



South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project

Restoring the Wild Heart of the South Bay

To: South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project Team, Shoreline Study Partners

From: Center for Collaborative Policy

Re: September 23, 2010 Alviso Working Group Meeting Outcomes

Background: The South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project/South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Study held the third meeting of the Alviso Santa Clara County Working Group (Working Group) on Thursday, September 23, 2010 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the San Jose/Santa Clara Water Treatment Plant in San Jose. The Working Group was convened to provide ongoing input and advice to the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project Management Team (PM Team) and the partners of the South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Study (Shoreline Study) on Phase 1 restoration and public access implementation, as well as flood protection planning.

Meeting Attendance: Attachment 1 lists meeting participants.

Meeting Materials: In advance of the meeting, Working Group members were provided with a meeting agenda, a summary of the prior meeting, a summary of the last Stakeholder Forum meeting and a Phase 2: Preliminary Options for Future Actions document. At the meeting, a printout of the meeting slides and a South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project brochure were available. Most presentations are available on the SBSP Project website (www.southbayrestoration.org).

Substantive Meeting Outcomes:

1. Welcome, Self-Introductions and Agenda Review.

John Bourgeois, Executive Project Manager, welcomed participants and led a round of self-introductions. Ariel Ambruster, facilitator with the Center for Collaborative Policy, reviewed the day's agenda.

2. Tracking Our Progress Project-wide

John Bourgeois provided a status report on South Bay Salt Ponds management, funding and construction, with the aid of PowerPoint slides. He introduced himself as the new Executive Project Manager, having taken over at the beginning of 2010 from Steve Ritchie, who has taken a position at the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. He is sharing leadership with Len Cardoza, who is serving as Project Manager for the South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Study.

In regards to funding, he reviewed the array of federal, mitigation/penalty, local and state bond funds that have supported the Project recently. These include \$7.4 million in federal stimulus funds provided through NOAA to the Project and invasive Spartina control, as well as federal appropriations for construction and science. Local funding has been provided from the Santa Clara Valley Water District and the Alameda County Flood Control District. State funding has been provided through the State Coastal Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Board.

Construction in other parts of the Project outside Alviso includes completion of habitat reconfiguration and public access construction earlier in September at Pond SF2 in Ravenswood. Interpretive signage has also been installed at Bedwell Bayfront Park in Menlo Park. At the Eden Landing ponds near Hayward, construction has begun on a 630-acre tidal marsh project and final design is underway for habitat reconfiguration on 230 acres. In addition, final designs are complete for a kayak launch, trail and viewing platforms.

3. Tracking Our Progress at Alviso

Project managers and partners, with the aid of PowerPoint slides and handouts, presented an update on Phase 1 restoration and public access construction in Alviso. John Bourgeois, Executive Project Manager, began with an update on vegetation growth and wildlife use at the Island Ponds (Ponds A19, 20 and 21), which were restored in 2006.

Questions/Comments

Q: What was the subsidence at Island Ponds?

A: A couple feet.

Q: Is the vegetation pickleweed?

A: Yes, and cordgrass, too.

Pond A8 Restoration Work

Beth Dyer of the Santa Clara Valley Water District gave an overview of construction on 1400 acres at Ponds A8, A5 and A7 to develop shallow tidal habitat and new marsh. Groundbreaking began in January 2010 to install a 40-foot armored notch with eight closable gates, connected to the Guadalupe River (Alviso Slough). Construction is almost complete, except for small tasks. A mercury report released in February 2010 concluded that methyl mercury will probably not be a problem if the ponds are converted to marsh. The gates will be opened in spring 2011. They need to be closed through winter for salmon migration and to make sure the ponds, part of the Water District's flood management system, have sufficient storage capacity.

Questions/Comments:

Q: What about a weir for overflow?

A: It is roughly in the same location. The armored notch is a small structure, and the weir is about a quarter-mile long.

