

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

March 8, 2007

SAN PABLO BAYLANDS RESTORATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS PUBLICATION

File No. 07-005

Project Manager: Ann Buell

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$15,000 to Bay Nature Institute to produce a 16-page supplement for *Bay Nature* magazine on habitat restoration and public access in the San Pablo Baylands region of Napa, Solano, Sonoma, and Marin Counties.

LOCATION: San Pablo Baylands in Napa, Solano, Sonoma, and Marin Counties (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Project Location and Site Map

Exhibit 2: *Bay Nature* South Bay Salt Pond article

Exhibit 3: Letters of Support

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31160 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) to Bay Nature Institute to produce a 16-page supplement for *Bay Nature* magazine on habitat restoration and public access in the San Pablo Baylands region of Napa, Solano, Sonoma, and Marin Counties. Prior to disbursement of any Conservancy funds, Bay Nature Institute shall submit for review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a detailed work program, timeline, and budget; and the names and qualifications of any intended contractors.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the purposes and criteria set forth in Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the California Public Resources Code (Sections 31160-31165) regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.

2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.
 3. Bay Nature Institute is a nonprofit organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the California Public Resources Code.”
-

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends authorization to disburse up to \$15,000 to Bay Nature Institute to produce a 16-page supplement for *Bay Nature* magazine on habitat restoration and public access in the San Pablo Baylands region of Napa, Solano, Sonoma, and Marin Counties. The science-based educational supplement will describe several multiple-partner restoration projects being planned and implemented to protect, restore, and enhance the unique and vital habitat in the San Pablo Baylands and adjacent uplands. It will also include brief descriptions of recreational opportunities and access points for public enjoyment of the area. The resulting product will evaluate, interpret, and synthesize for the public the value and accessibility of their investments in one of the most important environments of San Francisco Bay.

Bay Nature Institute plans to publish this in-depth piece in the July-September 2007 issue of *Bay Nature* magazine in insert format, and print up to 10,000 additional copies (“overprints”) of the supplement to be distributed beyond the magazine’s subscription and news stand circulation of 7,500. Funding and partnering organizations will distribute the overprints to their constituencies and the general public as well as to decision-makers at local and state levels. Copies will also be made available to the Novato and Vallejo chambers of commerce as part of their outreach for Highway 37, which traverses the wetland edge of the San Pablo Baylands between the two cities (Exhibit 1). The Conservancy-funded insert for the October 2004 issue of *Bay Nature* magazine on the South Bay Salt Ponds (see “Project History”) is attached as Exhibit 2 to illustrate the format, high caliber, and educational focus of *Bay Nature*’s work.

The publisher of *Bay Nature* magazine envisions the following outline for the supplement, for which the working title is "The Road to Restoration: Highway 37 and the San Pablo Baylands":

Introduction: Highway to Restoration - A broad overview of the ecological history of the baylands along Highway 37 over the past two centuries, and the use of this area by humans over time, leading to an examination of the major factors behind the current push to restore a large percentage of the lost wetlands.

A Closer Look - Three or four projects along the Highway 37 corridor that are illustrative of the opportunities and challenges at play in the San Pablo Baylands. The selected projects will be at different stages of development and implementation, allowing for a portrayal of the many steps involved in restoration at this scale. The range of projects will also allow for a description of the breadth of habitat types being protected and restored. Profiles will include sidebars depicting representative/indicator species for those projects and people involved in project planning and implementation. Possibilities for site selection include Sonoma Baylands, Bahia, Tubbs Island, Petaluma Marsh, Hamilton-Bel Marin Keys, Sears Point, Skaggs Island, and Napa-Sonoma Marshes.

Map of San Pablo Bay Wetlands - A two-page centerfold map of the San Pablo Bay wetlands to illustrate the scope of the “Highway to the Flyway,” (Highway 37) identifying both the projects described in the supplement as well as the other ones that are underway or envisioned. Different habitat types will be identified, as will locations where the public can have access to recreation and nature observation.

See For Yourself - Brief descriptions of three different outings along the San Pablo Bay shoreline, including at least one by water/boat.

