Exhibit 3: Water Trail Outreach Material and Publicity

SAN FRANCISCO
BAY AREA
WATER
TRAIL

Exhibit 3: Water Trail Outreach Material and Publicity

Make the Bay Your Playground

Imagine a trail
with no beginning or end,
a non-linear path that takes you
to world-class destinations…

This is the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail, a growing network of launching and landing sites, or "trailheads," around the San Francisco Bay Area.

Each trailhead allows non-motorized small boat users to enjoy the historic, scenic, cultural, and environmental richness of San Francisco Bay. This unique network of sites will allow people to explore San Francisco Bay in different boat types and in a variety of settings through single- and multi-day trips.

The vision for the Water Trail began with Bay Access, a non-profit group working to ensure a future for the Bay with access for non-motorized small boat users. This vision became law in 2005 with the passage of the Water Trail Act by the California Legislature. Multiple agencies and partners are working together to make the Water Trail a reality.

From each Water Trail "trailhead," discover jaw-dropping views, amazing wildlife, and rich history — the possibilities are limitless.

Many of us have walked, jogged, or biked along the Bay, enjoying our shoreline for exercise, relaxation, wildlife watching, or for personal reflection. The Bay also offers a completely different type of experience — out on its waters. This great 450-square-mile estuary provides many opportunities for recreation for those who venture out beyond land. Some Bay experiences are thrilling, and others are quiet and peaceful.

We invite you to explore, discover, learn, and enjoy!

Photo Credits
Far left: Tom Mikkelsen
Left: Dan Sullivan/Save The Bay
Kiteboarder: Karl Nielsen
Above: Environmental Traveling Companions

So, you'd like to get out on the water. Where do you start? What do you do if you don't own a boat? Where should you go? How do you learn to be safe around other vessels, and prepare for tides, currents, and weather?

Our website has resources to help you get started and become a safer and more experienced boater. The foundation of safe boating on the Bay is preparation — from there, fun and exploration will follow!

www.sfbaywatertrail.org

Accessibility Notice
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SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA WATER TRAIL

A linked network of launching and landing sites for non-motorized small boats around San Francisco Bay

There are more than 100 existing and planned launching and landing sites identified in the Water Trail Plan.

Sites join the growing Water Trail network through a designation process. Once sites become designated, information about the site, including a map and a description of site features, is added to our website. We will be designating many more sites, so stay tuned.

The Water Trail will improve boat launch facilities, develop more opportunities for overnight getaways, promote safe boating practices, reduce impact to sensitive wildlife and habitat, and foster stewardship and appreciation for the Bay.

Visit our website to find out about launch and landing sites, grant opportunities,

A Growing Network

outfitters you can rent from, clubs you can join, and recreational programs that offer boating opportunities. Our website has ideas on what to see and do while on the Bay and information to plan your perfect day or overnight getaway.

www.sfbaywatertrail.org

Wildlife Stewardship

Pay Attention to Behavior

When an animal has been disturbed, it will stop its normal activity (sleeping, eating, etc.) and watch you. This behavior may escalate to "flushing" or suddenly moving away.

Paddle at a Constant Speed

Avoid paddling directly at animals, and when you pass by them maintain constant direction and speed, and avoid sudden stops or changes.

Plan Your Trip to Avoid Sensitive Habitat

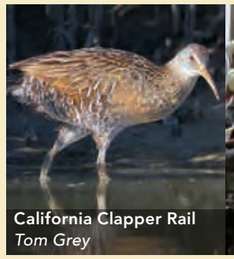
Avoid areas where you know there are sensitive species and only land in designated areas. Respect seasonal closures and wildlife buffer distances.

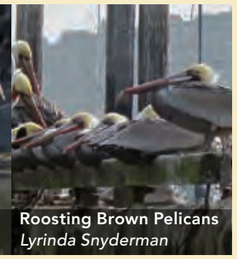
Want to learn more about the wildlife and habitat you see? Our website has information on the different species and how boaters can avoid disturbing them.

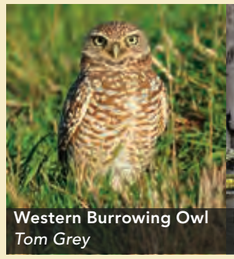
www.sfbaywatertrail.org

San Francisco Bay has so much for us to learn and discover. One of the rewards of using the Water Trail is seeing an amazing diversity of wildlife.

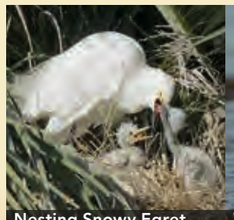
Sensitive Species

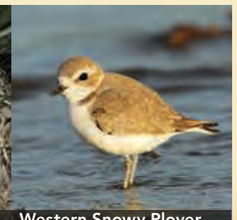

California Clapper Rail
Tom Grey

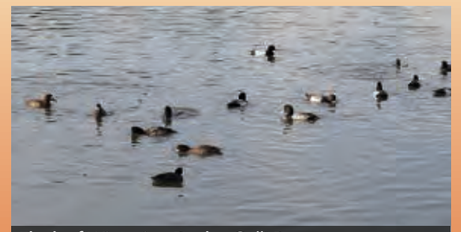

Roosting Brown Pelicans
Lyrinda Snyderman


Western Burrowing Owl
Tom Grey

Harbor Seal Haul-out
Lyrinda Snyderman


Nesting Snowy Egret
Tom Grey


Western Snowy Plover
Tom Grey


Flock of Wintering Ducks *Galli Basson*

Some of these species and habitats are sensitive to humans. There are ways to boat that minimize disturbance to wildlife, rewarding the boater with observations of natural behavior.

