

---

## Long wait for Bair restoration nearly over

Beth Winegarner, The Examiner

Aug 4, 2006 2:00 AM (4 days ago)

Current rank: # **864** of 5,568 articles

**REDWOOD CITY, Calif.** - The long wait is nearly over for plans to restore tidal wetlands on Bair Island that could bring short-term flooding relief to Bayside residents and provide better public access on new trails on the inner part of the island.

The Peninsula Open Space Trust purchased the 1,400-acre wetlands site in 1997 for \$15 million to permanently preserve it as open space. Plans to restore and manage the site entered their final environmental review stage this week, allowing the public a final opportunity to comment on those plans before Aug. 28, after which the California Department of Fish and Game is expected to adopt restoration plans, allowing work to begin, according to John Bradley, deputy project leader with the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

If approved, crews could breach outer Bair Island in the fall of 2007, according to refuge manager Clyde Morris. Other portions of the restoration plan will happen in phases, and as the land takes on water, neighborhoods nearest the Bay should see a 15- to 20-year decrease in flooding risk.

"In the short term, it helps, and in the long term, it won't help or hurt," Morris said.

Restoration is expected to cost \$6 million to \$10 million and will include breaching the levees surrounding the island so its lands can be inundated with seawater, returning tidal marshes that support native plants and animals, according to Morris. Smith Slough, which separates inner and middle Bair Island, will have its "meander restored," Bradley said, while modifications will be made to Corkscrew Slough between middle and outer Bair Island to keep water velocity down.

"I'm very excited," said resident Ralph Nobles, who led an effort in the 1980s to protect Bair Island from development. "It's been a long struggle. This is going to allow the endangered wildlife to take a big step toward recovery, particularly the clapper rail."

Meanwhile, low-lying areas of middle Bair Island will be filled with dredged silt from the neighboring Redwood City Port to keep waterbirds from camping out and having fatal run-ins with planes from San Carlos Airport.

A new 1.8-mile trail with wildlife-viewing areas will be built with better access for handicapped visitors, and school-bus parking will be added to the refuge's parking lot, giving kids and the disabled easier access to the park.

When the new trail opens, dogs on six-foot leashes will be allowed for a three-month trial period to make sure they pose no threat to wildlife, according to Bradley.

Funding the restoration may be a challenge, according to Brenda Buxton, project manager with the Coastal Conservancy, which has contributed \$220,000 toward the creation of the restoration plan. A \$5.4 billion parks and water bond on the November ballot could be one source of funds, she said.

[bwinegarner@examiner.com](mailto:bwinegarner@examiner.com)

