reduce reliance on imported supplemental recharge water from the State Water Project, improving local groundwater supply reliability by approximately 10,500 AFY and commensurately reducing energy and greenhouse gas production. Also, by increasing the reliability of groundwater recharge to the Niles Cone Sub-basin, the project enables climate change adaptation against further saltwater intrusion into the coastal aquifer from anticipated sea-level rise.



*Fishway crane operation and training. Photo credit: Shane O'Nesky (ACWD)*

# COMMUNICATIONS

## Meet the Estuary Partnership's New Communications Manager, Alexis Gabriel



I am pleased to introduce the Estuary Partnership's first full time Communications Manager. With a dual degree at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in marketing and sustainable development, Alexis Gabriel spent almost 10 years with the City of Portland focusing on communications, sustainability, and community engagement. Alexis also has experience in both the nonprofit and private sectors, doing marketing and communications. Alexis is an advocate for creating more accessible public and digital spaces and is committed to environmental justice and education. Alexis is thrilled to be back in the Bay Area and working with the Partnership to share the Estuary's story.

## Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program Summer Newsletter



The [WRMP Summer 2024 Newsletter](#) highlights some of the key accomplishments of the WRMP over the past quarter, including the Baylands Habitat Map release and new funding.

# IC CHANGES

## Goodbye to Thomas Mumley

Thank you to everyone who attended the May 22<sup>nd</sup> IC meeting and joined in our celebration of the many contributions of our long-time Chair/Vice Chair, Tom Mumley. Among several tributes was a wonderful sing-a-long prepared by Luisa Valiela.

For your earworm pleasure, here are the lyrics:

**TOM'S SONG** (to the tune of The Adams Family Theme Song)

*He's dedicated, Cal-educated  
Effusive and impressive  
He's altogether visionary  
He's our Thomas Mumley*

*His house is water board region  
Where people come to see him  
They really are appreciating  
Our tenacious Tom Mumley*

*Enthusiastic  
Empathetic  
Melomaniac*

*So bring on your permit problems  
a regulatory conundrum  
We will not stop calling on 'im  
Our clever Tom Mumley*

*He's dedicated, Cal-educated  
Effusive and impressive  
He's altogether visionary  
He's our Thomas Mumley*

*Collaborative  
Unperturbable  
Garrulous*

*That's Thomas Mumley!*

## SF Bay Conservation and Development Commission



Speaking of retirements, Steve Goldbeck is retiring from his position as Deputy Executive Director after almost 40 years at BCDC! Steve has been a long-time member of the Implementation Committee and has participated in multiple updates of the Estuary Blueprint/CCMP. Please join me in thanking Steve for all his years of service on the IC!

BCDC's primary representative on the IC will now be Jessica Fain, Director of Planning.

Welcome, Jessica!