California Clapper Rail
Size: Medium-size, chicken-like bird
Habitat: Salty and brackish marshes
Season: Year-round resident
Breeds: February – August

California Brown Pelican
Size: Large, with extendable throat pouch
Roosting Habitat: Pilings, docks, seawalls
Season: Summer – Fall

Western Burrowing Owl
Size: Small owl
Nesting Habitat: Grasslands near Bay shore
Season: Year-round resident

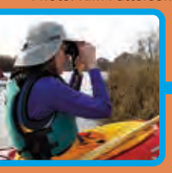
Pacific Harbor Seal
Pupping and Resting Habitat: Terrestrial sites near Bay shore
Season: Year-round resident
Breeds: March – July

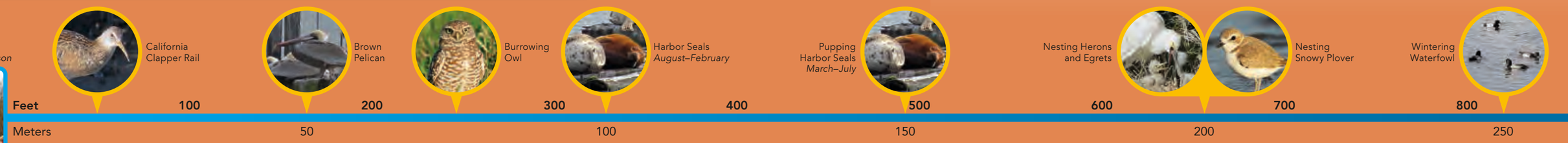
Nesting Herons and Egrets
Foraging Habitat: Wetlands and marshes
Nesting Habitat: Groves of trees near Bay shore
Season: Year-round resident

Western Snowy Plover
Size: Small shorebird
Nesting Habitat: Dry salt ponds or levees
Breeding Season: Early Spring to Mid-fall

Wintering Waterfowl
Foraging Habitat: Widespread in Bay
Season: October – April

Photo: Kim Patterson





Enjoy from a Distance

To help you visualize what these distances mean, 100 feet is approximately the length of six sea kayaks end-to-end.

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Leave No Trace

Know Before You Go

- Plan your trip based on weather, tides, current, wind, and your own capability
- Be prepared for an emergency
- Use proper gear
- Inform others of your trip plan

Bag Your Trash

- Carry out all your trash

Be Careful With Fire

- Follow regulations for your campsite or BBQ structure

Keep Wildlife Wild

- Give wide berth to wildlife and do not harass, feed, or rescue wildlife
- Respect seasonal closures and wildlife buffer distances

Leave It As You Find It

- Leave plants and other natural objects where you find them
- Don't disturb cultural resources
- Leave only wakes

Land and Launch on Durable Surfaces

- Launch and land only where you can avoid trampling sensitive habitat, disturbing wildlife, or trespassing on private property

Yield to Others

- Know the Rules of the Road for boats
- Know where the shipping and ferry routes are and give ships the right of way
- Take responsibility for your safety

This copyrighted information was developed in conjunction with the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics. For more information on Leave No Trace visit www.LNT.org or call 1-800-332-4100.

Be Safe

San Francisco Bay is one of the busiest ports in the world, influenced by tides, currents, and weather. Be aware of Bay conditions, know how to boat responsibly near other vessels, and be prepared for emergencies.

Wear a wetsuit and/or other insulating gear, a USCG-approved personal flotation device (and keep it snug), and carry emergency equipment such as radios, flares, whistles, and repair kits. Visit our website for more safety tips and links to real-time weather and tide information.

www.sfbaywatertrail.org

Photo Credits
Bottom: Daniel Mannisto
Top, center & cover: Lyrinda Snyderman

SAN FRANCISCO
BAY AREA
WATER
TRAIL

The Water Trail is a regional, nine-county program implemented under the leadership of the Coastal Conservancy in close collaboration with the Association of Bay Area Governments, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, and the California Department of Boating and Waterways. For more information visit www.sfbaywatertrail.org.

