

The San Francisco Bay Joint Venture

Winter 2004

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The Power of Partnerships

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Petaluma Buys Gray's Ranch

September 8, 2003

Over two years of efforts by the Petaluma Wetlands Park Alliance (PWPA), the Bay Institute and Madrone Audubon were finally rewarded on September 8, when the Petaluma City Council voted 5-0 to buy Gray's Ranch for \$4,000,000.

Of the 261 acres, 45 will be devoted to filtration (polishing) wetlands as part of the city's planned wastewater treatment system. In the end, the opportunity to incorporate the Water Recycling Facility (WRF) as part of the acquisition is what clinched the deal for the city. Originally, the WRF was going to be placed where an oxidation pond currently is located – requiring removal of 5,000 tons of sludge and then 250,000 cubic yards of fill. By dedicating ranch acreage for the WRF, the city was able to actually save money! \$2,233,000 of the needed funds came from the city while grants from the State Coastal Conservancy and the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District covered the remaining balance.

The property will also provide 3.5 miles of new trails linking with Shollenberger Park and numerous blinds and overlooks.

There's talk too of Audubon refurbishing the old Gray farmhouse and turning it into a nature-based education center.

A Wetlands Sanctuary – combined with Alman Marsh and Shollenberger Park, the Gray property comprises 500 acres along the Petaluma River, with almost seven miles of public trails. Shollenberger Park is a popular spot for birdwatchers, home to a small population of the elusive American Bittern, while adjoining Alman Marsh hosts endangered Black Rail as well as the Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse.

The acquisition of Gray's Ranch is good news for wetlands and a great example of the power of partnerships. Because of the collaborative work of citizens groups, NGOs, state agencies and city planners, bay area residents now have more wild-life-oriented recreation opportunities, the city has secured a fitting location for their needed water recycling facility, and another piece in the puzzle of protecting and restoring wetlands in and around San Francisco Bay has been realized.



Parcel B, photo courtesy of Bob Dyer

Many thanks to Bob Dyer, Senior Docent at Shollenberger Park and charter member of the PWPA for his contribution of the content for our first spotlight on partner projects.

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The San Francisco Bay Joint Venture is resurrecting its newsletter. This new format features a wetland story that proves how powerful partnerships can be to help projects succeed, and includes updates about the activity and accomplishments of the working committees. Suggestions are welcome about content and for a spotlight story in the spring issue.



*Award reception honoring Senator Dianne Feinstein for her efforts to help protect San Francisco Bay and celebrating the 100th anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge System, October 16, 2003
Washington DC Photo courtesy Audubon San Francisco Bay Restoration Program
photographer David "Scotty" Scavone*

Working Committees news in brief

The Joint Venture working committees meet quarterly and are open to anyone involved or interested in wetlands and creek protection and restoration. Each committee is chaired by a Joint Venture partner.

Public Outreach

**Chair: Michel Sellors,
National Audubon**

The official launching of our Speaker's Bureau to assist California Coastal Conservancy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game with their 5-year South Bay Salt Pond (SBSP) restoration planning process has begun, thanks to a dedicated core group of partners on the committee. In this start-up year, the outreach committee, along with the SBSP Stakeholder

Forum, will constitute the speaker's bureau, "adopting" various groups to keep them informed of the latest developments in this historic restoration project. The latest version of our power point presentation is available online. Please call Caroline Warner, Public Outreach Coordinator, for more information.

This year's work plan also includes our spring and fall wetlands tours for foundations and decision makers, the creation of a photo "bank" with and for partners, assistance with a 16-page insert to the July issue of Bay Nature magazine, coordination of 2004 workshops and events, and continuing to identify and integrate messages with both regional and national efforts, to raise awareness about wetlands, restoration, and the movement toward an integrated bird conservation approach. This spring we will be gearing up for mosquito season and thinking about how to address the concern over west Nile virus as it makes its way into California headlines. The next meeting of the Public Outreach Committee is scheduled for March 11, 2004.

*A partnership
to protect, restore,
increase and enhance
all types of wetlands,
riparian habitat and associated
uplands throughout the SF Bay region*

Restoration Strategy/Technical

**Chair: Marc Holmes,
The Bay Institute**

The Restoration Strategy/Technical Committee is comprised of people who are directly working on acquisition, restoration, and enhancement projects as well as the scientists who participate or consult on such projects. The focus for 2003 was to help move projects forward including Petaluma Gray's Field Project, the South Bay salt ponds, and encouraging the relocation of the casino proposed for properties along Highway 37.

The committee work has also focused on two major activities: 1. The development of a data system for project tracking and 2. The development, management and prioritization of projects for funding.

