

# The San Francisco Bay Joint Venture



Fall 2004 Volume 2 : 2

## IN FRONT OF THE ISSUE

### West Nile Virus, Wetlands Restoration and the Joint Venture Strategy and Communications Plan

In July, West Nile virus (WNV) hit the Bay area right after the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture West Nile virus strategy and communications plan was printed, bound and distributed.

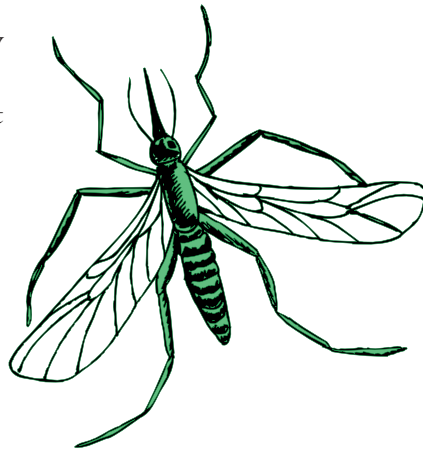
The virus first appeared on the East Coast in 1999. After an active season in Colorado and the first signs of its presence in the Southern portion of California last fall, Management Board members of both the San Francisco Bay and Central Valley Joint Ventures decided to prepare a communications strategy before the virus hit the Bay area. Recognizing that misinformation and/or fear of the disease might adversely impact public support for wetlands restoration, the two joint ventures determined that a plan would be helpful for partners to define the issues and defend their restoration efforts.

As long-time partners of the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture (SFBJV), mosquito abatement districts were invited to provide input, insure accuracy of the information included in the manual and help craft our key messages. While several key messages were identified, those that relate directly to habitat and restoration are:

- Tidal wetland restoration can reduce mosquito populations as tidal fluctuations keep water moving so that mosquitoes do not have standing water in which they breed.

- Non-tidal wetland restoration projects can be designed to provide drainage or keep water moving in order to deter mosquitoes.
- Tidal marshes do not provide good habitat for the two main vectors of West Nile virus.

The plan also includes a pro-active and reactive media strategy, a contact list of experts within the SFBJV who can address specific questions and concerns, a crisis management plan, guidelines for handling birds, as well as articles on managing mosquitoes and other resources. It is available for review (and downloadable) on our website – [www.sfbayjv.org](http://www.sfbayjv.org).



As part of the research for the SFBJV communications plan, a lot of information was collected about WNV, mosquitoes, and wetlands restoration. A special page with links to current information is also available on the SFBJV web site, under the heading “news”.

As of early October we have yet to see any public out lash against wetlands in response to WNV. Locally, the disease has been found in many birds, but only one human case has been confirmed in San Joaquin County. Bay Area legislators and local media have all been given the facts and contacts included in our manual. Stories have been pitched to local networks for potential future reporting and op-ed pieces have been written by partners to be available as needed. With the SFBJV plan in place and Joint Venture partners talking about a common message, we are confident that wetlands restoration efforts will not be sabotaged by [WNV] or the element of fear.



## GOOD NEWS in the North Bay

Another piece to the puzzle of putting back together the North Bay wetlands came into place early in October. The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation of San Francisco awarded \$5.9 million to acquire 2,327 acres of land near Sears Point, with an additional \$2 million to plan for future use of the land. The site includes the 648-acre Dickson Ranch along with 1,679 acres owned by the North Point Joint Venture and once eyed for development of a gambling casino.

Earlier this summer, the Wildlife Conservation Board donated \$8 million for the project, while the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors contributed \$2.6 million to acquire the Dickson Ranch. Individual contributors also gave \$1.5 million to the total purchase price of \$17.9 million. Escrow should close on both properties before the end of the year.

The JV adopted these projects as a priority, and many partners worked in a coordinated effort to develop the funding strategy and secure the funding needed for the purchases. We want to thank everyone whose efforts are contributing to the success of these important acquisitions.

