

Bay City News Wire

FEINSTEIN PRAISES SOUTH BAY SALT PONDS RESTORATION PROJECT

03/21/06 2:50 PST

ALVISO (BCN)

Sen. Dianne Feinstein joined representatives of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and President George W. Bush Monday in Alviso to celebrate the three-year anniversary of the largest wetlands restoration project on the West Coast.

The South Bay Salt Pond Restoration project seeks to restore thousands of acres of salt ponds formerly owned by Cargill Salt to wetlands. Feinstein spearheaded the public-private effort that purchased the salt ponds for \$100 million.

"Three years ago, I stood along the Bay to announce an historic public-private partnership - moving 16,500 acres from Cargill Salt to the California Department of Fish and Game and the US Fish and Wildlife Service," Feinstein said at a ceremony at the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. "I said at the time that I'd like to see the restoration completed in my lifetime. And today, we are seeing major progress toward that goal. So far more than 12,000 acres of wetlands have begun the restoration process, including the 479 acres of salt ponds opened to Bay water this month. This is a major milestone in the largest wetlands restoration effort in California history."

Feinstein was joined by U.S. Department of Interior Deputy Secretary Lynn Scarlett and California Resources Secretary Mike Chrisman.

Since the salinity of the ponds has been reduced, in part by a series of levy breaches allowing the free flow of Bay water, officials have noticed a 100 percent increase in waterfowl at the ponds.

"The regional and national benefits, including healthier fisheries, improved flood management, improved water resources, and enhanced wildlife-oriented recreation opportunities are central to Governor's Schwarzenegger's environmental effort to turn back the clock on decades of neglect." Chrisman said. "Ultimately, this partnership will benefit our generation, the next generation and create a lasting legacy now that will improve the quality of life for all future generations."

The next phase of the restoration is scheduled to begin in 2008. The full restoration of the ponds is expected to take a number of years.

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