



# 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:** June 21, 2012 Alviso Santa Clara Working Group Meeting Outcomes

**Background:** The South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project/South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Study held a meeting of the Alviso Santa Clara County Working Group (Working Group), a subcommittee of both the Project's Stakeholder Forum and the South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Study, on Thursday, June 21, 2012 from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. at the San Jose Santa Clara Water Pollution Control 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 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. At the meeting, summaries of the prior Alviso meeting; a printout of the meeting slides; a South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project brochure; and the Project 2011 Annual Report were available. The presentation is available on the SBSP Project website at

[http://www.southbayrestoration.org/events/docs/Shoreline\\_Study\\_Alviso\\_6-21-12\\_Presentation\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.southbayrestoration.org/events/docs/Shoreline_Study_Alviso_6-21-12_Presentation_FINAL.pdf).

**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 meeting's objectives and agenda.

**2. SBSP Project Update: Progress in Alviso**

John Bourgeois provided an update on restoration progress in Alviso with the aid of PowerPoint slides.

### **Phase One Projects:**

- **Island Ponds:** vegetation development at Ponds A19, 20 and 21, breached in 2006, is going well.
- **Pond A6:** The 330-acre Duck's Head Pond, breached in December 2010, is also seeing rapid sedimentation.
- **Ponds A8, A5 and A7:** One gate of the notch was opened last year to create a muted tidal system. Researchers have been looking at the impact of the gate opening on scour and species. Preliminary data indicates that opening the notch has caused almost no scour along the length of Alviso Slough, but a lot of scour at its mouth, which is good news for the methylmercury picture. Researchers' measurements showed a significant decrease in methylmercury in Pond A8 water in 2011 compared to 2010. This year, managers will expand the notch opening from one to three of the eight gates, with researchers continuing to evaluate scour and mercury contamination.
- **Ponds A16 and A17:** Workers are building nesting islands on Pond A16, while Pond A17 will be restored as tidal marsh. Construction is expected to be completed in fall 2013.

### **Phase Two Projects:**

There are not many Phase Two actions in Alviso, as options are limited until new levees are in place.

- **Island Ponds evaluation:** Consultants are considering a breach on the north side of the islands to enhance restoration.
- **Ponds A1 and A2W:** Consultants are looking at restoring these ponds near Mountain View's Shoreline Park. The first step of completing and opportunities and constraints analysis will be completed this month.

### **Questions/Comments:**

Q: What is the increase in methylmercury shown on the chart?

A: That higher bar in the graph is at a reference site. The study found no significant increases in the A8 system.

Q: What has been the total cost of Phases 1 & 2?

A: Total costs of planning, for the entire project, were more than \$20 million. The cost of Phase 1 construction is about \$30 million project-wide. As for the cost for Phase 2, it's still too early to tell. [Information later provided: Planning costs were \$25 million, Phase 1 total about \$35 million.]

Q: What is the cost of Phase 1 in Alviso alone?

A: I don't know off the top of my head, perhaps \$12 million. We will provide this information to you. [Information later provided: Just over \$10 million.]

### **3. Shoreline Study Introduction**

John Bourgeois said the South Bay Salt Pond Project can't do more tidal marsh in the Alviso area until flood protection is in place, as breaching the Cargill levees would put the community of Alviso at risk. He showed a map of the 50-year maximum restoration

alternative for Alviso from the 2007 Project EIR, which showed potential locations for levees and trails as skirting the outside of New Chicago Marsh. The levee will free up nearly 2000 acres for tidal restoration and are part of the synergies of the two projects.

He showed a South Bay Salt Ponds and Shoreline Study timeline to indicate how the two projects are linked and have been moving forward in tandem. A year ago, the Shoreline Study decided to focus on the Alviso area as the area with the highest potential for flood damages. The goal is that levee construction occurs by 2017.

It has been a collaborative effort between the South Bay Salt Ponds, the Shoreline Study and the community. Shoreline Study partners took to heart comments made by the public at previous meetings and tried to build those concerns into the design. There will be other opportunities to participate moving forward.

