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A Framework for Collaborative Action on Wetlands

US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Wetlands in the San Francisco Bay Area are among the most important coastal wintering and migratory stopover areas for millions of waterfowl and shorebirds traveling along the Pacific Flyway, which stretches from Alaska to South America. These wetlands also provide economic benefits, offer a range of recreational opportunities, and contribute to a higher quality of life for residents in the densely populated San Francisco Bay Area. They are essential aspects of the Bay region's unique character and, along with the creeks that flow into the Bay, help to define the vibrant and distinctive identities of communities around the Bay. However, despite their value, destruction of these precious natural assets continues. Today's wetlands are only a remnant, perhaps 20 percent of the vast wetlands seen by the first European settlers. Yet the destruction has continued. Likewise, some 95 percent of the Bay Area's riparian habitat has been damaged or destroyed, and some of the five percent remaining is threatened.

Purpose of the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture and Its Implementation Strategy

Responding to the loss of wetlands and their potential functions and values, individuals representing a

range of interests—including resource and regulatory agencies, environmental organizations, business, and agriculture—convened the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture (**SFBJV**) in June of 1995. In September 1996, 20 parties representing this diverse wetlands constituency signed a working agreement that identified the goals and objectives of the SFBJV, and the responsibilities of its board and working committees. The agreement also stated that the Implementation Strategy would be developed to guide its parties toward the long-term vision of the restored Bay Estuary. The signatory partners recognized and endorsed the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. However, they enlarged the goals and objectives of the Plan to include benefits not only for waterfowl, but also for the other wildlife that depends on Bay wetlands and riparian habitats. (See **Appendix A** for the "SFBJV Working Agreement.")

As defined in the Working Agreement, the goal of the SFBJV *"is to protect, restore, increase, and enhance all types of wetlands, riparian habitat, and associated uplands throughout the San Francisco Bay region to benefit waterfowl and other fish and wildlife populations."* Several objectives (or means to accomplish the goals) were defined. In summary, these are:

- Protecting, restoring, and enhancing wetlands, riparian habitat, and associated uplands by funding restoration, applying incentives, and other non-regulatory approaches



Avocets, cormorants, and the San Francisco skyline
 MARK RAUZON, 1995

- Strengthening the sources of funding for these efforts
- Providing support for monitoring and evaluation of existing restoration projects
- Preparing an Implementation Strategy for the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture
- Supporting monitoring of habitat restoration projects and research to improve future initiatives.

The SFBJV Implementation Strategy serves as the concept plan for partners to accomplish the Joint Venture’s goals and objectives by using an innovative collaborative and non-regulatory approach. It is based on an ecosystem perspective that integrates the range of biological requirements with public health and safety considerations of wetlands. It offers strategies to help fulfill the stated acquisition, enhancement, and restoration goals for wetland habitats. These habitat goals and associated strategies are designed to guide the Joint Venture partners in identifying priorities for wetland and riparian habitat protection and restoration, in determining funding needs and resources, and in recommending actions and partnerships to carry out the habitat goals.

The SFBJV’s integrated biological vision is reflected by the Joint Venture’s organizational inclusiveness and diversity: its Management Board now consists of 27 agencies, nonprofit conservation organizations, business representatives, and agricultural groups, all working toward the stated goals and objectives. A broad range of roles and abilities is present among these diverse partner organizations (**Table 1-1**). By joining forces, arriving at common interests, leveraging existing resources, and finding new resources and partners, the Joint Venture intends to protect and restore far more wetland

**Table 1-1
 Organizations Represented on the Management Board of the
 San Francisco Bay Joint Venture**

| Nonprofit & Private Organizations | Public Agencies (Ex-Officio Members) |
|--|--|
| Adopt-A-Watershed | Bay Conservation and Development Commission |
| Bay Area Audubon Council | California Department of Fish and Game |
| Bay Area Open Space Council | Coastal Conservancy |
| Bay Planning Coalition | Coastal Region, Mosquito and Vector Control District |
| Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge | National Fish and Wildlife Foundation |
| Ducks Unlimited, Inc. | National Marine Fisheries Service |
| National Audubon Society | Natural Resources Conservation Service |
| Point Reyes Bird Observatory | Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Francisco Bay Region |
| PG&E Corporation | San Francisco Estuary Project |
| Save San Francisco Bay Association | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers |
| Sierra Club | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency |
| The Bay Institute | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| The Conservation Fund | Wildlife Conservation Board |
| Urban Creeks Council of California | |

habitat than would be possible if all the partners were to work separately.