Major funding provided by

Coastal
Conservancy

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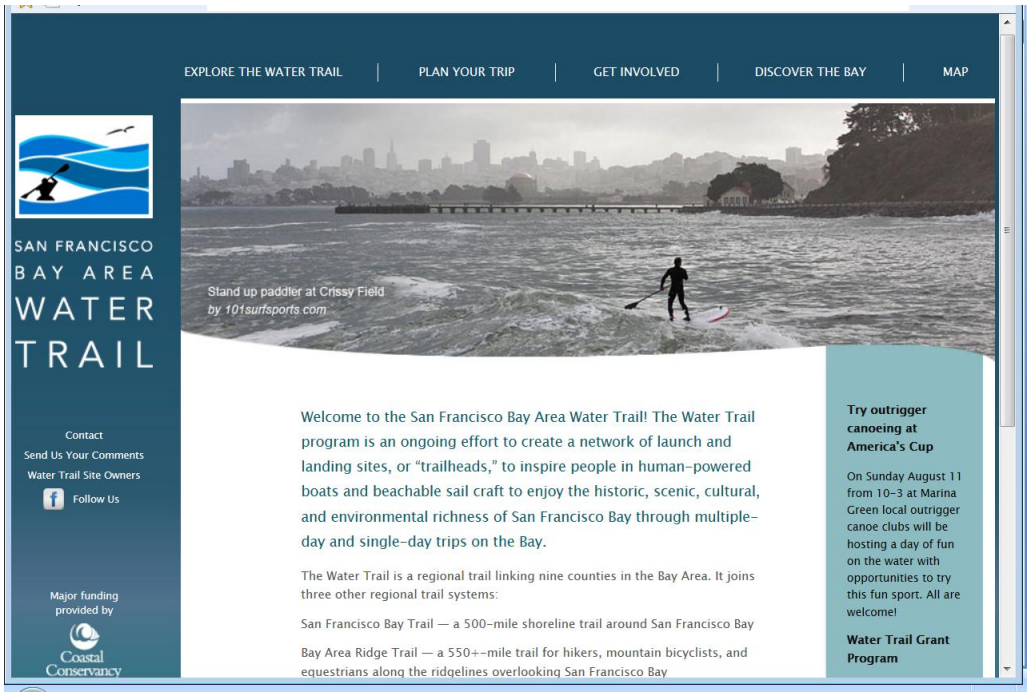
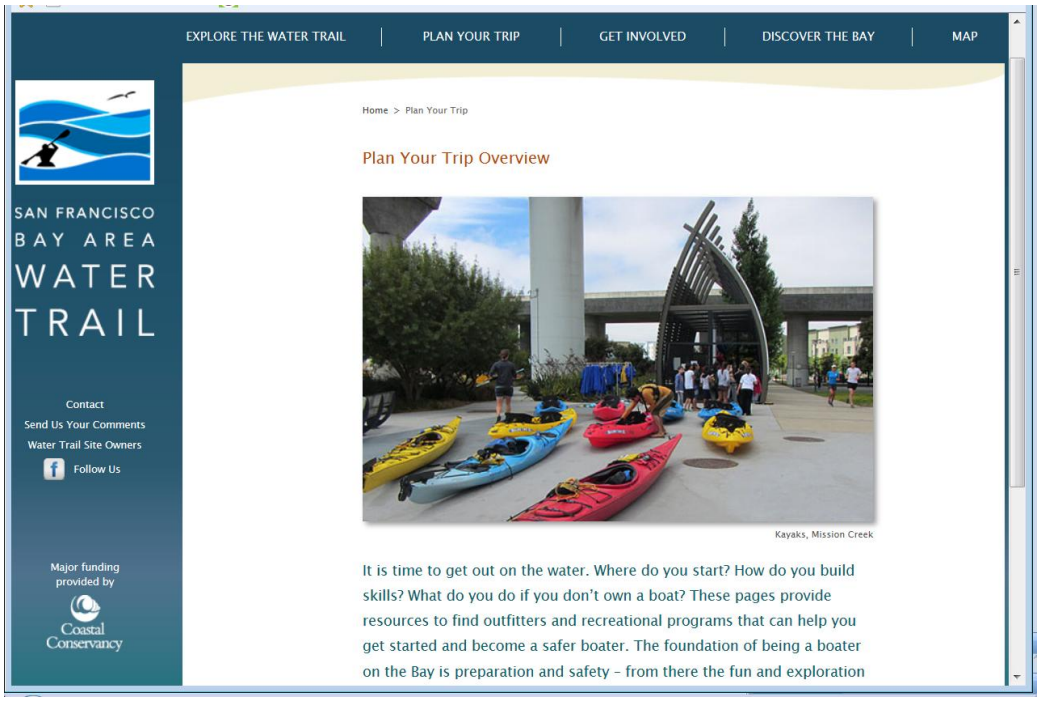
Screen Shots from Water Trail Website



Opening page of the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail website, managed by the Water Trail Planner at ABAG. http://sfbaywatertrail.org



Water Trail-related information is continuously updated on the website, which includes links to critical safety data, such as tides and waterfowl hunting areas and dates. Special events and opportunities are posted, along with descriptions of designated sites.

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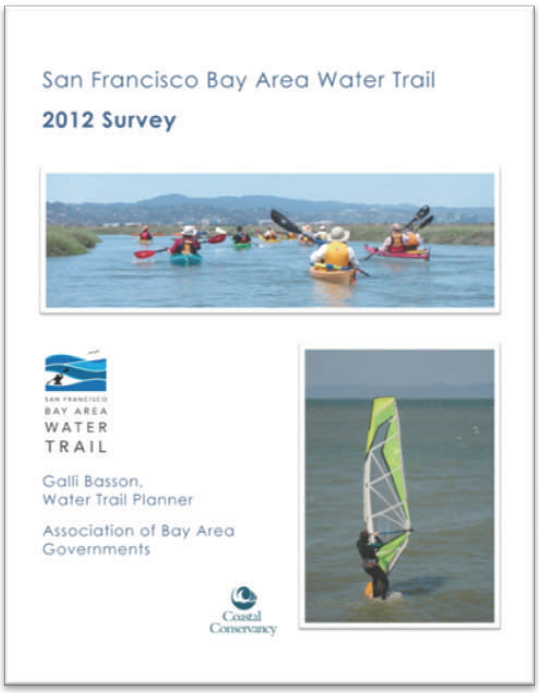
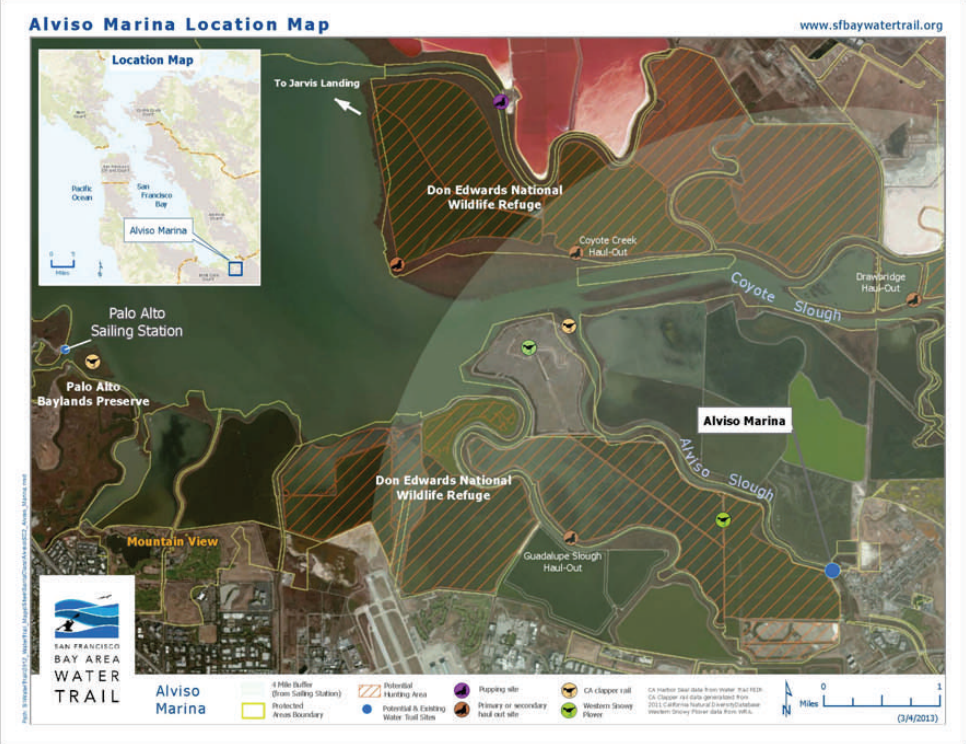


The survey, above, is posted on the Water Trail website.