#### ***4. Shoreline Study Tentatively Selected Alternative in Alviso***

##### **Flood Risk Management**

Rechelle Blank, Santa Clara Valley Water District Project Manager, presented the flood risk management aspects of the tentatively selected alternative.

Flooding along San Francisco Bay can occur from streams (fluvial), coastal flooding and local interior drainage. The potential for fluvial flooding from the Guadalupe River was eliminated when the Water District completed the Lower Guadalupe River Project and the Corps completed the Downtown Guadalupe River Project in 2004.

Coastal flooding is a threat because the area is at or below sea level and is protected by non-engineered salt pond levees, which aren't recognized by FEMA as providing adequate tidal flood protection, causing FEMA to designate the area as a flood hazard zone. Constructing the Shoreline Study project will protect the area from coastal flooding and projected future sea level rise.

The Water District is working with the City of San Jose to address interior drainage system flooding, which can occur when storm water exceeds the capacity of local storm drains.

The Shoreline Study analyzed several flood management options. The tentatively selected alignment begins at the Alviso Marina, where it would tie into an existing 16-foot levee, the required study height. From here the levee continues north along the existing easterly edge of Pond A12, then follows the southern edges of Ponds A13 and A16 [north of New Chicago Marsh] to Artesian Slough. It would have to cross the Union Pacific Railroad, and in other parts of the country this has been accomplished by using a swing gate.

We would have to cross the Artesian Slough, the outfall for the San Jose/Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant. Tide gates are typically used to cross this type of slough opening.

The levee would continue east from Artesian Slough and would follow the San Jose/Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant's Master Plan alignment, which meanders near the southern edge of Pond A18, and tie into the existing Coyote Creek Bypass levee that is already at the required height.

Certain information has come to our attention which we will address with our stakeholders. Until then, this remains as our tentatively selected alternative.

The top of the levee will be at about 15.85 feet high with a 16-foot width. The bottom width of the levee where it meets existing ground will be approximately 100 feet. The levee cross section shows the medium fill option for the tidal restoration bench, which would be at about a slope of 30-to-1 on the Bay side of the levee.

**Questions/Comments:**

Q: What is the new information you referred to?

A: Some people prefer that the alignment follow the stairstep alignment near Pond 18. We will discuss this.

Q: How will the levee cross the railroad?

A: That's a good question that will be looked at.

Comment: I have concerns about the New Chicago Marsh alignment.

Q: What would the look of the levee be from Alviso?

A: The Army Corps regulations prohibit trees on levees, but it would be covered with non-woody vegetation.

Comment: There are several large, simultaneous projects. It will be important that the EIS/R process analyzes a complete picture and addresses all the different projects.

Comment: The EIS/R needs to address cumulative impacts.

Q: How will this project impact the chances of flood protection for other areas in the South Bay, such as Palo Alto?

A: It will help the other areas if the project gets started, to have federal funding going to this region.

Comment: The San Francisquito Creek project is looking at the Palo Alto area and tying into that area.

Response: No one will be left out of the South Bay.

Comment: I represent Zanker Road landfill. If you need access through our property, the sooner you contact us about it, the better.

Comment: The goal is that the wetlands be outboard in order to help mollify flood effects.

Q: Are you looking at the overall linking of habitats?

A: The Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Report's goals are the starting point, those are the goals.

### **Ecosystem Restoration**

John Bourgeois discussed the ecosystem restoration component of the tentatively selected alternative. The approach would use historic channels. Outboard levees would generally be removed, except for portions possibly left as high refugia.

The first slide shows a no-fill alternative. The second slide shows a medium fill alternative, with fill used to develop two areas of upland transition habitat at a 30-to-1 slope. A high-fill alternative has been eliminated because of high costs to bring in that much material.

### **Questions/Comments:**

Q: Where will you get the fill?

A: From beneficial dredge sediments and other upland sources.

Q: Will you use soil from on-site levees?

A: Yes, all of the soil on site will be used.

Q: Could you use fill from the Guadalupe River and Alviso Slough?

A: You mean the Water District projects? Yes, as long as it is clean.

Q: Why are you using a 30-to-1 slope?

