



## San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail

### Site Description for Dickson Ranch / Sears Point



**Location, Ownership, and Management:** The Dickson Ranch boat launch allows visitors to experience and learn about tidal marsh restoration. The site is located south of Highway 37 off Reclamation Road, and is accessed from the parking area on the Sears Point Unit. The boat launch is on the Dickson Ranch Unit within the 1,500-acre Sears Point restoration project along the northern shoreline of San Pablo Bay. The site is located within the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Sonoma County and is managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

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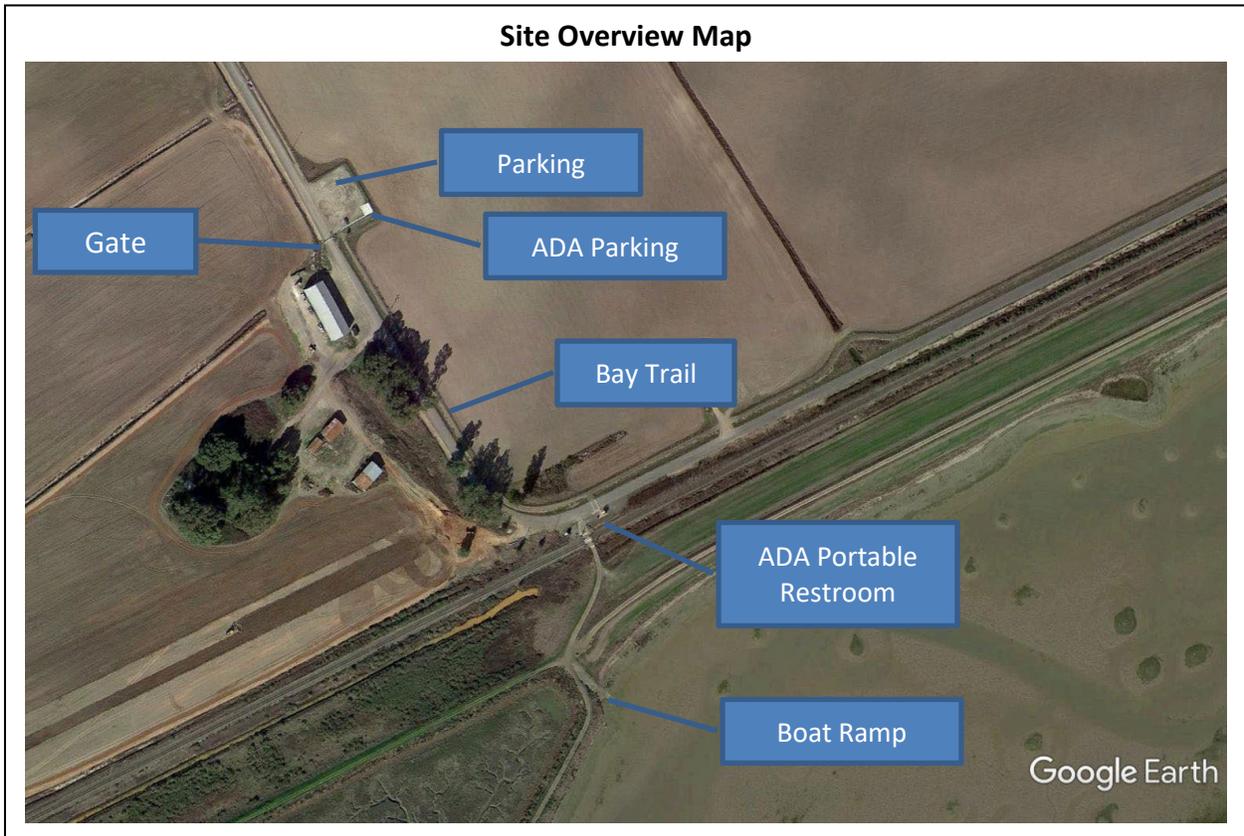
**Contact E-mail:** don\_brubaker@fws.gov



**Facility Description:** The Dickson Ranch boat launch provides kayakers, SUPs, and canoers incredible bird watching and scenic views. Water access facilities at the site include a gravel ramp that tends to be compacted and consolidated. The launch is located approximately ¼ mile from the parking area on Sears Point Unit, San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

Due to the distance from the parking area, the site is most often used as part of guided programs and tours. Sonoma Land Trust offers kayak programs and guided tours throughout the spring, summer, and fall for residents, visitors, and school classes. A boat dolly is recommended for those bringing their own boats.

Other facilities at Dickson Ranch / Sears Point include a parking lot and several miles of Bay Trail.