The Water Trail poster, left, is being distributed around the Bay to retail shops and clubs.



All of these outreach and educational materials were developed by ABAG staff (Water Trail Planner).

This GIS-based map is a standard part of public meeting preparation for consideration of site designation into the Water Trail.

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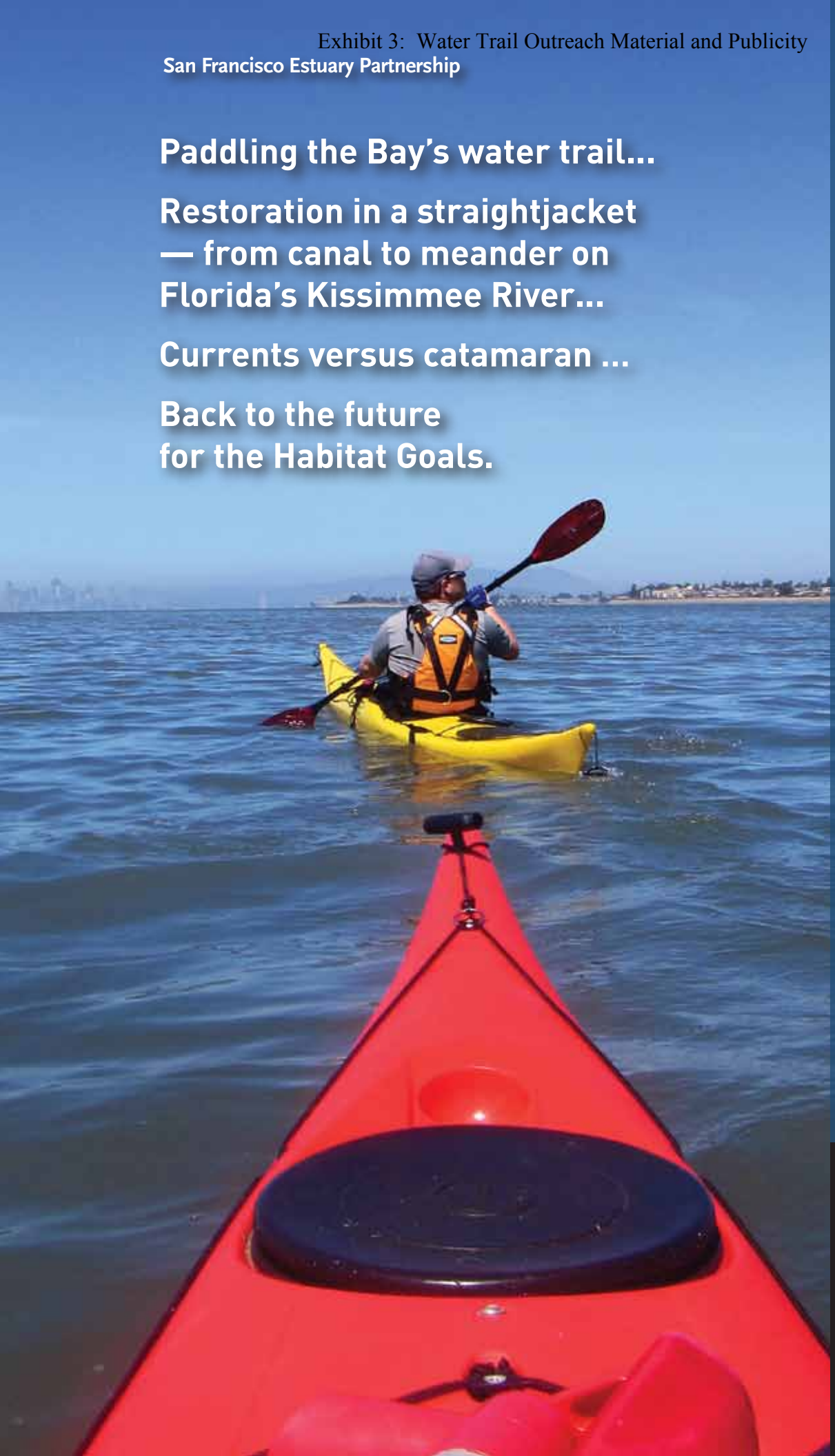
San Francisco Estuary Partnership

ESTUARY NEWS

SCIENCE • RESTORATION • WATERSHED • POLITICS • SPECIES • BAY



Paddling the Bay's water trail...

Restoration in a straightjacket — from canal to meander on Florida's Kissimmee River...

Currents versus catamaran ...

Back to the future for the Habitat Goals.

JUNE 2013
VOL. 22, NO. 3

SAVE this 20-year old, award-winning magazine from the sequester snafu. Imploring every reader to give $25 or more to keep us going!
www.sfestuary.org/estuary-news/estuarynewsdonate/
See back.

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YOUTH SPEAKS

The Invader Crab

By Charlotte Witter, Student, Santa Clara University

I'm a European green crab,
so call me Lou

If you need to find me
I live at Elkhorn Slough

I used to live in Europe and Africa
in the North

But invaded the rest of the world
when I decided to go forth

First I travelled to the East Coast and
then to the golden state

I started my journey in the 1800s and I'm
still here to date!