Q: Is there a large drop from the notch structure to the levee?

A: The weir is not exactly a structure, but really a lower part of the levee. The bottom of the notch is at the bottom of the pond. So the weir is still part of the levee, and the notch allows free exchange between the pond and the slough.

Q: Will it be closed every year December through May?

A: At this point, it's our regulatory requirement.

Q: Is the mercury situation okay because of the increased flow? What is the finding on methyl mercury based on? Is it because of the reduction in the wet to dry cycle?

A: Correct.

Q: Is there habitat for plovers on A8?

A: We have lowered Pond A12, so there is good plover habitat there. A8 will have about 2-3 feet more water than it has now. They still may nest on the outer levees.

Q: Is there room for them on the lower levee by the Bay Trail?

A: They never nested on the levees.

Q: If there is increased bioactivity, could this move mercury higher up? I'm concerned that it could be retained in the sediments.

A: Right now we are not entirely certain, and that's why we are conducting ongoing monitoring to look at what happens to mercury over time. The preliminary finding is that restoration will not be detrimental to species because of mercury. There are two concerns. One is that the sediments will be scoured by introducing water. That's why we are monitoring. The other concern is about how mercury interacts with other biological elements in the pond, the quantity, where it is in the dirt, and the methylation process. We are looking at all those issues. Pond A8 is deeply subsided. If anything, the mercury will be buried very deep.

Pond A6 Restoration Work

Eric Mruz of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Refuge Manager, reviewed the work that will take place at the 330-acre Pond A6 at the mouth of the Guadalupe River to develop tidal marsh. It was planned for restoration in 2008, but invasive *Spartina* was found and control work has been underway for two years. Now, the pond can be breached and construction, managed by Ducks Unlimited, is expected in October, to be finished by the end of November. The project is designed to restore historic channels. There will be four breaches with ditch blocks to force water and sediment into the pond. Managers are hoping to increase sediment in the pond. Applied studies will measure sedimentation rates and compare them with the Island Ponds, and will monitor where the gull colony of 40,000 birds will go once the pond is breached.

Questions/Comments:

Q: Do you expect the same sedimentation rates as you saw in Pond A21?

A: We hope so, but this pond is more subsided. We will be able to compare sedimentation rates and predict when habitat will begin to show up.

Q: Could there be unforeseen problems with gulls taking over this new territory?

A: They nested on the Farallones two years ago and also in the Central Valley. We are watching this very closely. We are working with the dumps to improve their covering. Newby Island has been very successful in keeping gulls out.

Q: Are biological controls possible, such as putting something in their food?

A: It's very difficult to control gull populations -- you have to do it year after year and the Refuge doesn't have the resources.

Moffett Field Section of the Bay Trail

John Bourgeois said that after many years of negotiations to finalize federal approvals, a 2.4 mile segment of the Bay Trail near Moffett Field was opened on September 20.

There were no questions.

Pond A16-17 Restoration Work

John Bourgeois reported that this project has been delayed. It was originally intended to be an intensively managed pond like SF2, but engineering studies showed that, because of pond depths, water movement would be very difficult and expensive. The project was redesigned with the same concept, but with islands placed in the southern part of Pond A17. Another challenge is that the mud is soupy, so it is difficult building islands. Because of this, engineers are conducting a redesign. Managers are considering moving ahead with tidal marsh restoration of the northern part of A17 to save on construction costs. The re-design is expected to be complete in February 2011.

Questions/Comments:

Q: What will happen to the existing tern islands?

A: They will stay, and we may throw up some dirt to create high spots. That might also help us find out if highly designed islands are better than humps of mud.

Q: How will the water be managed? Do you expect A16 vegetation?

A: These ponds will be managed for shallow water, 12 inches or less, with deeper channels. With shallow water, there are immediately water quality concerns about high temperatures, so the water control structures have to be able to turn over water very rapidly. To avoid impacts, water will flow in from A17 and move out Artesian Slough. We are looking if it is possible also to reverse the flow.