**Other Identifying or General Information:**

<p>Site ID: <u>Sn8</u>                  In WT Plan: <u>No</u>                  Existing or Planned: <u>Existing</u>                  Ownership: <u>Public</u>                  County: <u>Sonoma</u>                  Geo-Region: <u>San Pablo Bay</u>                  SF Bay Plan Region: <u>San Pablo Bay</u>                  Launch or Destination: <u>Launch</u></p>	<p>Home of a Club: <u>No</u>                  Used by a Program that Assists Persons with Disabilities: <u>No</u>                  Appreciated for Windy Conditions: <u>No</u>                  Near Food or Drink: <u>No</u>                  Proximity to Other Sites: Black Point Boat Launch is located approximately three paddle miles from Dickson Ranch. There are no other existing sites along the southern edge of San Pablo Bay.</p>
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**Description of Launch/Landing:**

<p>Fixed Dock/Pier Launch/Landing: <u>No</u>                  Float: <u>No</u>                  Transfer/Launch Assistance System: <u>No</u>                  Gangway: <u>No</u>                    Boat/Trailer Ramp: <u>Yes</u>                  Mudflats Affect Site Usability: <u>Yes</u>                  Beach Wheelchair Available: <u>No</u>                  Stair Water Entry: <u>No</u>                  Beach: <u>Yes</u>                  Firm-Surface Beach Crossing: <u>No</u>                  Fee for Launch or Parking: <u>No</u>                  Water Entry Path: <u>Yes</u></p>	<p>Other Launch/Landing Notes: This site provides important access to the northern shoreline of San Pablo Bay. Black Point Boat Launch is the only other launch providing access to northern San Pablo Bay for ~17 miles of shoreline between the Petaluma River and the Napa River.</p>
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*The road is gated nearly a quarter mile from the launch, requiring a long walk from the parking area to the gravel launch. Boat dollies are likely required for most kayakers and canoers. Inflatable paddleboards may be another good option.*

**Site Appears to be Suitable For:**

Kayak: <u>Yes</u> Windsurfer: <u>No</u> Kiteboard: <u>No</u> Whaleboat: <u>No</u> Stand Up Paddleboard: <u>Yes</u>	Canoe: <u>Yes</u> Outrigger Canoe: <u>No</u> Sculling: <u>No</u> Rowboat/Dinghy: <u>No</u> Dragonboat: <u>No</u>
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**Transportation and Parking:**

General Spaces (number): <u>~50</u> ADA Parking Spaces (number): <u>2</u> ADA Parking Description: Two paved ADA spaces in the parking lot located a quarter mile from the launch. Duration (hours): <u>No time limits posted.</u> Overnight Parking Allowed: <u>No</u>	Overnight Parking Description: No parking past sunset. Loading/Unloading Area: No. There is a gate across the road leading towards the launch. Bay Trail: <u>Yes</u> Public Transportation: No public transit serves the site.
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*Two paved ADA spaces in the parking lot located within the parking lot a quarter mile from the launch.*

**Path of Travel:**

Distance to Launch from Parking Area (feet): 1,400  
 Distance to Launch from ADA Parking (feet): 1,400  
 Distance to Launch from ADA Restrooms (feet): 900  
 Distance from ADA Restrooms to ADA Parking (feet): 900  
 Path of Travel Exists: No



*Two ADA parking spaces are paved and there is a paved path of travel along the edge of the parking lot to the kiosk and trailhead that parallels Reclamation Road. The trail to the restroom is decomposed granite and in good condition.*

**Overnight Accommodations:**

Hotel: <u>No</u>	Hostel: <u>No</u>	Ship: <u>No</u>	Camping: <u>No</u>	Other: <u>No</u>
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**Additional Notes Related to Accessibility:**

The site is not ADA accessible. The path of travel is unpaved and the boat ramp is comprised of large gravel.

**Other Site Amenities:**

Total Restrooms: <u>1</u> Total ADA Restrooms: <u>1</u> Restroom Description: One ADA portable located at the trailhead Boat Storage: <u>No</u>	Boat Washing: <u>No</u> Rigging/Staging Area: <u>No</u> Picnic Tables: <u>No</u> Benches: <u>Yes</u> BBQ: <u>No</u>
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**Safety and Security, including Parking:**

Waterfowl hunting occurs in nearby wetlands October to January. Winds and currents on San Pablo Bay can be strong; paddlers need to take care to stay within their skill level.