They loved me in Europe and
called me a "native"

But now in California they think
I'm invasive

My official name is *Carcinus maenas*

Just because I've invaded
doesn't mean that I'm heinous

Me and my crab friends are declining,
that you are taught

We personally don't like that
because we like it here a lot!

With estuaries, tides, and
a deep habitat

The life of the green crab,
you really can't beat that!

If you're looking for the big ones,
such like me

Go to deep muted tides
and there you will see!

Or if you are looking for
where abundance is high

You can find us at the estuarine
where we little crabs lie

In the future although my friends
and I will decline

Come to the Slough, educate yourself,
and take the time

Get to know the species around
where you live

Because you affect the future and it's
your turn to give

If you want to help more
grab a map and a kit

We're all one ecosystem
and so it's definitely worth it!

RECREATION

Paddling At Last

The dock is getting smaller and smaller as I paddle away. I have been waiting for this view for a long time. As planner for the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail I visit many launch sites around the Bay. During these landside visits I cannot help but steal furtive glances at the water, wishing I could put myself in a boat and explore the waters beyond. And here I am at last, in a kayak, watching the dock at Tidewater recede, and the view of San Leandro Bay get bigger.

Tidewater Boating Center, the first site to be included in the Water Trail network, is owned and managed by East Bay Regional Parks and located at the southern end of the Oakland Estuary. The Water Trail is a new, growing, regional trail. It's not exactly a trail in the literal sense, but a series of launch sites around the Bay, like Tidewater, for non-motorized small boat users. I like to think of it as a web that you can explore for as little or as long you like, and go in all different directions anchored by the network of launch sites. Today I head towards Bay Farm Island and the open bay.

Photo: Galli Basson

As I look out on the water I see thousands of shorebirds. They fly close together, and like a school of fish, a sudden change in direction causes the flock to change from gold, to white, and back to gold. During our paddle we are accompanied by chattering terns flying overhead and cormorants diving. A group of rowers passes by, moving quickly in a synchronized dance.

This is a complex landscape. San Leandro Bay is nestled between residential communities, shoreline parks, the Bay Trail, and the Oakland Airport. It also provides important habitat for migratory and resident birds, including the endangered California clapper rail. Urban and wild meet here, and the Water Trail user gets to soak it all in — even becoming part of the scenery.

I raft up with my partner to eat lunch. This pause from paddling allows me to notice movement in the shallow water. I train my eyes on the water, and soon spot it again. A leopard shark darts by! And then another, and soon a dozen more. They are beautiful, primal, almost exotic.

As I sit watching leopard sharks cruise by our boats, I am impressed by how interesting this landscape is, and by how many ways people can enjoy the shoreline. The San Francisco skyline and Bay Bridge form a striking backdrop. Nearby is a sandy beach with families enjoying themselves. Bikers and joggers are using the Bay Trail.

Back onshore I am grateful for the dock, parking lot, restrooms, and all the features that allow me to get on the water safely and comfortably. But next time I go on a site visit, I will not be able to resist daydreaming about being on the water. **GB**

Water Trail: www.sfbaywatertrail.org

pressdemocrat.com

Bay Area Water Trail could put Hudeman Slough on the map

By DEREK MOORE, THE PRESS DEMOCRAT
January 30, 2013

Christopher Chung/ The Press Democrat

Hudeman Slough in southern Sonoma County could be featured on the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail.

Hudeman Slough in southern Sonoma County is a kayaker's dream, a snaking, secluded tidal path that meanders through the Carneros region and a tapestry of vineyards and ranches.

Given its remote location about 10 miles southeast of the city of Sonoma, the spot exists in relative anonymity, visited mainly by local fishermen and hunters.

That's subject to change with implementation of the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail, which could feature Hudeman Slough prominently on a map of access points for kayakers and other enthusiasts of non-motorized boating activities.

More than a decade in the making, the water trail is not so much a linear path but a recommended network of places for people to plot a daily or days-long adventure. In concept, it's like the Bay Area Ridge Trail, but with paddles instead of hiking boots.

"The water trail can let people know how to get out into one of the greatest water resources we have in the Bay Area," said Ann Buell, project manager for the California Coastal Conservancy.

The project was authorized in 2006 with the passage of Proposition 84 (the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act), and funded with a $1 million grant.

The Coastal Conservancy, working with a consortium of agencies, has identified 112 sites in the nine-county Bay Area region for possible inclusion in the water trail. Many of the sites have existing services, but others will require upgrades to meet safety and environmental standards, or to provide access for the disabled.

Hudeman Slough is one of four sites in Sonoma County identified by the group. The others are on the Petaluma River, including at the Petaluma Marina, Turning Basin and at Gilardi's Lakeville Marina.

Buell met with representatives from Sonoma County Regional Parks at the slough this week to discuss the site's eligibility.

They were joined by Galli Basson with the Association of Bay Area Governments, which is administering a $500,000 grant program for improvements to the trail's access points.

Sonoma County planners are hoping to tap into that money to help fund the redevelopment of Hudeman Slough.

The site is owned by the state Department of Fish and Wildlife and operated by county regional parks, which recently abandoned a policy requiring visitors to obtain a key to the gate because people simply cut the locks.

The boat dock, originally built in 1962, is in forlorn shape, its gangway listing like a drunken sailor. Parts of the aluminum structure have been ripped off by vandals, and the launch itself is often buried under a pile of broken reeds and mud. Portable toilets are no longer an option because they keep getting stolen.

County planners are hoping the redeveloped site will deter future vandalism. The plans include a completely rebuilt dock, a built-in bathroom and possibly camp sites -- with an on-site camp host -- for overnight adventures.

"This creates a gateway to many different experiences in Sonoma County and the Bay Area. Heck, you could go all the way to San Francisco (by boat)," said Elizabeth Tyree with regional parks.

