**San Francisco Bay Joint Venture**
**Restoration Committee**
**Tuesday, May 25, 12:30 – 3:45**
**State Coastal Conservancy 11th floor meeting room**
**1330 Broadway, Oakland**

*Summary Notes*

***In attendance:*** Marc Holmes, Chair *(The Bay Institute);* Ann Buell *(State Coastal Conservancy);* Cecille Caterson *(California State Parks Foundation);* Giselle Block *(US Fish and Wildlife Service),* Alice Chung; Jill Bluso Demers *(San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory);* Arthur Feinstein *(Citizen's Committee to Complete the Refuge);* Tom Gandesbery *(State Coastal Conservancy);* Tom Gardali *(PRBO Conservation Science);* Dan Gluesenkamp *(Bay Area Early Detection Network)*; John Krause *(Ca Dept. of Fish and Game*); Peter LaCivita (*US Army Corps of Engineers*); Marilyn Latta (*State Coastal Conservancy*); Moira McEnespy (*State Coastal Conservancy*); Julian Meisler (*Sonoma Land Trust*); Kevin Murray (*San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority*); Brad Olson (*East Bay Regional Parks District*); Suzanne Olyarnik (*Audubon California*); Mike Perlmutter (*Bay Area Early Detection Network*); Aviva Rossi (*Bay Area Early Detection Network*); Barbara Salzman (*Marin Audubon*); Paul Schimelfenyg (*US Army Corps of Engineers*); Maxene Spellman (*State Coastal Conservancy*); Renee Spenst (*Ducks Unlimited*); Kyle Spragens (*US Geological Survey)*; Kate Symonds (*US Fish and Wildlife Service*); Laura Valoppi (*US Geological Survey*); Isa Woo (*US Geological Survey*); Julian Wood (*PRBO Conservation Science*); Dave Yearsley (*Friends of the Petaluma River*)
***Staff:*** Beth Huning*, Coordinator;* Sandra Scoggin*, Assistant Coordinator;* Caroline Warner, *Public Outreach Coordinator*

## 1. Welcome and Introductions

## 2. Population Status and Recent Trends: Clapper Rails and other Marsh Birds of Concern

Julian Wood of PRBO Conservation Science presented information on the status and trends for tidal marsh bird species, including Clapper Rail, Black Rail, Song Sparrow, and Common Yellowthroat. After discussing marsh habitat threats and impacts, species-specific trends were covered Bay-wide as well as by Bay subregion in some cases. Most of the focus was on Clapper Rails, which are declining Bay-wide, with a 21% short term decrease from 2005 to 2008. These same decreases are seen in San Pablo Bay and the South Bay. Threats to Clapper Rails include:

<u>Acute Threats</u>
- Non-native *Spartina* removal
- Predation
- Toxic spills
- Extreme weather events

<u>Long-term Threats</u>
- Climate change
- Habitat alteration
- Pollution
- Invasive species

Julian then suggested ways to help reverse these declines:
- Understand the effects of *Spartina* removal on rail abundance
- Expand/refine re-vegetation efforts
- Predator control
- Expand demographic studies

- Observe population closely until it stabilizes

Other species were discussed.
- Song Sparrow Populations are stable overall but vary by Bay.
- Song Sparrow is decreasing in San Pablo Bay but increasing in South Bay.
- Common Yellowthroat and Black Rail are increasing overall.

For more information contact Julian at jwood@prbo.org.

## 3. Spatial Climate Change Scenarios for San Francisco Bay Tidal Marsh Habitats

Julian Wood also presented a new mapping tool for tidal marshes. The tool allows for elevation and salinity, development of subregional scenarios for future change in marsh elevation, modeling current plant and bird distributions, and projecting for a range of future scenarios. Some of the motivating issues include the need to understand how tidal marsh bird populations will respond to changing climate and how sea level rise (and salinity change) will determine future habitat availability and suitability.

Questions the tool is intended to address include the following:
- What are the prospects for long-term sustainability of existing and restored marshes?
- What are the important thresholds and sensitivities for marsh sustainability?
- Where should marsh restoration and conservation be concentrated?
- How much space exists for new marshes to form?
- How are bayland conservation goals affected by climate change?

Julian also gave a demonstration of climate change scenarios for tidal marsh habitats using a new PRBO-developed online tool that allows the user to select sea level rise ranges, sediment availability, organic material accumulation levels and other general layers.

Preliminary general conclusions include the following:
- Marshes are extremely dynamic; accretion potential over time (with non-linear SLR) needs to be considered.
- Future tidal marsh projections are highly dependent on sediment concentrations.
- Organic accumulation rates are less influential than sediment rates.
- Under high rates of SLR, marsh plain sustainability and restoration prospects are limited, except with high sediment concentrations.
- The Bay fringes have limited potential for marsh migration; therefore it is important to protect adjacent currently diked private lands.

