



South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project

Restoring the Wild Heart of the South Bay

Key Outcomes

South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project Researchers & Managers Annual Meeting September 18, 2012

The Project held its annual meeting of Project researchers and Project Management Team members on September 18, 2012. The day-long meeting included presentations on three key scientific uncertainties:

1. Sediment Budget and Mudflats

- Is there sufficient sediment in the South Bay to support the establishment of restored wetlands and sustain mudflats?
- What are cost-effective ways to track changes in mudflats?

2. Bird Use of Islands

- How can construction and management of Islands be maximized for roosting and nesting habitat?

3. Bird Use of Ponds

- How can pond use be enhanced for various types of shore and water birds?

Each topic was geared toward gathering the best thinking and recommendations of Project researchers for upcoming Phase 2 restoration, management and public access actions.

Key outcomes included:

1. Sediment Budget and Mudflats

- There was general consensus from sediment scientists in support of undertaking tidal restoration sooner rather than later, in order to take advantage of the high suspended sediment currently in the system and give marshes a head start against sea level rise.

2. Bird Use of Islands

- There was consensus in favor of creating a smaller number of islands in several ponds, rather than more islands in fewer ponds; and maintaining existing islands.
- Scientists supported creating more varied topography on islands and on pond bottoms to create a diversity of water depth and habitat.
- For construction of islands, it was recommended to use about 50% upland material with bay mud to prevent cracking, and to make surfaces lumpy.

3. Bird Use of Ponds

- In general, there were concerns that tidal marsh restoration would convert some salt ponds that have become prime habitat for shorebirds and snowy plovers.
- Snowy plovers are experiencing low fledging success, due in part to predation. There needs to be a fuller understanding of the regional variables affecting fledging success.

Next Steps

Project Lead Scientist Laura Valoppi will form two workgroups:

1. A group to explore cost-effective options for monitoring mudflat habitat
2. A group to explore optimizing pond management for multiple species, perhaps using structured decision-making.

The Project will consider certain scientific issues, including mercury, California gull predation and water quality in managed ponds, in smaller subcommittee meetings.

Recommendations for Phase 2

Eden Landing

- If converted to tidal, need some type of boat launch for access to study areas

Alviso

- Restoration of Charleston Slough could greatly reduce the current high shorebird use here. The Slough has a lot of biofilm.
- Possible eastern breaching of Island Ponds: consensus against breaching Pond A21. Breach of Pond A19 on Mud Slough side would likely scour out Mud Slough. Consider breaching between ponds A19 and A20. Restored ponds A19 and A20 are seeing high fish and bird use as the area is transitional mudflat habitat and looks fairly productive.

Ravenswood

- Perhaps manage ponds R5/S5 for shorebird foraging.
- Consider creating snowy plover habitat in Pond R3.