A: This is designed to create transition zones for species, so they can escape during high tides.

### **Recreation Features**

John Bourgeois presented information on the planned recreation features of the tentatively selected alternative. As levees are breached for tidal marsh restoration, trails would be phased back and managers would have to create trails in new areas.

Partners looked at all possible variations. The priority is on opening the deepest ponds to the Bay earlier to enhance opportunities for marsh restoration. Waiting to breach deeper ponds might mean they never become marsh, because of sea level rise and potentially insufficient Bay sediments in the future.

So the deepest pond, A12, would be breached first. This would also help to scour Alviso Slough. The trail would be moved back from Pond A12. Based on modeling of hydrology, sediment and sea level rise, the next best ponds to open would be Ponds A9, A10 and A11, so the loop trail would become smaller. The changes would be phased in 5-7 year increments. The Ponds A16 and A17 trail would remain and the Bay Trail would be completed on the levee. One of the goals of the Bay Trail is that it border the Bay, rather than running on city streets.

All restoration is contingent on the South Bay Salt Ponds adaptive management plan, so ponds would not be opened to the Bay if doing so would harm pond-using birds. But the

last slide shows the ultimate goal the project is aiming for, if there are no scientific reasons to stop restoration.

**Questions/Comments:**

Q: What is the difference between a recreation trail and a commuter trail? It seems as if species issues can cause a recreation trail closure, but not if it is a commute trail.

A: We need to sit down with the Bay Trail and discuss this more. Maybe there could be a dual trail in combination with the paved Highway 237 trail, with the second trail unpaved.

Comment: [South Bay Salt Ponds Lead Scientist] Laura Valoppi gave a recent talk and discussed research on species impact distances from trail users. How are you going to utilize that research? The issue is that, on your map, the red trails seem like they are closable, and the green trail seems like a superhighway. I support the idea that we can discuss ways to address this issue.

Comment: There should be identified preferential feeding areas for birds that should receive higher priority for protection.

Q: Will the levees just be breached, or are you going to completely remove the levee?

A: We will probably lower the levee.

Comment: So it will be available for wildlife.

Q: Will you have to build up the inner levees as you transition through the phases from ponds to wetlands?

A: Yes.

Comment: I'm concerned about the compatibility of bikes with wildlife viewers – I don't think they are compatible, when they are speeding by walkers and people taking wildlife pictures.

Response: This is the first time that issue has been raised. We will need to consider it.

Comment: The Refuge Environmental Education Center access and use needs to be factored in to the thinking on this.

Response: The Refuge is represented on the Project Management Team, so that interest has been represented as options have been discussed.

Comment: I'm concerned that the tentatively selected alignment doesn't take that issue into consideration. [A second participant agreed.]

Q: Are managed ponds at risk outboard of the levee?

A: Yes.

Comment: I'm concerned about the costs.

Response: Unfortunately, we have to take action, because today's levees weren't built to withstand sea level rise.

Q: Is it possible to breach levees in a few places and add bridges to connect trails?

A: That would be very expensive and we would still need to rebuild the levees, because they aren't strong enough in the long run.

Q: Is there consideration of moving the levee at New Chicago Marsh south?

A: The Alviso community has a concern about the levees being right up against their houses. And putting the levee through the middle of New Chicago Marsh has its own issues.

### ***5. Army Corps of Engineers Analysis of Costs and Benefits, and Project Next Steps***

Caleb Conn, Project Manager at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, presented information on the Corps analysis of the project's costs and benefits.

Estimated project costs include:

- Levee construction: \$80-90 million
- Ecosystem restoration: \$115-125 million
- Recreation: \$5-10 million
- Monitoring and adaptive management: \$7-15 million
- Total: \$207-240 million

Project benefits include reduced flood risk to Alviso and the Water Pollution Control Plant, homes no longer considered as being in the coastal floodplain, improve habitat for endangered species and completion of the Bay Trail spine in the area.

Moving forward, in 2013, a project draft environmental analysis and feasibility report will be issued, followed by a public meeting to take input. The analysis and report are scheduled to be finalized by the end of that year. Congressional authorization and appropriation would be needed, with the goal to begin construction in 2017. The Corps will look at other economic impact areas identified in the Shoreline Study after work on the Alviso area is completed.