**Additional Notes on Use of Site (Boating and Non-Boating) and Existing and Planned Management:**

The site was constructed as part of the Sears Point restoration project; therefore, use of the site is relatively new. The site is most heavily utilized by the Sonoma Land Trust, which regularly hosts interpretive tours from the site. It is anticipated that most individual use will be by kayakers, canoers, and SUPs to explore the restoring salt marsh habitats and to access the Bay. The Bay is located approximately one mile south across the restoration site from the boat launch. The restoration is intended to accrete sediment, so it is anticipated that much of the site will become more shallow and inaccessible to paddlers over time.

Waterfowl hunting is allowed in restored areas accessible from Dickson Ranch on specified hunting dates during the year. Dates are announced at the beginning of the year and posted on USFWS's website.

**Wildlife and Habitat Considerations:**

Dickson Ranch is an approximately 1,500 acre tidal marsh restoration project that is managed for resident and migratory waterbirds and tidal marsh habitats and species. Waterfowl species commonly seen in the area include mallard, Northern shoveler and pintail, ruddy duck, canvasback, widgeon, gadwall, scaup and Canada goose, among many others. In marsh areas, egrets, herons, stilts, avocets and sandpipers rest and prey on invertebrates in the shallow water and exposed mud flats. Tidal marsh habitat also acts as a significant nursery habitat for species of anadromous fish such as salmon and steelhead.



**Other Existing or Anticipated Water Trail-Related Issues and Opportunities:**

Dickson Ranch is intended to accrete sediment and will naturally become more shallow in many areas as the site restores in the coming years and decades. As this occurs, many areas will no longer be accessible to paddlers and access may ultimately be limited to a few sloughs or excluded entirely.

**Education, Outreach, and Stewardship, Including Signage:**

Naturalists conduct a variety of programs for both organized groups and the public. Programs are offered on a variety of subjects including restoration history and current issues, birding, wetland ecology, and general nature exploration.

There are also interpretive signs located near the boat launch and along the nearby segments of Bay Trail. These signs highlight the unique species and habitats as well as the history of farming on the site.



**Accessibility of Sites within the Petaluma River Geo-Region:**

There are four potential Water Trail sites within this geo-region in the Accessibility Plan: Petaluma Turning Basin, Petaluma Marina, Lakeville Marina (Papa's Taverna), and Black Point Boat Launch. Dickson Ranch Boat Launch was not included in the Water Trail Accessibility Plan. There are no beaches, and currently no low-float docks or transfer systems within this group of sites. At the Petaluma Turning Basin, a non-profit organization (Petaluma Small Craft Center) is fundraising to add a low-float dock and boating concession facility to the existing high-freeboard dock. That location should eventually provide broadly accessible NMSB access for the public (an obstructing flag pole will need to be removed from the path of travel). The Petaluma Marina has a boat launch ramp, as does the Lakeville Marina. The future of the Lakeville Marina as a public launch site is unknown. Black Point Boat Launch is currently a broadly accessible boat launch site for those NMSB types and individuals who use high-freeboard docks or boat launch ramps to enter and/or launch their watercraft.

The experiences that are available within the Petaluma Geo-Region include both rural and urban environments, wildlife viewing, river or Bay paddling, and participation in events and festivals in Petaluma, where there are also restaurants and overnight accommodations. To the south of Black Point Boat Launch in the Marin/West San Pablo Geo-Region, there are wetlands and beaches.

Dickson Ranch Boat Launch is not broadly accessible. The closest accessible site is Black Point Boat Launch, which, for many NMSB users with disabilities, is already broadly accessible.