She said the county has already committed to redeveloping the site and has garnered $112,000 so far for initial design and permits. That includes $40,000 in county tobacco funds set aside for Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

She said the county is investigating whether the work is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act. Some environmental groups, including the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society, have raised concerns about some proposed locations on the water trail posing a threat to wildlife and sensitive vegetation.

Tyree said construction at the slough could begin by early next year, with completion set for summer 2014.

Bill Manzoni, whose home and gravel excavating business borders the slough, said he welcomes improvements to the boat launch, which he said is impossible to use during low tide.

But he said Skaggs Island Road, which leads to the slough and is riddled with potholes, will deter people from visiting the site. And he worries for the safety of kayakers in the waterway.

"It gets narrow in there," he said.

Buell said one goal of the water trail is to improve safety for boaters by making it easier to access the water and providing information about tides and weather conditions.

She said the trail also could protect from unwanted development.

"This is a proactive, preventive measure to protect what exists, and to enhance what exists," she said.

You can reach Staff Writer Derek Moore at 521-5336 or derek.moore@pressdemocrat.com. On Twitter @deadlinederek.

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http://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/20130129/ARTICLES/130129498/1033/news?Title=Project-could-boost-waterway-s-profile

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© Kathleen Goodwin, KathleenGoodwin.net

Kayakers paddle on San Pablo Bay near China Camp State Park, home to one of more than 100 launch sites that are part of the plan for a regional San Francisco Bay Water Trail.

PADDLING THE BAY WATER TRAIL

FROM MILD TO WILD

by Andrea Pflaumer

Somewhere back in our collective unconscious—before army engineers dredged a shallow trench to accommodate giant container ships at Oakland's waterfront, before industrious men and women welded and riveted steel and iron to assemble Liberty ships at Point Richmond, before industrialists diked the South Bay's marshes to harvest sea salt for a burgeoning population—dwells a primordial memory: one of Ohlone, Miwok, and Carquin living in densely populated encampments and navigating the Bay's shores in vessels fashioned from tough stalks of tules to gather clams, mussels, Dungeness crab, and salmon and other fish.

Over the last 150 years people became increasingly cut off from the Bay as it converted from a natural wonder into an opportunity for development and an obstacle to traverse. That interlude of blindness has been lifting for a few decades, and now public agencies, private stakeholders, and intrepid outdoor enthusiasts have joined forces to rekindle the spirit of that ancient memory of silent boats plying the shoreline. On March 17, 2011, the California State Coastal Conservancy approved a multiyear environmental impact report and granted $1 million to the Association of Bay Area Governments to begin knitting together as many as 112 official launch sites for non-motorized water vessels—kayaks, canoes, rowboats, dragon boats, sailboards—into the newly designated San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail. It will join the Ridge and the Bay Trails to complete the trifecta of concentric public pathways around the Bay.

More a series of launch sites than a linear course, the Water Trail offers adventures geared to every skill level. "If you want wild water you can find it," says Penny Wells, president of Bay Access, a key nonprofit advocate for the project. "If you want to lollygag around and look at birds you can go to the back bays of San Pablo and the South Bay, where the water is calm and we have tremendous marshland." Wells' organization designed the wish list that became a blueprint for the trail: launch sites, parking, restrooms,

places to rinse off and store equipment, campsites, and potential for other lodging, as well as maps of existing and proposed launch sites.

For Bay Access's Casey Walker, who spent almost 30 years hiking local trails before he took up kayaking, being on the water opened up a new world. "It's a unique way to be outside in the Bay Area," he says. "Unless you're sailing, you don't acquire the knowledge of a mariner—the tides, fluid dynamics, and situations that specifically apply to the Bay." Learning to read the tides—the inhale and exhale of the Bay—is a crucial part of that knowledge. "You have to head out with the ebb and come back with the incoming tide, especially around the Golden Gate Bridge, where tides are most powerful," says Wells. "Conditions can go from mild to wild quickly." Spring runoff and a new or full moon can double the average three knots that most paddlers travel. "The choicest kayaking is close to shore, observing the interaction of water and land," she adds.

ONE OF THE WATER TRAIL'S core existing sites is at Schoonmaker Beach in Sausalito, where day-trippers set out to explore the area's picturesque harbors and houseboats and the more experienced paddlers venture around Yellow Bluff toward the Golden Gate or across Raccoon Strait to Angel Island. "Raccoon Strait is not as notorious as Yellow Bluff," says Anne Kang, a member of Bay Area Sea Kayakers who has done the trip more than 30 times. "But depending on the tide and current you can get standing waves there too or be swept out toward the bridge. Heading out on a slack tide, between ebb and flood, is best."

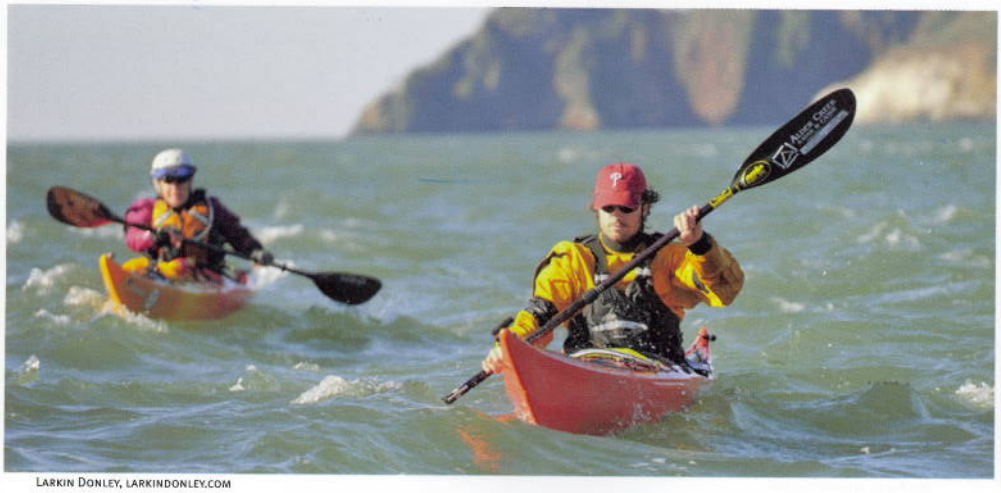
(right) A stand-up paddleboarder passes behind a great blue heron along the Sausalito waterfront in Richardson Bay. (left) Harbor seals may pop their heads out of the water near your kayak on the Bay, but you should never approach them.

