



NATIONAL SCIENCE PANEL MEETING PROJECT STATUS REPORT NOVEMBER 4, 2005

Here is a summary of the activities of the Project since the last National Science Panel meeting in June. The summary is subdivided into 4 sections: Long-Term Planning, Science Program, Data Collection, and Initial Stewardship Plan Management. We are working hard in each of these areas to maintain the commitment of the Project to commence Phase 1 of the long-term restoration plan in 2008.

LONG-TERM PLANNING

We have been refining the alternatives for NEPA/CEQA analysis. A key step has been agreement that adaptive management would be incorporated as an integral part of each alternative. In addition we have developed a proposed set of Phase 1 actions with integrated adaptive management studies to help make sure we are learning from the outset of implementation.

This approach has involved education of our stakeholders regarding what adaptive management is and is not. We did this in two workshops, one on July 13 and one on September 8. Subsequently, the Adaptive Management Plan was revised and is included in material distributed to the Panel last week.

We also conducted a workshop devoted specifically to public access and all of the considerations in providing for wildlife-orientes public access in the Project area. The workshop was preceded by a number of tours where participants could see on the ground what the opportunities and constraints were for public access.

A very significant step forward for the Project was the kickoff of the South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Study, the WRDA-authorized study that provides for Corps of Engineers participation, and ultimately, potential Federal authorization of a project. This was achieved with the late-September signing of the Federal Cost Sharing Agreement for the "Alviso Ponds and Santa Clara County Interim Feasibility Study" of the Shoreline Study. The Shoreline Study is a multi-purpose (habitat restoration, flood damage reduction, and related purposes) study and will proceed by geographic sub-unit. The Alviso Ponds/Santa Clara County area is first. The co-local sponsors are the Coastal

Conservancy and the Santa Clara Valley Water District. The kickoff meeting for the Study was held on October 24.

To resolve issues regarding hydrodynamic and geomorphic modeling, the Project Management Team issued a memo describing the Project's approach to hydrodynamic and geomorphic modeling both for initial planning and for implementation. It affirmed the Project's long-term commitment to model development. The memo was distributed to the Science Team and the National Science Panel.

SCIENCE PROGRAM

We successfully recruited a social scientist to be part of the Science Team. Dr. Lois Takahashi from the Department of Urban Planning, UCLA will be joining the Science Team this month.

Dr. Trulio, working with input from the Science Team, developed an approach to initiating Island Ponds adaptive management studies in early 2006. The approach is detailed in a paper that was distributed to the Panel earlier this week.

We supported successful proposals to the San Francisco Foundation by the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory and Point Reyes Bird Observatory to collect data on bird use of the Newark Salt Ponds (those remaining in salt production) and bird use of mature and restoring marshes.

The Project actively supported development of a mercury investigation proposal by SFEI, SCVWD, USGS (Mark Marvin-DiPasquale), including peer review of the proposal and development of a funding plan for it. Funding is anticipated to come from the San Francisco Foundation, the Regional Monitoring Program, the Santa Clara Valley Water District, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Coastal Conservancy.

The Project supported Mark Stacey, Science Team modelers, and other researchers on the development of a modeling proposal to NOAA for ecological forecasting. The proposal is in line with the NSP's recommendation at its last meeting regarding sediment transport and hydrodynamic model development.

We worked with Jim Cloern's group at USGS in Menlo Park to assess and compile dissolved oxygen and other water quality data and conduct specific analyses with the data. This involved significant collaboration within USGS to ensure that the data collection methods were rigorous.

A Pond Ecology and Management Workshop was conducted in August as part of our growing recognition of the long-term significance of pond management in the ecosystem. This workshop will result in a science synthesis on pond ecology and continuing workshops to design studies, understand pond ecology and help advise the land managers.

A third Sediment Workshop was conducted. The first two had focused on sediment dynamics in the South Bay. This workshop focused on watershed inputs to the South Bay. A plan to study tributary inputs into the Eden Landing Complex is being developed as a result of this workshop.

Dr. Trulio worked with the Science Team to develop a Science Team Conflict of Interest Statement. This is important because the Science Team members are leading researchers in and around the Bay and will likely be involved in work contributing to the Project over time. Prevention of conflicts and the appearance of conflicts is important for the Project's integrity. The Statement was distributed to the Panel earlier this week.

Dr. Trulio, other members of the Science Team and Steve Ritchie presented science and management talks at the State of the Estuary Conference, including a summary of the Science Program and its progress

Science Team modelers met with the Consultant Team modelers to discuss the predictive capabilities of the Landscape Scale Geomorphic Assessment and the modeling approaches described in the PWA report on Modeling Methods and Strategy. Science Team modelers wrote a formal response critiquing the modeling methods. This response was sent to the Consultant Team, PMT and NSP.

DATA COLLECTION

A significant task was the completion of the South Bay bathymetry survey; the survey covered an area from north of the San Mateo Bridge down into the extreme south Bay and up into some of the sloughs. The bathymetry survey is being coupled with the previously conducted LiDAR survey and pond bathymetry surveys to produce a single Digital Terrain Model. The results of the Bay bathymetry survey were somewhat surprising and have caused us to re-think the approach to the Landscape Assessment, which we will discuss at the meeting.

The USGS monitoring team, led by John Takekawa, submitted a Draft report of the data collected in 2003-2005 in the Project area. The draft report was distributed to the Panel last week. The report will be final by the end of the year and the results will be available to anyone. We are now preparing for analysis of the data that provides useful information to the managers and we will speak to that at the meeting.

We have agreed with USGS on continuation of certain data collection efforts. The agreed-upon scope of work is being distributed with this report.

Jim Cloern's team, especially Tara Schraga, at USGS has worked closely with John Takakawa's USGS team to ensure that field methods provide as accurate data as possible. Tara is also assisting Cheryl Strong at SFBBO with water quality data collection in the Newark Salt Ponds.

Data collection, specifically for the ISP, continues and is providing insight into pond and slough conditions in response to ISP management. In addition to water quality data collected throughout the system, the USFWS funded monitoring for mercury levels in the Alviso ponds.

INITIAL STEWARDSHIP PLAN MANAGEMENT

Most of the ponds in the Project area have been transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Dept. of Fish and Game. Both agencies have been challenged regarding the maintenance of dissolved oxygen levels. In particular, the Fish and Wildlife Service has modified the management of various ponds to better understand how to manage dissolved oxygen conditions. These will be described at the meeting.

One unsettling development has been increased levee maintenance costs above the levels that Cargill experienced. This will be a significant issue as the land managers work to maintain the pond system prior to implementation of the long-term plan. Particularly as it relates to levee construction, implementation could still be a decade away.

To implement the Island Ponds restoration, an MOA was executed between USFWS and SCVWD to prepare the restoration plan. SCVWD is participating to fulfill their mitigation obligation for their 10-year stream maintenance permit. This mitigation was going to be fulfilled in Pond A4, but the agencies collectively concluded that the Island Ponds represent a better opportunity. An important institutional point is the allowance for mitigation to be carried out on Refuge lands. This may prove to be a key to successful funding for long-term restoration.