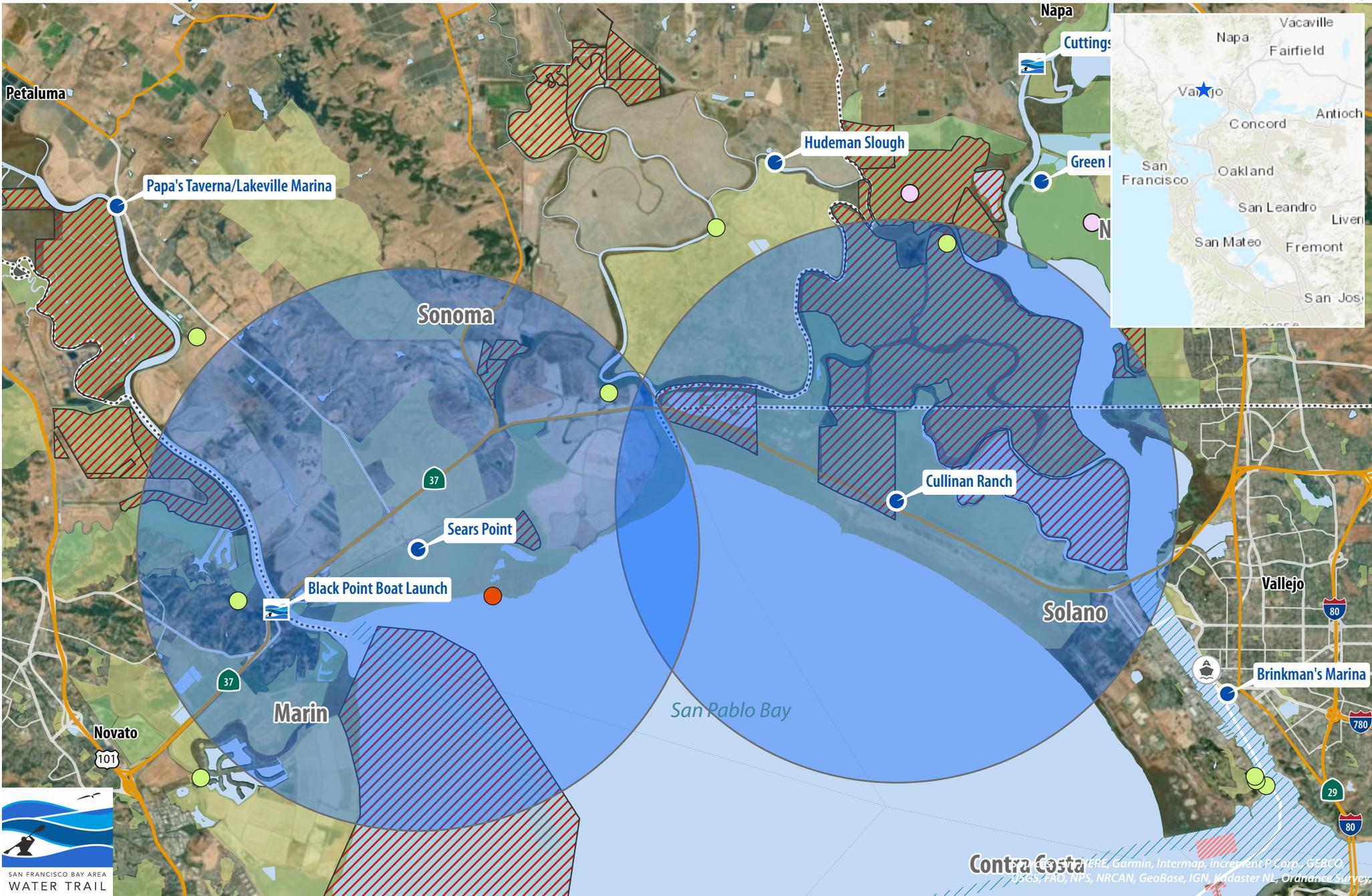
**Summary of Environmental Review  
based on the  
San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail Plan Final Environmental Impact Report**

**Dickson Ranch  
June 14, 2019**

<b>Resource Area</b>	<b>Impacts Analysis</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<p>Recreation References: WT DREIR, pp. 3-32 to 3-37.</p>	<p>Dickson Ranch has a gravel ramp, parking, and an ADA portable restroom. Facilities are well maintained. The large parking area could accommodate increased levels of use but use is not anticipated to substantially increase due to the distance from the parking area to the launch.</p> <p>Waterfowl hunting is allowed in restored areas accessible from Dickson Ranch seasonally. Hunt season dates are announced at the beginning of the year and posted on USFWS's website. Hunting generally occurs October – January.</p>	<p>Water Trail users may submit comments to Water Trail staff through the website if they witness or experience recreational conflict at any designated site. The Water Trail educational sign would include warnings about seasonal hunting in the Bay (Oct – Jan) and includes the USFWS website for specific information.</p>
<p>Navigational and Personal Safety References: WT DREIR pp. 3-38 to 3-51, and Figures 3.4.2-1 and 3.4.2-2.</p>	<p>Small boat users should be aware of tides, winds, and currents. Extensive mud flats may be exposed and even shallow draft vessels can be subject to hidden underwater hazards during low tides. Boaters should be aware of the breaches along the edge of San Pablo Bay. A lot of water moves into and out of Dickson Ranch between tides, which can create dangerous currents due to increased flow through the levee breaches.</p>	<p>The Water Trail educational sign that would be installed provides safety information related to navigational and personal boating safety.</p>