SEBASTIAN KENNERKNECHT, PUMAPIX.COM

Despite its challenges, this trip is a favorite because of the perspective it offers on some of the Bay's most breathtaking scenery. "The views of the city, the Golden Gate, and the Bay from the water are spectacular," says Diane Poslosky, who runs Environmental Traveling Companions, an organization that leads outdoor adventure expeditions for people with special needs. "A month ago I was paddling to Angel Island with friends and we saw a raft of cormorants—more like a freeway of them—coming through the Golden Gate. There must have been thousands. It was absolutely stunning." Harbor seals also make frequent appearances in these waters, following the progress of boaters. "They're really curious but kind of shy," Poslosky says. "They'll pop up and when you notice them they'll pop down quickly. You'll turn around and there's the harbor seal playing hide-and-seek with you."

A MILDER ADVENTURE BEGINS at the public dock at Jack London Square where California Canoe and Kayak offers classes for novices like me. From here we launch into the Oakland Inner Harbor, a nine-plus-mile inland waterway where giant cargo cranes preside over container docks at the north end and the channel merges with San Leandro Bay's intertidal mud flat to the south. In the early 20th century, dredging operations here transformed what was once an isthmus into the island of Alameda. Midway down the channel is the slough, now heavily silted over and dammed, that connects Lake Merritt to the estuary and Bay. Thanks in part to dogged advocacy by Keith Miller, owner of California Canoe and Kayak, that channel will be daylighted next year with a kayak bypass as part of Oakland's wetlands restoration project.

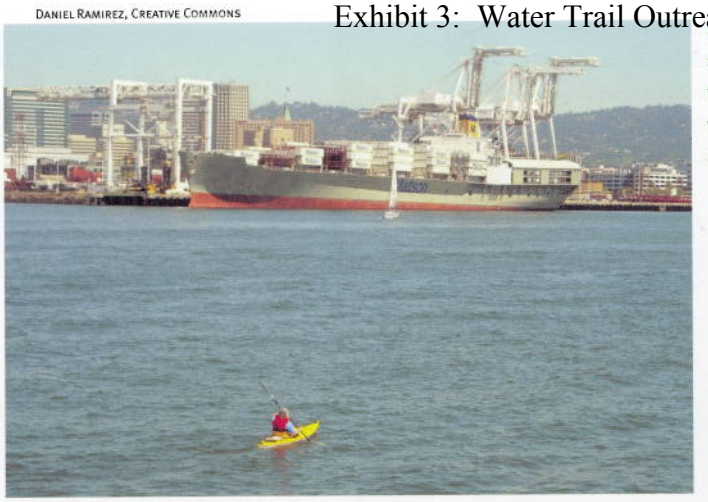
Today's journey will be brief—less than a mile down the southeasterly portion of the estuary. Because of the movement of container ships and security prohibitions near the shipping docks, the northern path along the Alameda side is off-limits to all but the most experienced paddlers. We wonder aloud what aquatic life braves this very urban setting. Although anglers here report catches of striped bass, perch, and even leopard shark, most of the nearly 70



LARKIN DONLEY, LARKINDONLEY.COM

Paddlers on the open Bay or just outside the Golden Gate (as here) face much more challenging—and exciting—conditions than paddlers in more sheltered waters.

Daniel Ramirez, Creative Commons



Kayakers share the sheltered waters of the Oakland Estuary with giant container ships.

species of fish found in the greater Bay tend to avoid these more enclosed waters.

But right on cue, a small silvery fish bursts out of the water. Most likely a juvenile being chased by something higher on the food chain, it is probably one of three kinds of fish that serve as regular appetizers for the estuary's hungry waterfowl: sardines, northern anchovies, or possibly one of three species of herring. Miller believes they're most likely sardines: "I've leaned over the dock here in August and September and seen huge schools of them going through the marinas." If he's right, these swimmers are midway on a journey that takes them from Russia to Alaska and down to Baja's Sea of Cortez.

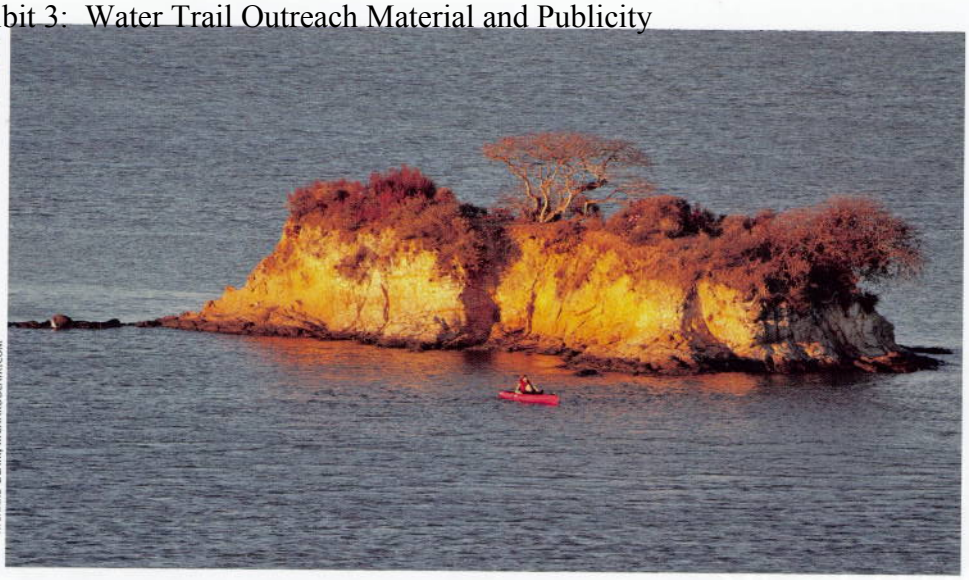
The estuary's landmarks, such as the old port terminal, Coast Guard Island, and Alameda's cheery houseboats, provide historical context for paddlers continuing southward. A favorite event here is the full moon paddle, when the bright night sky illuminates the egrets, gulls, and night herons that line the docks. But perhaps the most exhilarating experience on these waters is that of simply reaching the southerly end of the estuary, where this narrow channel suddenly broadens out into the expansive San Leandro Bay. "For an urban paddling environment, it's very cool," says Miller.