The land along San Pablo Bay will ultimately be converted into wetlands and public open space. The Sonoma Land Trust will now set out to raise another \$6.5 million to restore tidal wetlands on the property and create a 4-mile extension of the San Francisco Bay Trail, enabling hikers and bikers to travel from the Petaluma River to Tolay Creek.

“That whole landscape, where Sonoma County meets the bay, is going to be protected land,” said Ralph Benson, Executive Director of the Sonoma Land Trust.

## Legislative Affairs Committee

CHAIR: JOHN WOODBURY,  
BAY AREA OPEN SPACE COUNCIL

The Joint Venture Legislative Affairs Committee, in partnership with the Central Valley Joint Venture, has been actively engaged these past several months supporting and endorsing state legislation. **The Joint Venture supported the following legislation** that was recently signed into law by the Governor. This legislation was the culmination of hard work on the part of many JV partners.

- **AB 1876 (Chan) Save the Bay**  
SF Bay Beaches will now be monitored regularly for water quality as has been required on coastal beaches in CA.
- **SB 1215 (Morrow) California Waterfowl Association**  
Reinstates Prop. 99 funding allocated to Department of Fish and Game waterfowl and wildlife management for the purposes for which it was intended.
- **AB 2690 (Hancock) Bay Area Open Space Council and the Watershed Project**  
Allows Californians to volunteer their time and efforts on public works projects without a requirement that they be paid the prevailing wage.

Two JV supported bills did not make it out of Committee, probably due to the current political climate.

- **SB 1477 (Sher) Audubon**  
Would have closed the gaps left by changes in federal regulations of filling of interstate non – navigable wetlands. Efforts continue to address this issue administratively.
- **AB 204 (Nation) Bay Area Open Space Council**  
Would have enabled Bay Area counties to elect to assess an annual vehicle surcharge. The revenue would have supported projects where vehicles or transportation infrastructure impacts habitat.

**The Governor’s California Performance Review** (CPR) process has now concluded the public hearing phase. The CPR document was developed as an independent comprehensive review of state government operations, intended to overhaul and streamline state government. CPR recommendations will be considered for implementation by both the Legislature and the Governor. The Legislative Affairs Committee facilitated the review and analysis used by many of the JV partners to comment on the document. While some of the CPR recommendations have merit, of

particular concern to JV partners were the following recommendations:

- transfer of state park rangers and state wardens from their respective agencies to homeland security;
- elimination of regional water quality control boards;
- reduced regulatory oversight of the Bay Conservation and Development Commission;
- preference for easements over fee title acquisition;
- consolidation of all real estate transactions under a Resources Conservation Board. While this recommendation may have merit, the JV partners wanted assurance that resource protection and management will take precedence, and that the process will expedite, not delay, transactions.

As the JV is developing consensus among the partners, it is uncertain at press time whether the JV will be commenting directly on the CPR. Whether or not the JV comments, the work that the JV has done to assess and assist the partners in developing their comments has been extremely valuable.

## Restoration Strategy/ Technical Committee

CHAIR: MARC HOLMES, THE BAY INSTITUTE

The Restoration Strategy/Technical Committee tracks the progress of acquisition, restoration, and enhancement projects. The Committee also determines which projects to place partner, staff and funding emphasis on at any particular time. This year, the committee has focused on three program areas:

- tracking and assessment of JV projects and goals,
- initiating implementation of all federal bird conservation initiatives, and
- developing a system to prioritize projects for funding.

The **new JV project data tracking system** is now on line. Developed by Ducks Unlimited and funded by the US Fish & Wildlife Service and the Coastal Conservancy, this system adds mapping and GIS to a database of JV partner projects. The goals are to be able to track progress toward JV acreage and habitat goals while providing partners with tools that can assist with project planning.