Policy Foundations of the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture

The groundwork for the SFBJV was laid over a decade ago with the signing of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. The United States and Canada signed in 1986, followed by Mexico in 1994. The Plan was designed to foster public/private partnerships to increase waterfowl populations to 1970 levels. It designated the San Francisco Bay as one of 34 “Waterfowl Habitat Areas of Major Concern” in the U.S. and Canada. The major emphasis of the Plan was on the restoration and enhancement of wetland ecosystems as the basis for recovery of waterfowl and other associated migratory birds. It called for the formation of cooperative associations or “joint ventures.” These joint ventures were formed between federal and state agencies and private organizations to collaborate in planning, funding and implementing projects designed to conserve and enhance wetlands in high priority regions of North America. The Plan created this organizational framework to accomplish waterfowl population goals, and directed that joint ventures prepare their own implementation strategies identifying protection, enhancement, and restoration acreage goals and objectives.

The Plan’s overall goal is to ensure habitat for 62 million breeding ducks and a fall flight of more than 100 million. The continent-wide planning effort is being led by 14 regionally oriented joint ventures with region-specific objectives and strategies founded on waterfowl research conducted by federal and state agencies. In the San Francisco Bay Area, this research is contained in the 1989 *Concept Plan for Waterfowl Habitat* prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The approach of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan has been enormously successful over

the past decade. As of 1998, about 1.8 million acres had been protected, 642,500 acres had been restored and 2.14 million acres had been enhanced by the ten reporting joint ventures in the United States. Partner contributions totaled \$1.5 billion from federal, state, and local governments, private organizations, and individuals. For more information about the relationship of the SFBJV to the Plan see Appendix B.

Other conservation planning initiatives on behalf of birds have recognized the success of the Plan and are emulating it. Partners in Flight, a coalition of bird conservation groups, is focusing on neotropical migrants, and has recently prepared a riparian bird conservation plan for California. The Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences recently completed the United States Shorebird Conservation Plan in cooperation with the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, which assumed responsibility for the section regarding shorebirds on the California coast, San Francisco Bay, and in the Central Valley. A continent-wide conservation plan has also been prepared for “colonial waterbirds” (which include terns, gulls, herons, and egrets). Late in 1998, leaders from these separate initiatives began developing a framework to promote cooperative, ecologically based migratory bird conservation throughout the nation. The SFBJV has been coordinating and collaborating with other bird conservation planning efforts and will continue to do so.

A joint venture in the San Francisco Bay Area was also envisioned as a means to implement the *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP)* for the San Francisco Bay. The CCMP is



The Golden Gate: San Francisco Estuary meets the Pacific Ocean. LISA WOO SHANKS, 1999



Canada geese in flight CENTRAL VALLEY HABITAT JOINT VENTURE, 1995

a plan for the estuary, the product of a five-year consensus-building process known as the San Francisco Estuary Project. It was completed in March 1993, and signed by 42 agencies and organizations. The CCMP specifically called for the formation of a joint venture to increase the acreage of wetlands permanently protected in the San Francisco Estuary.

Wetland characterizations and habitat acreage goals contained in the present Strategy, along with their scientific basis, are derived from the findings and habitat recommendations of the *Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals (Habitat Goals)*, a visionary ecosystem management plan for the restoration of the Bay Estuary, published in March 1999. More than 100 scientists and resource managers from many organizations and disciplines collaborated for four years to produce the document in light of comments from public and environmental organizations.

For a closer look at how the CCMP and *Habitat Goals* serve as a foundation for this implementation strategy, see Appendix B.

Geographic Scope

The San Francisco Bay Joint Venture encompasses the San Francisco Bay and the watersheds that drain into the estuary. As shown in **Figure 1-1**, it includes substantial parts of the nine counties surrounding the San Francisco Bay. Flanked to the northwest by the Pacific Coast Joint Venture and to the east by the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture (CVHJV), the SFBJV is the only joint venture to be found in a major metropolitan area. It extends into the San Joaquin Delta as far as Brentwood along the Contra

Costa County shoreline, but does not include all of Suisun Bay, only its uplands. The remaining area, including that portion of the Suisun Marsh below the 10-foot contour line, is within the scope of the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture. The SFBJV and the CVHJV recognize Suisun Bay and the far eastern part of Contra Costa as “areas of mutual interest.” They will coordinate and cooperate, wherever appropriate, on projects within these areas. The geographic scope of the SFBJV also includes coastal San Francisco and San Mateo Counties, although not western Marin and Sonoma Counties, as these are currently part of the Pacific Coast Joint Venture territory. However, it is likely that the SFBJV will annex coastal Marin and Sonoma Counties from the Pacific Coast Joint Venture in the near future.