Down in the South Bay, just off Highway 237, past empty office buildings, and over the Gold Street Bridge, lies the tiny town of Alviso, situated along the Guadalupe River. It's hard to imagine that such a place exists less than five miles from downtown San Jose.

The town—once a proud and busy port for commerce and the ferry system, a home for Wells Fargo Express carriages, and a construction site for Liberty ship hulls—became, literally, a backwater. In the mid-20th century, the local aquifer was pumped to provide fresh water to nearby cities and farms, causing the land closest to the Bay to subside 15 feet. Alviso's most prominent designated historical landmark, the 115-year-old South Bay Yacht Club, had to be moved to higher ground. Protective levees built from recycled concrete were found to contain high amounts of asbestos, putting Alviso on the Superfund list and initiating a 25-year EPA cleanup effort. Alviso Slough is clogged with Gold Rush mining sediment that returned with the tides, inviting the growth of invasive grasses that have further choked the channel. Salt pond levees in surrounding marshes prevented the tidal action that could have scoured out the sediment.

With all these challenges, the marina appeared doomed. "Alviso used to be known as San Jose's front door," says Russ Robinson, the yacht club's commo-

Ben Pease, peasepress.com



Richard Blair, richardblair.com

A kayaker passes in front of Rat Island, off China Camp State Park.

dore and historian. "Over the years, that door was closed."

But now, with a clean bill of health from the EPA and the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project opening up the neighboring areas to tidal action, Alviso's resurrection has begun. In June 2010 nearly 1,000 local residents, civic leaders, and boating enthusiasts gathered at the Alviso Slough to inaugurate the new Alviso Marina Boat Launch Ramp. Funded by the California Department of Boating and Waterways, the ramp serves as a template for future launch sites. On opening day more than 400 people, including local children, took turns powering a colorful dragon boat, provided by the California Dragon Boat Association, through the slough.

Surrounding the new marina are observation decks, picnic areas, and many bicycle and walking trails. The best paddling here is at high tide, when you are less likely to get stuck on a mudflat. Launching from the new ramp into the slough one feels rather cozy, surrounded on either side by vegetation. The northwesterly wind, stronger in the summer months, offers a respite from the South Bay's summer heat, but slows our forward progress. Except for the sight of Coyote Hills and the occasional auditory accompaniment of trains and jets, you could be in any quiet inland waterway.

And then it hits—the smell of salt air—a reminder of being connected to a larger body of water and to the sea. Soon the landscape changes as well. Tall, breezy cordgrass is replaced with pickleweed, critical habitat for the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse. Pickleweed is a hardy succulent with segmented fingerlings ranging from coral to pale green from which sprout tiny cream-colored oval florets. Like the cordgrass, pickleweed is a halophyte, or salt-tolerant plant, ideally suited to these wetlands and the harbinger of a healthier marsh.

Beehive-like mounds of salt line the levees. And everywhere—birds. Most of the migrating birds here, such as northern shovelers and greater yellowlegs, leave by April or May. "Some of our earliest might be coming back in July. Those are mostly shorebirds—like long-billed curlews," says Cheryl Strong, wildlife biologist at Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. But permanent residents are abundant: "We see egrets and great blue herons in the channel year-round."

In the distance a quiet roar announces a cut in the levee connecting the slough with a salt pond prosaically labeled A6. This mini white-water channel, occurring at the change between ebb and flood tides, is both exciting and awe-inspiring. The afternoon summer breeze picks up, and we take that as our cue to head back. A tailwind cuts the return trip in half.

Patrick Lewis

People attending the grand opening of Alviso's launch site paddle a dragon boat along the slough. The Water Trail will appeal to dragon boat teams, rowers, and other recreational boaters, in addition to kayakers.

Over the next few years, as Water Trail sites are developed and education programs get rolling, the thousands of people who climb into kayaks and other muscle-powered boats will learn firsthand why tides, tailwinds, and the preservation of our natural resources matter. "The number of people taking ownership of our Bay and caring for it will likely grow," says Ann Buell, project manager for the Coastal Conservancy. "To get out on the Bay is to love and want to protect it and the wildlife it supports." Thanks to Buell, Wells, and other advocates, more people will have the opportunity to appreciate the beauty, majesty, and joy of being out on San Francisco Bay.

GETTING THERE

You can plan trips at dozens of launch sites. For a map of those sites, visit bayaccess.org/bay_access.html.

Andrea Pflaumer is a Berkeley-based nonfiction writer. Her work has appeared in local and national periodicals and focuses on health, culture, and the environment.

On the Trail Elsewhere will return in our October–December 2011 issue.

PADDLE WITH A PORPOISE!

Saturday, September 24, 9:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m. Richardson Bay paddle to view harbor porpoises, with Environmental Traveling Companions and naturalists Bill Keener and Armando Quintero. $85/person. Info: baynature.org/bnevents. Reservations: (415)474-7662 x13 or kayak@etctrips.org.