PRBO is actively gathering feedback on this project and tool. They are interested in how it might or should affect our habitat protection and restoration goals and priorities as well as how it might inform JV and project manager decision-making processes Please contact Julian at jwood@prbo.org or Diana Stralberg at dstralberg@prbo.org

## 4. Improving tidal marsh hydrology in marshlands of San Pablo Bay: the Sonoma Creek and Tubbs Island projects

Giselle Block of the US Fish and Wildlife Service presented information on tidal marsh enhancement projects of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge, along the northern edge of the SF Estuary between the Napa and Petaluma Rivers. Projects she described were focused on Lower Tolay Creek and Lower Tubbs Island, Sonoma Creek West, the strip marsh area of the Refuge, and Sonoma Baylands South. Tidal environments in this area include subtidal (bay, slough, channel), mudflats, marsh plain, and marsh-upland ecotone. Sensitive species include salt marsh harvest mouse, rails (Black Rail, Clapper Rail and Virginia Rail), Salt Marsh Common Yellowthroat, San Pablo Song Sparrow, shorebirds, and fisheries.

The Bay has many areas of existing tidal marsh with impaired tidal hydrology and poor habitat conditions for estuarine-dependent species that are great candidates for tidal marsh habitat enhancement projects. She demonstrated how enhancement projects in existing habitat are both cost-effective and improve habitat. She encouraged JV partners to place more emphasis on enhancing existing habitat.

## 5. Army Corps of Engineers Federal Levee Vegetation Policy and future impact on projects

Paul Schimelfenyg, the Dam and Levee Safety Program Manager for the US Army Corps of Engineers presented and discussed the details of the Federal Levee Vegetation Policy. SFBJV partners had a number of questions concerning implications of this policy, which could have wide ranging impacts on restoration and management around the bay as the restrictions on vegetative growth on levees are extensive. It was clarified that the policy applies to levees maintained by the Corps, and those that may be part of a future Corps project, but not all levees, unless the land manager intends to have the Corps maintain them. For information regarding this policy, please contact Paul at 415-503-6916 or Paul.Schimelfenyg@usace.army.mil.

## 6. New Project Presentation – The Bay Area Early Detection Network (BAEDN)

Mike Perlmutter of BAEDN presented information about the network - a collaborative partnership of regional land managers and invasive species experts who coordinate early detection of, and rapid response to, limited distribution invasive plants throughout the 9 San Francisco Bay Area counties. It has been noted that invasive species are second only to habitat destruction as a threat to biodiversity and that many instances of massive invasions could be stopped much more efficiently and inexpensively if caught in the early stages.

Invasives result in:

- $143 billion/year in U.S. economic impacts.
- Over $82 million/year spent in California.
- Early detection, control, and eradication yields a cost-to-benefit of $17-$34 for every $1 invested.

San Francisco Bay is one of the most invaded aquatic ecosystems in the world. As of 2003 at least 167 species, and possibly up to 200 currently, have been introduced and established into its marine and brackish waters. According to the 2005 California State Noxious Weed Action Plan "Early detection is the single most important element in successful and economical eradication of new weeds before they become permanently established in new localities."

There was broad consensus within the committee that the JV should support the work of the Bay Area Early Detection Network. The project adoption vote was postponed to give the committee chair and JV staff time to determine the best process, since this "New Project" fell somewhat outside the boundaries of the types of projects typically adopted as JV projects, since it is a program rather than a project. It was decided that the specific action will be determined via e mail and distributed to the committee. *[NOTE: A blanked e-mail "adoption" has been approved for BAEDN activities on SFBJV-adopted habitat projects.]*

## 7. SFBJV Project Adoption Criteria Update

As a matter of saving time, Tom Gardali, Creeks Sub-Committee Chair, agreed to table action on the proposed revised project adoption criteria until the next meeting. Instead, he and Sandra provided a brief background on the purpose of the update. JV staff had requested his help in updating the criteria in our adoption document to clarify those relevant to riparian projects. The reasoning for the proposed changes were that SFBJV staff had discovered a number of projects on the SFBJV list of adopted project that were not focused on providing habitat values, many of which had been added to the JV project list prior to the completion of the original SFBJV Project Adoption Criteria document.

The proposed changes include the following:
• clarification of reference documents to be used to document how projects meet the criteria, and
• more specific instructions on supporting information to include that will make both the adoption process and inclusion in the SFBJV database more thorough and easy to complete.

