



Tidal Marshes Reborn: Latest \$20 Million Salt Pond Restoration Project Restores Habitat, Protects Shoreline, and Opens Public Access

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MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif. – The South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project partners, including the California State Coastal Conservancy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Ducks Unlimited, achieved another major milestone for tidal marsh restoration this month along the shores of this South Bay community, breaching levees of 435-acre Mountain View Pond A2W in the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge to San Francisco Bay.

The breaches will allow Bay tides to gradually transform the former industrial salt pond into marsh wetland habitat. The \$20 million construction project also built a new 1.2-mile public access trail, five bird nesting islands, and a half-mile habitat slope connecting marsh with uplands so wildlife can safely avoid high tides and to protect city infrastructure against flooding and sea level rise. The project used 180,000 cubic yards of dirt, enough to fill 18,000 dump trucks, mostly imported from local construction sites.

“With this major milestone, the ambitious 50-year effort to restore the South Bay’s wetlands has now opened more than 3,700 acres, over 25% of the total 15,000-acre Restoration Project area, to the Bay,” said Amy Hutzell, Executive Officer of the California State Coastal Conservancy. “Year after year, we are making progress towards our regional goals for a healthy, resilient Bay.”

The pond borders 750-acre Shoreline Park in Mountain View, one of the region’s most popular recreational destinations. The trail will sport benches, interpretive signs, and a scenic and wildlife viewing area, expanding public recreation opportunities from the park. “Birders, bikers, walkers and hikers will have the opportunity to watch the pond gradually transform into a verdant and vibrant marshland and future home for endangered California Ridgway’s rails and salt marsh harvest mice,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biologist Rachel Tertes.

The project will have positive impacts on both people and wildlife now and into the future. Aside from providing new public access and helping endangered species, tidal marshes are a

nature-based solution to shoreline resilience, which adds both habitat values and protects infrastructure. Tidal marshes provide a multitude of environmental benefits, including water filtration, which supports a healthy bay ecosystem, and carbon sequestration to help offset global emissions.

This month's levee-breaching at Mountain View Pond A2W is one part of a round of marsh restoration projects occurring on the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project breached a 300-acre pond in the Refuge's Ravenswood complex in December 2023. Initial construction has begun at a second pond in Mountain View, with plans to breach the 275-acre pond next to A2W within three years.

"Together, these three construction projects will result in tidal restoration of more than 1,000 acres on the Refuge, allowing nature to regrow South Bay tidal marshes, transforming the former ponds into a thriving mosaic of wetlands and creating habitat for endangered species and other wildlife," said Chris Barr, Deputy Complex Manager of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex. "To date, the Restoration Project has built more than 8.4 miles of public trails and viewing areas, giving people access to the shoreline of San Francisco Bay and enjoy wide-open views of the restoring marshlands, bay, and wildlife." Those miles of new trails spread across the National Wildlife Refuge lands from San Jose to Menlo Park, as well as the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project's other construction site, the State-owned Eden Landing Ecological Reserve in Alameda County.

"We continue to bring meaningful benefits to both the natural environment of the Bay and the human communities around it. At Mountain View Pond A2W, we've not only restored several hundred acres of marsh and added new public access features, but we've also worked with the City of Mountain View and others to add erosion protection and make improvements to the local storm water management system," said Dave Halsing, Executive Project Manager of the Restoration Project.

Several City of Mountain View stormwater and flood management infrastructure improvement/sea level rise adaptation program elements were integrated into this construction effort, reducing impacts and cost. Halsing noted the important role played not only by the City of Mountain View, but also by other partners, including the Santa Clara Valley Water District and Ducks Unlimited.

The Restoration Project is indebted to funders of the Pond A2W construction, including voters who approved Measure AA, which established funding for projects like this via the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority. The \$20 million in funding for the project was provided by:

- California Department of Water Resources
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority
- California State Coastal Conservancy
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- City of Mountain View
- Pacific Gas and Electric Company

An onsite celebration of Pond A2W construction completion and trail opening is planned for the morning of February 20th, 2026.

Tidal marsh once lined the South Bay, cushioning shores from storms and tides and providing important habitat for native fish and wildlife. But over the course of the 20th century, approximately 85% of San Francisco Bay wetlands, over 150,000 acres, were lost to development. Restored tidal marshes help absorb flood waters and buffer against sea level rise, support wildlife, and improve water quality by filtering pollutants.

The South Bay Salt Ponds were acquired in 2003 from Cargill Inc. in a deal brokered by the late Senator Dianne Feinstein, a long-time champion of the restoration effort. The 15,100-acre transfer is the largest single acquisition in a larger campaign by multiple partners to restore 40,000 acres of lost tidal wetlands to San Francisco Bay.

The South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project is a collaborative effort by federal, state and local agencies – for more information, please visit www.southbayrestoration.org.