



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

March 19, 2025

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

State of the Estuary Conference - October 28-29, 2025!

The State of the Estuary Conference will be held in Oakland on Oct. 28-29, 2025, at the Henry J. Kaiser Center for the Arts.

As we prepare for the conference, we want to hear from you! Let us know what topics you would like to see presented at the Conference and/or if you would like to join the planning process by taking five minutes to fill out [a short survey](#). We value your feedback on any and all of these questions.

To save the date and be informed of the Conference, [sign up for our newsletter](#) and/or follow us on [Bluesky](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or [LinkedIn](#) for more updates.



Friends of the Estuary Call for Board Member Applications

The Friends of the San Francisco Estuary is seeking individuals to join their Board!

Friends has a thirty-year history of protecting, restoring and enhancing the Bay and Delta through education, advocacy, outreach, and

collaboration. Friends partners with the Estuary Partnership to implement the Estuary Blueprint, including the Estuary Youth Council. They are at a pivotal moment in the organization's history as founding members are ready to shift into advisory capacities to allow new voices to step into leadership positions. This stage marks an exciting opportunity for growth for a slate of passionate new board members!



Please spread the word and direct interested applicants to <https://www.friendsofsestuary.org/>. Applications are due March 31!

Priority Conservation Area Nominations Now Being Accepted

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) is now accepting Priority Conservation Area (PCA) nominations through May 2, 2025. PCAs nominated during this window and all existing compliant PCAs will be eligible to apply for 2025 PCA Grant funding, which will be administered by SFEP. PCAs are designated geographic areas nominated by local jurisdictions and recognized by ABAG to support regional conservation, resilience, and sustainability goals.

Who Can Nominate a PCA?

PCAs can be nominated by local government entities with land use authority, including cities, towns, counties, park districts, open space agencies, and water districts. Nongovernmental organizations cannot nominate but are encouraged to work with local nominating agencies.

Want additional information?

For further information on the process, eligibility, timeline, prioritization guidance, and nomination resources, reach out to Kate Lyons (klyons@bayareametro.gov).

Aquatic Invasive Species Updates

As reported at the last IC meeting, Golden Mussels (*Limnoperna fortunei*) were detected in the Delta in October 2024, the first known detection of this species in North America. Golden mussel has a similar life history and impacts as the other

freshwater non-native invasive mussels (quagga and zebra mussels) already present into California, but they have even wider environmental tolerances for low calcium and salinity than quagga and zebra mussels. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife CDFW formed an interagency Task Force to: 1) Develop a statewide Response Plan; 2) Survey to delineate the current range of golden mussels and expand early-detection monitoring; and 3) Reinvigorate outreach and education to recreational water users, and anyone conducting in-water work in the Delta. Key links include:

- CDFW Golden Mussel Webpage: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Invasives/Species/Golden-Mussel>
- Watercraft Decontamination Protocols: <https://www.westernais.org/trainer-resources>
- Western Basin Invasive Mussel Incident Response Toolkit: <https://www.westernqzrr.com/>
- Golden Mussel Literature: <https://www.westernqzrr.com/golden-mussels>

In response to the introduction of Golden Mussels, the California State Lands Commission's Marine Invasive Species Program, passed emergency regulations on February 25, 2025 adding a requirement that any vessel with ballast water with a salinity less than 18 ppt will have to do an exchange at least 50 nautical miles from land prior to discharging at ports within the SF Bay east of, and including, Rodeo and extending to Stockton and Sacramento. This will put additional protections on discharges of fresh and brackish ballast water into California's fresh and brackish water ports, which is critical for protecting these waters from new invasive species introductions.

NEW FUNDING

Palo Alto Horizontal Levee Pilot Project – State Coastal Conservancy (\$2 million)

Funding from the Coastal Conservancy closes a critical funding gap for construction of the Palo Alto Horizontal Levee!

The Palo Alto Horizontal Levee Pilot is a new kind of infrastructural adaptation that links nature-based solutions to the need for flood protection, achieving habitat and water quality improvement, along with public access to open space, while addressing increased flooding vulnerability due to sea level rise. The Partnership along with the Association of Bay Area Governments, will work with the City of Palo Alto, project partners and a contractor selected through a competitive bid process to construct this project, the first of its kind to be completed in the Bay Area.

The project will include construction of a 500-LF berm including a horizontal levee irrigated with treated wastewater and planted with native species. The project includes installation of a new pump located at the City of Palo Alto Regional Water Quality Control Plant, a buried pipeline to transmit the treated wastewater to the horizontal levee, relocation of an existing public access trail further away from the Bay edge to better connect habitats, and interpretive signage for continued public engagement. Community-based monitoring and education will happen alongside the project and within the larger Harbor Marsh. This project is anticipated to result in key information that could be integrated into the larger levee improvement projects that would allow for broader implementation of horizontal levees throughout the Region.

Regional Conservation and Resilience – Bay Area Toll Authority (\$1.6 million)

The Partnership is partnering with the Bay Area Toll Authority to advance critical conservation projects and innovative multi-benefit nature-based solutions to climate change that protect bridge assets as well as provide habitat and water quality improvements and recreational opportunities.