## 8. SFBJV Program Updates

SFBJV staff provided the following updates:

- *Science Coordinator*
  Applications are due at the end of May. Interviews will take place in June and early July.
- *JV Monitoring and Evaluation Plan*
  A meeting of JV partner scientists was held to develop a scope of work for the plan. The team recommended that this become a focused project for the Science Coordinator rather than utilizing multiple independent contractors.
- *Project Design Review*
  Projects from the Sonoma Ecology Center and Sonoma Land Trust have been selected for the first round of Design Review sessions. The first session will take place on June 10.
- *Seasonal Wetlands Goals Update*
  The final two meetings for Napa/Solano and South Bay have yet to be scheduled. It is anticipated that these will be completed before the end of the summer.
- *Quarterly Project Update Reminder*
  The JV has a newly automated process that sends quarterly reminders to project managers to update their projects in the SFBJV project tracking system. Sarah Rose, JV intern, has been updating accurate project contacts. Anyone who is noted as a "primary" project contact should have received a message last week. This is the first test of this new system; so please reply as requested. Only update those projects that have had changes to their status. We continue to encourage partners to update projects as changes occur, including funding needs and those that change the project's priority status from one tier to another.
- *Ramsar Nomination for SF Bay*
  We are lining up the final letters of support and updating to the application prior to submitting it this fall.
- *San Pablo Bay Mapping*
  Corrections have been incorporated and the final maps should be complete within the next couple of weeks.
- *Featured Project on the SFBJV Web Stie*
  The JV is featuring partner projects on our website and in our regular update e mail. To have your project posted, contact Caroline Warner at cwarner@sfbayjv.org.

## 9. Announcements and Project Updates

Isa Woo: USGS has received funding for a study of movement by Clapper Rails during on winter high tides.

Suzanne Olyarnik: Audubon California will be announcing a public comment period on the draft EIR for the Aramburu Island Restoration Project. Suzanne is leaving Audubon for a position at the Bodega Bay Marine Lab. Kathy Boardman will be her replacement, with offices at Richardson Bay Audubon Center. Her expertise is native and non-native plants and impacts on bird communities

Marilyn Latta: The Draft Subtidal Goals report will be out on June 16. There will be a public meeting the same day. Partners are encouraged to review the document and provide comments either at public meetings or in writing.

Brad Olson: EBRPD has started the restoration design of Bruener Marsh and started planning for the Albany beach restoration.

Peter LaCivita: The Corps levee regulations discussed earlier in the meeting also address safety risk and risk of financial liability.

Barbara Salzman: Marin Audubon is getting their last permit for a 19-acre enhancement project. They still seek funding to purchase the Mira Monte property on the Petaluma Marsh.

Renee Spenst:. DU has projects on the dockets of both the Coastal Conservancy and Wildlife Conservation Board this next week. They are Cullinan Ranch restoration and interpretation at Bair Island. DU is also conducting monitoring at Napa Sonoma Marshes.

Julian Meisler: The Sonoma Land Trust is working through permitting and design for the Sears Point Restoration Project. It will soon be determined whether construction can commence by 2011.

Jill Demers– SFBBO is studying the effects of shells as habitat enhancement.

Tom Gardali: Landscape Conservation Cooperative project proposals are due June 1. UC Extension will be evaluating the NRCS conservation practices for their wildlife values.

Laura Valoppi: The South Bay Salt Ponds project will be doing several breaches soon. They are working on getting permanent tide gates at the Alviso/Coyote Creek confluence and another at the Dumbarton narrows.

David Yearsley: Petaluma River Partners starting another season of tours. Check out their website for more information.

Dan Gluesenkamp: BAEDN has received stimulus funding. Partners were encouraged to report invasive upland species through the BAEDN website.

Marc Holmes: A federal bill has been introduced to create a San Francisco Bay program under EPA and authorize funding of up to $1 billion over 10 years. The bill would elevate importance and bring attention additional funding to SF Bay Partners were encouraged to send letters. Those that can do so should contact Marc.
*Action: Marc will circulate a template letter.*

Beth Huning: A number of changes to the State of the State's Wetlands Report were suggested by partners of the SF Bay and Central Valley JV's. The SFBJV is encouraging the Resources Agency to carefully consider those comments letters and incorporate them and additional comments submitted by the JV's.

The Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC) are now a Department of Interior Program. The California LCC, which includes the SFBJV and CVJV regions, has been launched. Debra Schlafmann has been hired as the coordinator. USGS, PRBO and others have been invited so submit full proposals for funding by the program.

**10. The Restoration Committee meeting of May 25, 2010 was adjourned.**