Several JV partners have offered to beta test the system and provide feedback so that corrections can be made before "going public". The beta testing should

be completed by early November. Throughout the rest of the year, JV partners will be issued pass codes and training sessions will be scheduled in the use of the data system. This new tool will be invaluable in helping the JV track progress toward our goals, monitor progress on individual projects, and be able to access maps of projects and surrounding land uses as tools for future project planning.

The **JV Implementation Strategy**, Restoring the Estuary, is being amended to incorporate the recommendations from **all of the federal bird conservation plans**. In addition to the waterfowl management plan, the initial basis for the JV Implementation Strategy, other federal bird plans include the water bird plan, shorebird plan, and Partners In Flight migratory bird plan.

PRBO Conservation Science has completed a very important process with the JV, outlining the components of a more extensive addendum that would include recommendations of new restoration decision support tools, scientific findings, population goal-setting processes, and monitoring efforts. The Restoration Strategy/Technical Committee is currently reviewing the draft and will be bringing recommendations to the Management Board for adoption early in 2005.

A JV partner, PGE, is one of the largest single landowners on the Bay. At the request of the JV, **PG&E is standardizing ways of addressing wetland restoration inquires**. A process for contacting PG&E regarding utility easements has been developed and is being tested on the Dutch Slough project. Once complete, PG&E will provide JV partners with the information so that they can identify easements that affect restoration projects and know who in PG&E to work with on their projects.

## Public Outreach

CHAIR: TO BE ANNOUNCED

As the lead article in this newsletter suggests, one of the major focuses of the Public Outreach Committee this year has been addressing the public outreach issues and opportunities elicited by the spread of West Nile virus. The Public Outreach Committee has also been working on public outreach activities that can benefit specific JV restoration and protection projects such as hosting tours, developing educational displays and coordinating speakers to give presentations about the South Bay salt ponds restoration planning project.

In **May**, the committee hosted a tour for federal and state legislators and funders **along the Contra Costa County shoreline** including restoration and acquisition sites at Stege Marsh, Baxter Creek, and Bruener Marsh in Richmond, McNabney Marsh and Alameda Creek in Martinez, and Hastings Slough and Pacheco Marsh in Concord. The tour was so well received that local officials have been requesting a repeat of the tour which will occur after the elections and lame duck sessions this fall.

On October 20, the JV will host a **tour for state and federal legislators of the South Bay salt ponds**. Participants will tour the project site with Refuge Manager Clyde Morris for an up close and personal look at the interim management process and upcoming needs in the restoration of over 15,000 acres of salt ponds to a variety of wetlands habitats, the largest project of its kind in the country. While local officials have been offered tours of the ponds, this will be the first time since the acquisition that these officials will have access to the new purchase.

In other salt pond news, the **speaker's bureau** has been building momentum over the last few months with more requests for presentations coming in from groups as diverse as the League of Women's Voters, local Rotary Clubs, church group breakfast clubs and UC



Public Outreach Committee meeting July 04

Berkeley's Boalt Hall of Law. The power point presentation used by the presenters is downloadable from the project website –[www.southbayrestoration.org](http://www.southbayrestoration.org). **Educational displays** about the project are either installed or near completion for the Bay Model in Sausalito, the Environmental Education Center and Visitor Center at the National Wildlife Refuge and the Aquarium of the Bay in San Francisco.

In September the entire JV staff attended the **Restoring America's Estuaries Conference** in Seattle as a sponsor and exhibit hall participant. One of the key messages from the Conference was the need to involve more people in our effort to protect and restore America's estuaries by increasing our outreach efforts. Quite an inducement for public outreach!



Management Board of the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture

Chair, Ellie Cohen; Vice Chair, Arthur Feinstein

SF Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Francisco Estuary Project, Bay Area Open Space Council, Bay Area Audubon Council, The Conservation Fund, California Resources Agency, 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, Coastal Region Mosquito & Vector Control District, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bay Conservation and Development Commission, National Audubon Society, Urban Creeks Council