Alternatives to be considered in the analysis are:

- No action
- The tentatively selected alignment, Alviso North and WCPC North;
- Alviso South and WCPC South (see Slide 38);
- Alviso Railroad Spur and WCPC North (see Slide 38)
- Each action alternative would be analyzed with restoration options of medium fill and no fill.

The levees around the Salt Ponds now are not engineered. The Alviso North and Railroad Spur alternatives would offer 100-year flood protection, and the Alviso South alternative is not as high and would offer 25-year flood protection.

We aren't evaluating every alternative. We are looking at the lowest cost solution to set the basis for the federal contribution to the project. The Alviso community had indicated support for the Alviso North alternative. The WCPC North alternative is still flexible –

the decision was to go with what the City of San Jose decides in the WCPC Master Plan process, which is not yet complete.

**Questions/Comments:**

Comment: I want a public meeting on the pluses and minuses of each alternative. You should provide all the alternatives and information.

Q: Why is the Alviso South option offering less protection?

A: It was selected as part of the economic analysis as the least-cost alternative because it is not built on Bay mud. There is a difference in height of less than one foot.

Comment: You could just add one foot to the Alviso South option and it would offer 100-year flood protection.

Comment: We need more space between our town [Alviso] and the levees.

Comment: I'm concerned that the tentatively selected alternative was selected because of aesthetics issues for Alviso.

Comment: You could argue it's an aesthetics issue on your side because you want the levee further from the Refuge Environmental Education Center.

Comment: If you move the levee closer to Alviso, the flood water would be closer to the roof level for us. We need New Chicago Marsh to get our kids out if it floods. So far this century, we've been very lucky we haven't had a loss of life. People will be trapped and we need that space.

Comment: I am interested in an alternative combining the railroad spur alignment with the WPCP South alignment. [Two other participants agreed].

Response: The railroad spur alignment was seriously considered. However, cutting through New Chicago Marsh, as it would, has issues, too.

Comment: Alviso never flooded from the Bay.

Comment: In regard to the Water Pollution Control Plant discharge at Artesian Slough, consider a pumping plant rather than a tide gate, in order to address sewage issues during flood episodes.

Comment: Sea level rise would be a new issue for Alviso, making coastal flooding a possibility. The tentatively selected alignment would create a buffer zone.

Comment: Moving the Refuge Environmental Education Center building in combination with a different levee alignment would be cheaper.

Response: Moving or raising the Environmental Education Center building is something that will be looked at in the analysis.

Q: Were the economic impacts to areas behind levees considered in the analysis?

A: Yes.

Comment: Part of the history of Alviso was a ring levee around the community that was later removed. There were three devastating floods.

Q: What are the pros and cons that were considered in the selection of an alternative?

A: Here are some of the issues that were considered in comparing the railroad spur alignment with the alignment on the New Chicago Marsh levee (Alviso South alignment):

- With the New Chicago Marsh alignment (Alviso South alignment), the marsh remains as a managed marsh
- Putting a levee through the middle of the marsh creates management issues
- Putting a levee through the middle of the marsh would have direct impacts on endangered species habitat
- It would bifurcate any New Chicago Marsh endangered species populations
- Nesting colonies north of New Chicago Marsh have historically crossed the levee between Pond A16 and New Chicago Marsh. Partners are trying to compensate for the raising of the levee along A16 by building new marsh and habitat around the nesting colonies.
- There are ownership issues with the railroad spur alignment. For example, the railroad spur is owned by the City of San Jose.
- For the Alviso Railroad spur and Alviso South alignments, there are a lot of utilities at the levee along Artesian Slough associated with the Water Pollution Control Plant that would be challenging to deal with.

Q: When will the feasibility report be made available?

A: In early 2013.

Q: How will the release coincide with the environmental scoping period?

A: It will be concurrent with it.

### ***7. Display of Maps & Posters and Stakeholder Input on Future Design & Recreation Features***

During this segment, meeting participants were able to view maps and posters showing the levee alignment, restoration and recreation features, as well as visual simulations of how the Alviso North levee would appear from different points in the community.

