



## **NATIONAL SCIENCE PANEL MEETING PROJECT STATUS REPORT NOVEMBER 1, 2006**

Here is a summary of the activities of the Project since the last National Science Panel meeting in November 2005. We are working hard to maintain the commitment of the Project to commence Phase 1 of the long-term restoration plan in 2008.

### **LONG-TERM PLANNING**

In January 2006, we identified the basic alternatives for NEPA/CEQA analysis. The alternatives are Alternative A: No Action; Alternative B: Managed Pond Emphasis (a 50:50 mix of tidal habitats and ponds managed for bird habitat); and Alternative C: Tidal Emphasis (a 90:10 mix of tidal habitats and ponds managed for bird habitat). An integral component of the Project is adaptive management. The basic layout of tidal and pond habitats in Alternatives B and C presumes a progressive conversion of ponds to tidal habitats over time. The two alternatives are laid out to represent a continuum: an easy progression over time from Alternative B to Alternative C, provided that monitoring results confirm that the Project Objectives are being achieved. The implicit assumption in this construct is that ponds that are managed ponds in Alternative B but tidal in Alternative C would not be converted to tidal action until after:

- a) the 50:50 mix of tidal and pond habitats is achieved, and
- b) monitoring has confirmed that further conversion of ponds to unrestricted tidal action is acceptable.

In addition, we identified a set of Phase 1 actions with integrated adaptive management studies to help make sure we are learning from the outset of implementation.

Another major activity was coming to agreement on an institutional structure for long-term implementation of the Project. This commenced with a one-day retreat among the involved agencies, regulators and Science Team representatives that was held in May. The discussion at that meeting led ultimately to agreement among the agencies and stakeholders on an organizational approach that is similar to the current structure. The attached memo describes that structure.

Also in April, we conducted a workshop devoted to the social dimensions of restoration where participants discussed the significance of the Project in the changing Bay Area human environment.

Work has progressed on 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. The Shoreline Study is a multi-purpose (habitat restoration, flood damage reduction, and related purposes) study and will proceed by geographic sub-unit. The feasibility study for the Alviso Ponds/Santa Clara County area is the first to be developed. The co-local sponsors are the Coastal Conservancy and the Santa Clara Valley Water District.

Due to limited availability of Federal funding for Corps participation, the Shoreline Study is proceeding slower than expected. As a result, the local sponsors are working to identify early project opportunities that can be implemented prior to completion of the feasibility study.

The Administrative Draft EIS/EIR for the Project, including the Adaptive Management Plan, is currently undergoing internal review. The scheduled release date of the Draft EIS/EIR is January 31, 2007. We are aiming for a Final EIS/EIR in late summer such that implementation can commence in 2008.

We are planning a workshop focused on funding of the Project on November 29.

On October 26, a levee was breached at the Dept. of Fish and Game's Eden Landing Ecological Reserve to restore tidal action to 300 acres. This acreage is not part of the Project area, but is adjacent to it and it will be managed with the Project lands.

## **SCIENCE PROGRAM**

Much of the effort of Lynne Trulio and the Science Team during the past year has been on developing the Adaptive Management Plan, which is currently undergoing internal review as a component of the Administrative Draft EIS/EIR. Completing this Plan required the Science Team review and comment on the Phase 1 actions and finish developing the current list of priority Applied Studies for research. The Science Team also spent significant time working with the PMT and Consultant Team to develop an integrated adaptive management approach that identifies restoration targets, which are linked to Project Objectives and then ties monitoring, applied studies, and management actions to those targets. The 2006 schedule of Science Team activities is attached.

In March of 2006, the levees of the three Island Ponds were breached, restoring tidal action to 479 acres of former salt ponds. The Project is funding investigations of the restoration processes there by two teams, one led by John Callaway of the University of San Francisco and one led by Mark Stacey of U.C. Berkeley. They will be presenting their research in progress at the Science Panel meeting.

The Project convened the first South Bay Science Symposium on June 7, 2006 at San Jose State University where over 45 researchers presented findings of their investigations relevant to the South Bay and the salt ponds.

In August, the Project initiated a \$750,000 mercury investigation in and around Alviso Slough and Pond A8. The principal investigators are Letitia Grenier and Josh Collins of SFEI, Dave Drury of SCVWD, and Mark Marvin-DiPasquale of USGS. The aim of the investigation is to characterize mercury levels in the sediments of Alviso Slough that may be scoured out of the slough by restoration actions and to assess mercury uptake in an array of sentinel species.

In 2007, using a competitive proposal process, the Project will select a research team to undertake applied studies at the Eden Landing Complex. This work is funded by the Alameda Flood Management District. The research will focus on the effects of tidal restoration on sediment movement and bathymetric changes, particularly as these relate to flood protection requirements.