

San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge Acquisition Boundary Expansion

Sonoma Land Trust strongly supports expansion of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge acquisition boundary as part of our campaign to protect and restore 20,000 acres of tidal wetland habitat in the San Pablo Baylands, helping to meet state and federal 30 x 30 goals.

Background The San Pablo Baylands were once a network of thousands of acres of tidal and seasonal wetlands rich with wildlife. Today, that habitat is largely gone, as the area was diked and drained for agriculture and other purposes. Now deeply subsided, the region's diked baylands are susceptible to chronic flooding. Flooding, and loss of habitat, species, and ecological function will increase with climate change-driven sea level rise and increased storm intensity.

Tidal Wetland Restoration While reduced emissions remain a central response to climate change, significant sea level rise is unavoidable, underway, and accelerating. Tidal wetland restoration is the most effective and least expensive tool for adapting to sea level rise in the North Bay. We have available land to build natural infrastructure to absorb future flooding, while providing habitat and recreation opportunities. We are at a critical moment, with the latest IPCC climate reports urging us to act now, an unprecedented prioritization of state and federal funding for conservation, restoration, and climate change resilience, and many private property owners ready to sell land with high conservation value.

Expanding the Acquisition Boundary of San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge Much of the acreage identified for acquisition and restoration in the coming decade is outside of the Refuge's acquisition boundary. The ability to transfer fee title of protected and restored property to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Refuge is critical to meeting regional conservation and restoration goals. We must work with the community, USFWS, and our congressional representatives to expand the acquisition boundary of the Refuge.

Refuge acquisition boundary expansion requires congressional action, and we need your support. While infrastructure improvements like the rebuilding of State Route 37 enjoy bipartisan support, it must go hand in hand with investment in natural infrastructure. The coming years hold deep political uncertainty, and it is critical to act now.

Increasing Staff Capacity at San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge We cannot achieve boundary expansion without the support and approval of USFWS staff. Currently, the Refuge is understaffed. We hope Congress and the administration can provide additional funding to add staff capacity at the Refuge, so that we are able to move this initiative forward.



The Sonoma Creek Baylands facing southeast. This photograph, taken during the wet winter of 2019, demonstrates the extensive flooding that occurs in this region and that will worsen with sea level rise. The properties pictured are a mixture of public and private ownership. Sonoma Land Trust's goal is to purchase, restore and transfer privately-owned lands to the Refuge.