Q: Is A16 connected to A13?

A: No, A13 is connected to A15, and A15 to A16 through a siphon at the railroad tracks.

Pond A16-17 Public Access

Jennifer Heroux of the US Fish and Wildlife Service gave an overview of three interpretive panels that have been designed for these ponds, which are right next to the Environmental Education Center. They will be in English and Spanish and focus on the restoration, microscopic creatures in the water, and the causes behind the different colors of salt pond water.

In addition, Heroux noted that the docent program has been restarted. A training will be held in 2011, and the public is invited to attend and become involved.

There were no questions.

4. Phase 2 Planning for Alviso

John Bourgeois, with the aid of the document "Phase 2: Preliminary Options for Future Actions," introduced participants to the initial ideas that Project Managers are beginning to think about for the Alviso complex. Managers want to hear what Alviso Working Group members' thoughts and priorities are for the Project's next steps at Alviso. The key question is: What would you like to see happen next at Alviso, given what is feasible until flood levees get built?

Questions/Comments:

Comment: Perhaps you could focus on the blue ponds -- work on the ponds that are farther from the flood control structure.

Comment: You could work on expanded tidal wetlands for sediment deposition.

Comment: I agree, start with the blue ponds.

Comment: Keep this in the public eye. There is an increased population at the marina now. Target that audience.

Participants used post-its, maps and butcher paper posted at two stations to give their ideas for Phase 2 restoration and public access actions. Project managers were available to answer questions and converse about various ideas.

After the exercise, John Bourgeois and Brenda Buxton of the State Coastal Conservancy reported on the ideas generated at their respective stations:

Station 1 Ideas

- Make sure to include the trail at A16/17 and keep it intact
- A22/23 Bay Trail expansion.
- Don't affect wildlife
- Question: How does water operate behind Lockheed Martin?
- Highlight the upland zones for restoration.

Comment: There's a need for flood protection for Alviso. It's nice to have a tidal area available, instead of sediment deposition in the Slough. I know you are putting off consideration of the blue ponds, but if tidal wetland is flood protection, can't we consider working on Ponds 9 & 10 and beefing up that internal levee?

Station 2 Ideas

- That railroad that runs through Alviso is the Achilles heel of the flood protection system
- For public access, we could move forward. New levees or not, if a trail is intended to be there, move forward, even if on an existing levee.

- Develop some signage and elevated overage looking out over Drawbridge
- This project needs to prepare for the Water Trail. Think about the Water Trail in Phase 2.

Comment: I sort of agree with Charles, it's nice to get something going with the blue ponds, but I understand why not, even having been involved in meetings from the beginning. Keep this in the public eye: I know there are money issues, but there are a lot of people who may want to know about what is going on with this Project. There are a number of people out at the Marina now. I don't see any signs for the South Bay Salt Ponds project. But we have gotten more and more people in and out, and that's the kind of people we need on board.

5. Shoreline Study Update

Len Cardoza, Project Manager for the South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Study, gave an update on the Study with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation. The Army Corps of Engineers held its Study Feasibility Scoping Meeting on September 18. The meeting is to determine if there is a problem, how to move forward and if there is a federal interest in flood protection in the area. Giving a sneak preview of the draft preliminary map, the Corps research indicates so far that the highest potential flood damages would be in Alviso. Sea level rise would be expected to cause a 2.3 feet increase in the Bay in the next 50 years, with a 100-year flood. The Shoreline Study schedule would result in a report submitted to Congress in June 2016 to authorize the project. Why is this so far out in the future? There have been cost overruns, schedule slips and geotechnical issues -- the analysis has not taken into consideration that the levees were built for salt production, not flood control, and are maintained by the US Fish and Wildlife Service for habitat, not flood control. He asked for help from meeting participants on options for moving forward:

1. Should we concentrate on the four areas with significant damage and reduce the scope of the project?
2. Another option might be to try to put some congressional language in WRDA or an appropriations bill to direct specific Corps actions to move the project forward.
3. A pilot project, similar to Sonoma Baylands, might be a way to accelerate the process.