Accomplishments to Date

The diverse and innovative financial and technical partnerships among the many agency organizations that make up the SFBJV have enabled its partners to undertake wetland projects of significant scope. **(Table 1-2)** Between July 1996 and October 1999, SFBJV partners were involved in 22 separate projects to protect, restore, or enhance wetlands in the San Francisco Bay Area. Over 11,100 acres of wetlands have benefited from SFBJV partnerships.

Achieving protection for existing wetlands is an important first step. The acquisition efforts of SFBJV partners have already protected 3,300 acres, including Bair Island where 1,600 acres have been placed under federal protection and will be restored to tidal action. The Peninsula Open Space Trust and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are leading this immense effort. At Hamilton Airfield, tidal action will be restored to 800 acres in a project that is currently in the planning phases. The Army Corps of Engineers, California Coastal Conservancy, Marin Audubon, and the Port of Oakland are partners in this major project.

The number and scale of wetland conservation projects have increased recently. In spring 2000, planning and implementation were under way for over 30,000 acres of wetland and creek projects around the Estuary (as discussed in Chapter 6 of this document). One of the more substantial of the tidal marsh restoration projects, for example, is the almost 14,000 acres of wetlands enhancement, restoration, and protection that will be conducted through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant for the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

Figure 1-1
San Francisco Bay Joint Venture Geographic Scope and Subregions

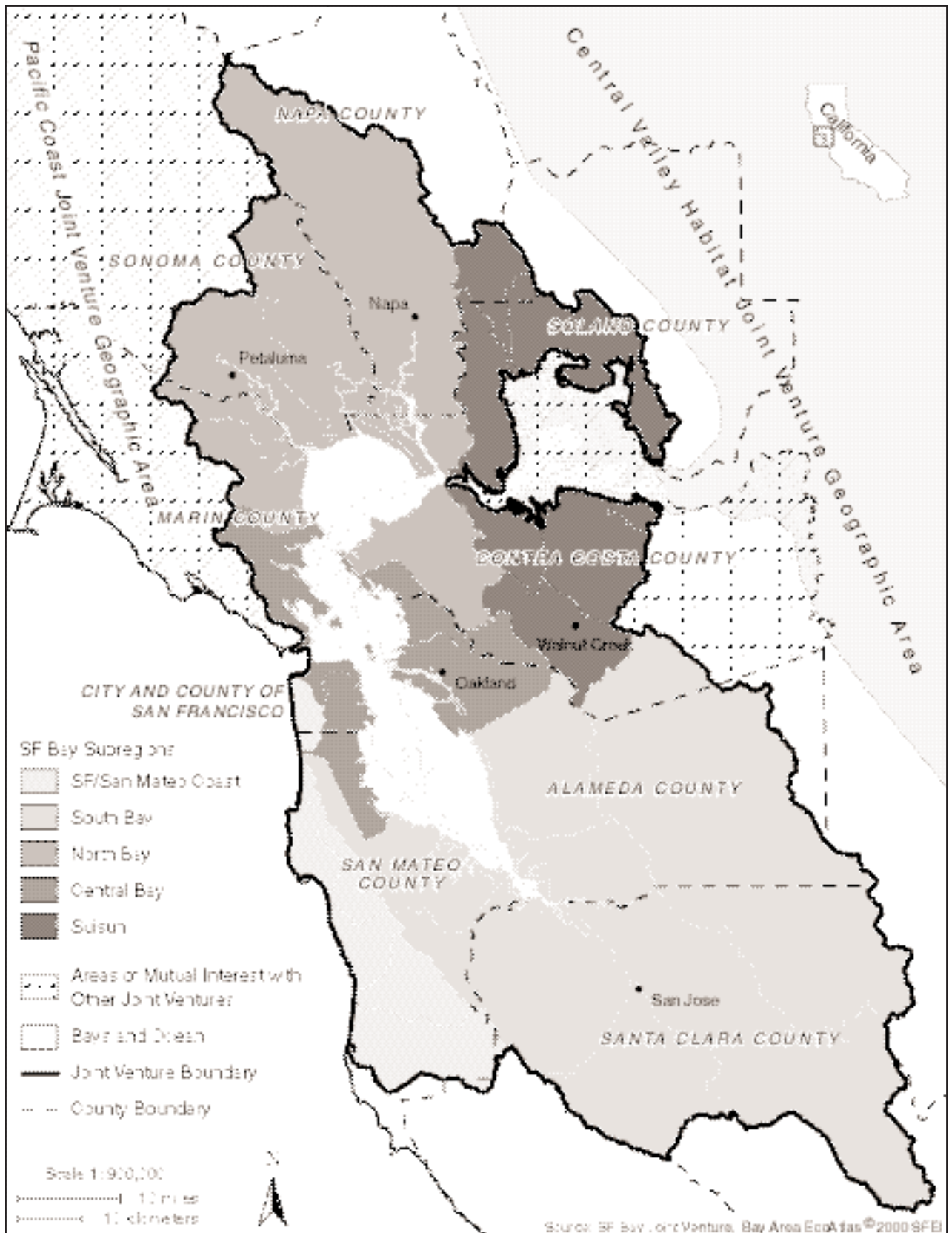


Table 1-2

San Francisco Bay Joint Venture Partners' Completed Habitat Protection and Restoration Projects (1996-1999)

| Project Name | Lead Partners | Additional Partners | Protected (acres) | Restored (acres) | Enhanced (acres) |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Arrowhead Marsh | EBRPD, Port of Oakland | Golden Gate Audubon, STB, Sierra Club | 72 | 72 | 0 |
| Bair Island* | POST, USFWS | CCC, Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, WCB, Audubon | 1,600 | 1,600* | 0 |
| Bull Island | NCLT, CDFG | State Lands Commission | 109 | 0 | 0 |
| Camp Two | WCB, CDFG | STB, SSRCD | 608 | 0 | 0 |