Meeting participants were able to provide input on design, recreation features and other issues by talking with Shoreline Study partners and consultants and providing input on comment sheets.

Those interested in providing additional input and comments can do so by contacting:

- Caleb Conn at [Caleb.B.Conn@usace.army.mil](mailto:Caleb.B.Conn@usace.army.mil) or 415-503-6849
- Rechelle Blank at SCVWD at [rblank@valleywater.org](mailto:rblank@valleywater.org) or 408-265-2607 x2615, or
- John Bourgeois at [jbougeois@scc.ca.gov](mailto:jbougeois@scc.ca.gov) or 408-312-8859.



**Attachment 1:  
Alviso Santa Clara WG June 21, 2012 Meeting Attendance**

Steve Blomquist	Office of Supervisor Dave Cortese
Betty Brown	Alviso Water Task Force
Janine Burgess	SCC Parks
Norma Camacho	SCVWD
Kansen Chu	San Jose City Councilmember Dist. 4
David Cook	
Janice Edgerly-Rooks	Santa Clara University
Jim Foran	SCCOSA
Dr. Bob Gross	
Lonnie Gross	
Michael Gross	Zanker
Dave Halsing	URS
Jill Hamilton	ESA
Annette Herz	SCVAS
Carin High	CCCR
Deborah Jamison	SCVAS
Ellen Johnck	Consultant
Shani Kleinhaus	SCVAS
Tom Laine	Alviso
Libby Lucas	CNPS
Sheila Ngo	City of San Jose Council District 4
Pat Mapelli	Cargill
Eileen McLaughlin	CCCR
Tara Martin-Milius	Self/Sunnyvale
T. Charles Moore	Self
Trish Mulvey	Clean South Bay
Sharon Nelson	Refuge EEC
Ngoc Nguyen	SCVWD
Craig Parada	SBYC
Jonah Probell	
Melanie Richardson	SCVWD
James Robenolt	SCVAS
Russ Robinson	RBOC/SBYC
Caitlin Robinson-Nilsen	SFBBO
Bill Roth	City of San Jose
John Ryan	CH2M Hill
John Ryan	Self
Rich Santos	SCVWD

Rolane Santos	SCVAS
Tony Santos	SCVAS
Pat Showalter	SCVWD
Jim Sweet	
Charles Taylor	Alviso
Karine Tokatlian	SFBBO
Melody Tovar	City of Sunnyvale
Sarah Young	SCVWD
Ariel Ambruster	CCP
Rechelle Blank	SCVWD
John Bourgeois	SCC
Caleb Conn	USACE
Judy Sheen	USACE
Frank Wu	USACE
Craig Conner	USACE
Bill DeJager	USACE
Eric Mruz	USFWS
Ken Davies	City of San Jose
Sergio Jimenez	HDR
Dawn Lobaugh	HDR

**Attachment 2:  
Working Group Input via Comment Sheets on Shoreline Study Tentatively Selected  
Alternative**

- Stick to the north end levee. The people have spoken at meetings and that is our choice.
  - Name/Organization: Alviso Water Task Force
  - E-Mail/Contact Info: tas48@sbcglobal.net
- Bay Trail needs to be a high priority. A commuting trail (the 237 bikeway) already exists.
  - Name/Organization: Jim Foran
- Need to make clear in presentations that WPCP North is not actual configuration to avoid process issue. Currently WPCP North mimics what City of San Jose is showing as their recommended alternative for an enviro review process that hasn't even occurred. Could be construed as inappropriately influencing that separate review process.
  - Name/Organization: Carin High/CCCR
  - E-Mail/Contact Info: cccrrefuge@gmail.com
- 1. All of the options show floodgates. Are there examples of where these work (HAVE worked in actual events)? Do they work for both Bay flooding and creek flooding?  
2. What kind of water-side access (by boat) will be available?
  - Name/Organization: Craig Parada, Commodore, South Bay Yacht Club
  - E-Mail/Contact Info: craig.parada@sbcglobal.net