We have received \$500,000 for climate resilience planning in the Emeryville Crescent region, a dynamic area on the east side of the San Francisco Bay shoreline with major transportation assets, public access, habitat, and cultural sites at risk from rising sea levels. The Estuary Partnership is partnering with Caltrans, East Bay Regional Parks District, City of Emeryville, City of Oakland, East Bay Municipal Utilities District, Bay Area Toll Authority, and community and Tribal partners on a comprehensive adaptation strategy for the Emeryville Crescent region. Funding from BATA will support the advancement of innovative nature-based strategies within the Crescent.

We have also received \$1.1 million to advance the Pacific Flyway Center’s Walk in the Marsh Project which aims to enhance and create 124 acres of managed wetlands, with almost four miles of trails, boardwalks and interpretive elements. The experience will highlight the ecological benefits of the region’s resting, nesting and feeding grounds for thousands of migrating shorebirds and waterfowl along the Pacific Flyway, as well as numerous other wetland-dependent species. Positioned on the edge of the Suisun Marsh, the project is located adjacent to and will enhance the I-80/I-680 Interchange and will provide an opportunity for public engagement and interpretive education that is rare for that area.

COMPLETED PROJECTS

Suisun Marsh Fish Screen Rehabilitation Project Phase II

The Suisun Marsh Fish Screen Rehabilitation Project Phase II was funded by a \$1,363,319 Measure AA grant provided through the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority. The project replaced failing fish screens at two sites within Suisun Marsh and wrapped up construction at the end of 2024. The ability to divert water from sloughs during low salinity periods into the managed wetlands is critical for improving habitats by flooding the wetlands, reducing soil salinities, and increasing germination and healthy growth of plants favored by waterfowl. Fish screens have been installed on intakes along Montezuma Slough in Suisun Marsh to prevent entrainment of chinook, steelhead, and other species of concern that use the marsh during their migrations. The completed project helps protect fish and 382 acres of managed wetlands.

De-Pave Park, Alameda

The City of Alameda completed planning work on the De-Pave Park Project under an \$800,000 Measure AA grant provided by the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority. The grant helped the City develop a master plan including 30% designs and a community stewardship program for a future park that will provide a range of habitats, from subtidal and tidal to upland, along with public access amenities. The park will restore historical wetlands and create new habitat and will be designed to evolve as sea level rises to create additional tidal wetlands with continued public access from a raised boardwalk. Plans include sequestering more carbon than is emitted to build by re-using materials on-site and maximizing native planting areas.

River Oaks Stormwater Capture Project, San Jose

The City of San Jose is wrapping up a stormwater capture project that received funding from the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Proposition 1 Round 1 Grant. The Project received \$3,203,550 in IRWM funding and has invoiced for the full grant amount with plans to close out the project by June 2025. The Project captures and treats stormwater at an existing detention basin site prior to discharge to the Guadalupe River. It has multiple benefits such as improving stormwater quality; maintaining flood control; providing public access to education, recreation, and aesthetic amenities; and enhancing nearby habitat. The Project is located along the

Guadalupe River in the vicinity of Riverview Parkway and will treat stormwater runoff from approximately 344-acres.



Photo Credit: Ellen Yuen, City of San Jose

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

EPA 5-Year Program Evaluation Underway

Every five years the Estuary Partnership undergoes a Program Evaluation (PE) by the USEPA to assess how the National Estuary Programs are making progress in achieving programmatic and environmental results through implementation of their Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (our Estuary Blueprint). Our 2025 PE is currently underway, with a package of required information due by the end of March, followed by a site visit in May. The PE team will be attending the May IC meeting as well as visiting various project sites.

EPA/NEP Workshops in DC

Later this month, Alexis Gabriel and I will head to DC for a series of meetings and workshops hosted by the Association of National Estuary Programs and USEPA. Our visit also corresponds with Coastal Week on the Hill so we will have the opportunity to interact with our colleagues from Restore Americas Estuaries, Coastal States Organization and others. Lastly of course will also do our best to visit the offices of all fourteen Representatives and two Senators within the Estuary Partnership's planning area.

IC CHANGES

Bay Planning Coalition

Welcome to **Laura Tam** as the new primary representative for the Bay Planning Coalition. Laura joined BPC in November as their new Chief Executive Officer, replacing John Coleman.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Due to her transfer to a new position within NRCS with different responsibilities, Alyson Aquino is no longer the primary representative for NRCS. Alyson has been replaced by **Luis Cruz-Rivera**, the NRCS District Conservationist in Contra Costa County.

State Coastal Conservancy

As the new Regional Manager of the San Francisco Bay Area Program of the Conservancy, **Jessica Davenport** is now the Conservancy's primary representative. Deputy Regional Manager **Linda Tong** is serving as the alternate.

STAFF CHANGES

New Sea Grant Fellows

Welcome to our 2025 California Sea Grant Fellows, **Miranda Melon** and **Natalie Rossi**! Miranda is primarily supporting the Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program and Natalie is primarily supporting several climate adaptation planning efforts.