| Crissy Field | National Park Service | CA Public Utilities Commission, Haas Fund, S.F. International Airport, CCC, City of SF | 0 | 20 | 0 |
| Eden Landing* | CDFG | Caltrans, Cities of San Jose, Fremont, and Milpitas, EBRPD, WCB | 835 | 600* | 345* |
| Gallinas Creek | Marin Audubon Society | CCC, Gallinas Sanitation District, USFWS, RWQCB | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Mark Frelier Property | Natural Resource Conservation Service | landowner, Contra Costa RCD, USFWS | 0 | 437 | 0 |
| Moseley Tract | City of San Jose | City of San Jose | 52 | 52* | 0 |
| Napa/Sonoma Marsh-Pond 2A | CDFG | DU, WCB | 0 | 550 | 0 |
| Oro Loma | EBRPD | City of Hayward, CCC, DFG, USFWS, WCB, GGAS | 0 | 364 | 0 |
| Pier 98 | Port of San Francisco | BCDC, CCC, GGAS, City of SF | 0 | 0 | 14 |
| Pillar Point* | San Mateo County | San Mateo County Parks | 23 | 0 | 0 |
| Point Edith* | CCMVCD | CDFG | 0 | 0 | 850 |
| Ravenswood* | MPROSD | MPROSD | 0 | 200 | 0 |
| Roe Island | CDFG | Department of Water Resources | 0 | 67 | 0 |
| Rush Creek | CDFG, County of Marin | Marin Audubon, CCC, Marin Community Fdn., USFWS, RWQCB | 0 | 0 | 300 |
| San Pablo Marsh | USFWS, CDFG | CDFG, USFWS | 0 | 0 | 1,400 |
| Shell Marsh | CCMVCD | CDFG, Caltrans | 0 | 300 | 0 |
| Shoreline at Mountain View | City of Mountain View | City of Mountain View | 0 | 60 | 0 |
| Tolay Creek | USFWS | CDFG, DU, EPA, Natural Resource Cons. Service, SSRCD, STB | 0 | 117 | 318 |
| Triangle Marsh | CCC, Marin Audubon | USFWS, State Lands Commission, CDFG, WCB, Individual Donors | 33 | 0 | 0 |
| Tubbs Island | DU | USFWS | 0 | 0 | 125 |
| TOTAL | | | 3,332 | 4,444 | 3,352 |

Source: San Francisco Estuary Project, 1999. Bay - Delta Environmental Report Card; SFBJV November 1999

*Projects with ongoing acquisition, restoration, and enhancement efforts

Abbreviations: CCC—California Coastal Conservancy, CDFG—California Department of Fish and Game, CCMVCD—Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District, DU—Ducks Unlimited, EBRPD—East Bay Regional Parks District, GGAS—Golden Gate Audubon Society, MPROSD—Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District, NCLT—Napa County Land Trust, POST—Peninsula Open Space Trust, RWQCB—Regional Water Quality Control Board, STB—Save the Bay, SSRCD—Southern Sonoma Resource Conservation District, USFWS—U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, WCB—Wildlife Conservation Board