<b>Resource Area</b>	<b>Impacts Analysis</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<p>Aesthetics References: WT DREIR pp. 3-56 to 3-68.</p>	<p>Dickson Ranch is considered a wildland site, characterized by the public boat launch within a National Wildlife Refuge. Dickson Ranch has interpretive signage and there are sign boards and parking signs near the parking lot that are very similar in content to Water Trail education signs.</p>	<p>The Water Trail will require the inclusion of a Water Trail identification sign. A sign that contains much of the Water Trail Education Sign information has already been placed near the launch so another education sign may be redundant.</p>
<p>Biology-Vegetation References: WT DREIR pp. 3-69 to 3-92 and Table 3.7.2-1 and Table 3.7.2-2.</p>	<p>There is marsh habitat located on small habitat islands throughout the Dickson Ranch restoration area, otherwise much of the restoration area is currently open water at most tides. Boaters could explore the San Pablo Bay shoreline. Endangered and rare plant species have been found in the area.</p>	<p>Preventing the inadvertent spread of exotic, invasive plant species is important at all launch sites. The WT educational sign and website ask WT users to help prevent the spread of invasive species by rinsing boats and equipment after use and by not landing in marshes or on levees.</p>
<p>Biology – Birds <i>References: WT FEIR text and map</i></p>	<p>Dickson Ranch provides important habitat to a wide variety of bird species. Ridgway's rail are known to occur in the marshes throughout the year.</p>	<p>Existing USFWS educational signs include information about how to paddle responsibly around wildlife and to maintain a buffer distance from birds, and to avoid landing in the marsh or on levees. The WT website and brochure include more detailed information about not disturbing nesting birds.</p>
<p>Biology – Rafting Waterfowl References: WT DREIR pp. 3-93 to 3-131 and Table 3.8.2-1, Figure 3.8.2-1.</p>	<p>This site provides access to areas where rafting waterfowl may congregate.</p>	<p>Avoiding disturbance of rafting waterfowl is addressed in the existing USFWS educational sign, and will be supported by the Water Trail brochure, and website.</p>

<b>Resource Area</b>	<b>Impacts Analysis</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<p>Biology – Ridgway’s rail and California black rail and high tide refugia References: WT DREIR pp. 3-93 to 3-131 and Figure 3.8.2-2</p>	<p>Black rail and Ridgway’s rail are present in the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge.</p>	<p>Signage emphasizes the importance of keeping a buffer from rail habitat and staying clear of high-tide refugia, and that landing in marshes and on levees is prohibited. The Water Trail educational sign, brochure and website include this information.</p>
<p>Biology – Harbor Seals References: WT DREIR pp. 3-132 to 3-156, Figure 3.9.2-1, and Tables 3.9.2-1, 3.9.2-2, 3.9.5-1, and 3.9.5-2</p>	<p>There is a secondary harbor seal haul-out site within four miles of the launch on the shoreline of San Pablo Bay.</p>	<p>The educational sign, brochure, and website all advise boaters not to land at haul-out sites and to always stay away from hauled-out harbor seals.</p>
<p>Biology – Other Species References: WT DREIR pp. 3-132 to 3-156 San Francisco Estuary Institute Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse Data</p>	<p>The salt marsh harvest mouse are found in the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Large areas of suitable marsh habitat occur within the Refuge.</p>	<p>Boaters are advised through the WT brochure and website to not disembark in any undesignated areas or trample sensitive habitats, including marshes. The educational sign emphasizes that boaters should not land in marshes or on levees.</p>
<p>Cultural Resources References: WT DREIR pp. 3-163</p>	<p>No WT-related construction is planned at this time. NMSB users are not allowed to land in adjacent wetland habitat, which would prevent potential disturbance of cultural artifacts.</p>	<p>The WT website includes information about avoiding disturbance to cultural artifacts.</p>
<p>Hydrology</p>	<p>No WT-related construction is planned at this time.</p>	<p>No hydrological changes would occur from existing conditions.</p>
<p>Transportation, Circulation, and Parking</p>	<p>The site is approximately ¼ mile from the launch, which is anticipated to limit use of the site. Most use is anticipated to be part of programs or tours. Therefore, the site is not anticipated to experience substantial increase in traffic.</p>	<p>Increased use by non-motorized small boat users will continue to be limited by parking capacity.</p>



San Pablo Bay  
NWR

- Potential Water Trail Site
- Active Nesting Sites
- Pelican Roosts
- ▨ Hunting / Security Exclusion Area
- 🚤 Designated Water Trail Site
- California Least Tern
- Harbor Seal Haulouts
- ▨ Shipping Channels
- 4-Mile Site Buffer
- Ridgeway's/Black Rail
- 🚢 Ferry Terminal



CA Harbor Seal data from Water Trail FEIR.  
Ridgeway's and black rail, Western snowy plover,  
and herony data generalized from 2015 California  
Natural Diversity Database  
Map Author: BB, September 2018