The Joint Venture has contracted with Ducks Unlimited to develop an on-line GIS-based system that will provide the Joint Venture current information on partner projects and project managers a tool for planning and generating reports and maps for their own use or for assisting with fund development. Members of the committee participated in a session that will help DU design a system with data fields that will provide the information needed by partners. Data sets are currently being gathered and the system designed to compliment and integrate with data bases managed by other entities such as the San Francisco Estuary Institute and UC Davis. Joint Venture partners are previewing the first stages of the data base now. Anyone interested in previewing the initial design should contact the Joint Venture office.

At the invitation of the Wildlife Conservation Board, the Joint Venture has developed a system to prioritize projects that qualify for funding under Prop. 50. Under the proposition, up to \$200 million was restricted for San Francisco Bay wetlands and associated uplands. \$80 million was targeted for the acquisition of the South Bay salt ponds from Cargill. The balance was to be allocated to the Wildlife Conservation Board and the Coastal Conservancy for projects identified by the Habitat Goals project. The Committee re-evaluated the definitions of "Ready to Go" projects and project criteria and developed a systematic approach to prioritize projects to recommend to the Wildlife Conservation Board. The project list has also been provided to the Coastal Conservancy as well as other funders.

The Wildlife Conservation Board will be determining projects for Prop. 50 funding based on Department of Fish & Game priorities, the language in the Prop. 50 initiative, and current Joint Venture project priorities, recognizing that they can change as project status changes. This has been a valuable exercise for the Joint Venture and our funding partners and will provide needed financial resources to initiate or complete important wetland projects.

Creeks Sub-committee

**Chair: BC Capps,
Bay Area Open Space Council**

A number of partners dedicated to creek enhancement and restoration have created a sub-committee of the Restoration Strategy/Technical Committee. The Creeks sub-committee has been a forum for sharing technical information and collaborating on project priorities. A major focus last year was the development of a pre and full proposal under Prop. 13 at the suggestion of the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The proposal was a truly collaborative process, both in project design and proposal submission. Major partners included the Bay Area Open Space Council, Regional Board, Aquatic Outreach Institute, Urban Creeks Council, East Bay Watershed Center, and the San Francisco Estuary Project.



*Petaluma River c 2003, Alan Harper
Photo courtesy of Audubon San
Francisco Bay Restoration Program*

Legislative Affairs

**Chair: John Woodbury,
Bay Area Open Space Council**

Secretary of Resources, Mike Chrisman recently joined the Joint Venture Management Board. Dave Widell, Assistant Secretary, will be attending regular Joint Venture Management Board meetings and will join Joint Venture Chair, Fritz Reid and Coordinator, Beth Huning for a week on Capitol Hill in early March. Secretary Chrisman is familiar with Joint Ventures and was helpful last year in his position as a Fish and Game Commissioner by introducing the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture to federal administrators.



Tolay Creek - October 2003; USGS photo files

At the state level, AB204 has now passed the Assembly and will be heard in the Senate sometime after the first of March. The bill will allow counties to assess up to \$6 per vehicle as a means to pay for the impacts of the transportation infrastructure on the environment. Should this bill pass, it will provide funding for many projects supported by Joint Venture partners.

On the national level, the committee continues to monitor federal appropriations and take action as needed. One such action was the reauthorization of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). Joint Venture partners rose to the call to assist with salvaging and renewing NAWCA, maintaining funding at \$34 million.

Speaking of NAWCA ...

Last fall Joint Venture partners received tutored coaching from a workshop provided by Anna Marie York of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) program. Several key pointers have helped the Joint Venture develop a new strategy for NAWCA proposals. It has become apparent that in order to compete on a nationwide level with projects in large geographic areas, SFBJV needs to not focus NAWCA applications on a specific project but create applications that include projects on a more sweeping scope. A team of partners is forming in the North Bay to prepare a second San Pablo Bay NAWCA that will include partial funding for several of the projects that the Joint Venture has identified as high priority as well as augment those projects already under construction. The group recommends that other geographic areas covered by the Joint Venture be "packaged" in a similar way, for example a Central Bay, Contra Costa, or South Bay NAWCA proposal. Multiple applications can be submitted over time to help fund a variety of projects as long as the acreage and funding match are not used up or are banked.

The deadline for NAWCA standard grants is March 5 and July 30, 2004. Potential NAWCA applicants should notify Joint Venture Coordinator, Beth Huning immediately.

*** Management board of the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture ***

*SF Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board San Francisco Estuary Project Bay Area Open Space Council Bay Area Audubon Council
The Conservation Fund Urban Creeks Council California State Coastal Conservancy Wildlife Conservation Board Bay Planning Coalition The Bay Institute
Sierra Club PRBO Conservation Science National Marine Fisheries Service Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge Save San Francisco Bay Association
California Department of Fish & Game U.S. Environmental Protection Agency U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Ducks Unlimited
PG&E Corporation California State Coastal Conservancy Contra Costa Vector & Mosquito Control District National Fish and Wildlife Foundation*