One thing the Corps has heard is that the Study needs more information from the public through scoping and outreach.

Questions/Comments:

Q: Will the study look at marsh restoration as a way to increase fluvial capacity? It could be a potential funding source.

A: The Shoreline Study is a multi-purpose project. But tidal marsh is not a substitute for levees. There already have been fluvial studies; the Shoreline Study is focused on tidal flooding.

Q: The FSM is three years behind -- why?

A: The Corps convened a national levee study after Katrina.

Comment: In regards to your three suggestions, we think you should do all three - whatever it takes to shorten the schedule.

Q: Is Shoreline Study modeling now more difficult because of levees after Katrina?

A: Yes.

Comment: This is awful. We can't wait until 2016. What can we come up with? We need an alternative. The Bay Planning Coalition would be happy to work with you.

Response: We are looking closely at what an early implementation pilot would be. We are considering our options on the local sponsor side; on how can we get this jumpstarted.

Comment: Wind conditions are important in the South Bay - the Study needs to look at that.

Q: A three-day storm, more than a 24-hour storm, leads to fluvial/tidal interactions. Is a multiple-day high runoff storm being looked at?

A: The Study is not just focused on a 100-year event. It is looking at different types of storms, as well as other considerations. SCVWD is looking at diverting into Pond A4.

Q: Is that part of what you are looking at?

A: At SCVWD, we are looking at projects with overlapping geography. We share everyone's frustration on the delays.

6. San Jose Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant Master Plan Update

Matt Krupp and Kirsten Struve of the City of San Jose gave an update on land-use alternatives developed as part of the Plant Master Plan process that began in 2007 and is scheduled to be completed in 2012-13. The presentation was aided by a PowerPoint. Pond A18, which is 860 acres, is part of the Plant lands. The Plant is taking into consideration reduced future acreage needed for biosolids, habitat needs of listed species, and potential sea level rise as it looks at new land uses. Top potential uses are renewable energy, retail, light industry, office research and development, institutional, marsh and mud flats, wetlands, creek habitat, lakes and effluent ponds, parks, trails, grassland uplands and an educational center. Now, planners are creating a hybrid of three alternatives, and are still open to public input.

They will present a draft alternative to the City Council in December, and will hold a community workshop in early 2011. City planners have been meeting with the resources agencies, the Salt Ponds Project, environmental groups, and will be meeting with the Alviso community. Planners have realized that there is no way to make everyone 100% happy. The public is welcome to attend the next meeting of the plan's Community Advisory Group at 6 PM on September 30.

Questions/Comments:

Q: What is your estimate of sea level rise?

A: We are waiting to see the flood maps coming out of the Shoreline Study, including their assumptions about sea level rise.

Q: How do you manage A8 now?

A: It's a flow-through -- structures can intake or discharge.

Q: In regards to the Water Board, would you need any mitigation wetlands?

A: No, we have met all the Regional Board requirements for a long time. We have been below the discharge trigger.

Attachment 1:**Alviso/Santa Clara WG September 23, 2010 Meeting Attendance**

Name	Organization/Affiliation
Jill Demers	San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory
Joe Ethier	
Jim Foran	SCCOSA
Al Gurevich	SCVWD
Ellen Johnck	Bay Planning Coalition
Matt Krupp	City of San Jose
Libby Lucas	CNPS-SC Valley OHAP
Ryan Mayfield	City of San Jose
Eileen McLaughlin	CCCR
Sean Michael	
Dick Santos	SCVWD
Kirsten Struve	City of San Jose
Charles Taylor	SBYC
Laura Thompson	Bay Trail
Kirk Willard	Lockheed Martin
Nayer Zahiri	SCCVCD