



State of California – The Natural Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
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EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor  
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



October 6, 2011

Mr. Eric Mruz, Refuge Manager  
Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge  
9500 Thornton Avenue  
Newark, CA 94560

Subject: Final Design of Ponds A16-A17, Phase One Actions, South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Alameda and Santa Clara Counties

The California Department of Fish and Game (Department) has reviewed the environmental documents and supplemental information to implement restoration and enhancement activities at the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The Refuge contains a complex of solar evaporation ponds formerly used for salt production in Fremont, California. The Refuge is part of the larger South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project (SBSRP) area, a collaborative project to provide habitat restoration, flood protection, and public access within the 15,100-acre SBSRP in South San Francisco Bay. The Department is a partner on the SBSRP and is the lead agency for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance.

The proposed project was found to be consistent with the Phase One Project and Programmatic actions planned at the Refuge and described in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (FEIS/R)* for the SBSRP.

The original Pond A16 enhancement project (project) was identified as part of the Phase One actions of the SBSRP. Further engineering and design activities were subsequently completed and it was determined that the project as shown in preliminary designs in the SBSRP FEIS/R was not practicable. The revised project design restores all of Pond A17 to tidal inundation. Compared to the original project, it provides a greater tidal area on A17 and a smaller managed pond area on Pond A16, with fewer nesting islands. The revised project includes less earthwork than the original project.

The revised project, which includes Ponds A16 and A17 (A16-A17 Project), will restore approximately 90 acres to full tidal action in Pond A17 and enhance approximately 50 acres for management of nesting waterbirds within the 150-acre Pond A16. The revised design for the A16-A17 Project was evaluated for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and CEQA compliance in July 2011. The revised project design does not result in new significant impacts.

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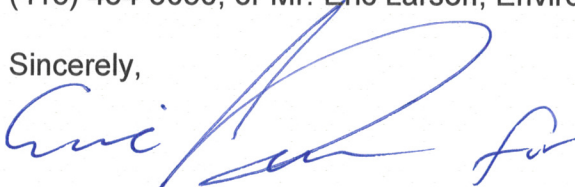
The A16-A17 Project design includes new berms, islands and water management infrastructure in order to provide shallow water for bird foraging habitat with 16 islands for bird nesting habitat. The Refuge is currently under contract for a "design-build" project. The Department has determined that the proposed A16-A17 Project remains consistent with Phase One Projects and programmatic actions planned at the Refuge and described in the SBSPRP FEIS/R.

The A16-A17 Project is important to the management of biological resources in the Refuge as part of the SBSPRP, for the San Francisco Bay ecosystem and has implications for management of the Pacific Flyway. The effect of the project will be increased wetland functions and values, improved water quality, and enhancement of habitat that benefits migratory waterfowl and shorebirds and other native fish and wildlife, including state and federally listed threatened and endangered species.

The Department fully supports the Refuge's A16-A17 Project and has determined that the environmental document and supporting information adequately complies with CEQA.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. John Krause, Environmental Scientist, at (415) 454-8050; or Mr. Eric Larson, Environmental Program Manager, at (707) 944-5528.

Sincerely,



Carl Wilcox  
Regional Manager  
Bay Delta Region

cc: John Bourgeois, State Coastal Conservancy