Resources/Funders/Partners/Contributors - A listing of websites for finding out more about the various projects along the Highway 37 corridor, short descriptions of the funders and partners, and short biographies of principle content providers.

Bay Nature is a full-color quarterly magazine dedicated to explaining, exploring, and preserving the natural world of the San Francisco Bay Area. Since its launch in January 2001, the magazine has published 25 consecutive quarterly issues, 12 of which have included separately funded special sections devoted to in-depth exploration of particular topics (see “Project History” below). *Bay Nature* is working with several key partners in addition to Conservancy staff to fund, produce, and distribute this proposed supplement on restoration and public access in the San Pablo Baylands: the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, Sonoma Land Trust, and Ducks Unlimited, with the cooperation of the Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Bay Nature Institute is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose purpose is to promote the understanding, exploration, and protection of the natural world of the San Francisco Bay Area through publications, outings, public events and collaborative initiatives with other organizations, institutions and public agencies.

Site Description: The San Pablo Baylands are held in multiple ownership, including by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Fish and Game, Coastal Conservancy, Sonoma Land Trust, Marin Audubon, U. S. General Services Administration (Skaggs Island), State Lands Commission, and many private owners. The main habitat types include full and muted tidal wetlands, salt ponds, seasonal freshwater or brackish ponds, sloughs, tributaries (Petaluma River, Napa River, and Sonoma Creek), upland transition zones that provide refugia for wetland species, and agricultural lands used mostly for hay production or grazing.

The most visible development includes Highway 37 (dubbed “Highway to the Flyway” because of the access this road provides to and through one of the most important wetlands along the Pacific Flyway), other roads, railroad tracks, levees, home or farm structures and attendant utilities, and equipment and pumps related to wetland management. Although limited in extent, transitional upland habitat still exists in the area as do a small number of seasonal freshwater wetlands, both of which raise the conservation value of the area. Additionally, several listed species are supported by the tidal wetlands, including the California Clapper Rail and Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse. The condition of the properties and wetlands in this area varies widely, depending on historic and current management practices. The invasive cordgrass *Spartina alterniflora* and hybrids have fortunately not yet become well established in the San Pablo Baylands.

Project History: *Bay Nature* magazine has received recognition for its successful rendering of complex issues in the 12 science-based, conservation-focused editorial supplements it has

published since its inception in 2001. For example, the supplement titled “South Bay Challenge: Reclaiming the Salt Ponds for People and Nature” (October 2004), funded by the Conservancy, received two awards: the 2005 “Maggie” award from the Western Publications Association for Best Editorial Supplement, and an Outstanding Implementation Project award from the San Francisco Estuary Project (2005) (Exhibit 2). “Out of the Flames: Point Reyes Ten Years After the Vision Fire” (July 2005) won the 2006 Prize for Best Site Publication from the National Association for Interpretation.

Bay Nature will bring similar skill and knowledge to the proposed San Pablo Baylands supplement, telling a compelling story about the San Pablo Baylands for the general reader, instilling understanding of the area’s values, the complexities of restoration, and the opportunities to visit and enjoy the sites. This in-depth description of work being done in public-private partnership will build upon past Conservancy investment by educating the general public about the importance of restoration at these sites, while also furthering the Conservancy goal of increased public access to open spaces with educational and recreational value.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$15,000
San Francisco Bay Joint Venture	5,000
Ducks Unlimited	2,500
Sonoma Land Trust	2,500
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (pending)	<u>1,500</u>
Total Project Cost	\$26,500

The expected sources of Conservancy funds are fiscal year 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 appropriations from the “California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Act of 2002” (Proposition 40) for the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. These funds may be used for acquisition and development of land and water resources, including their preservation, documentation, and interpretation. This proposed authorization is consistent with the funding source because this project would provide documentation, interpretation, and preservation of San Pablo Baylands consistent with Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31165, regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.

Matching funds from the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, Ducks Unlimited, and Sonoma Land Trust have been committed. Other matching funds as detailed above are pending confirmation.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This project would be undertaken in accordance with Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31165, regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.

Section 31162(a) directs the Conservancy to undertake projects and award grants that will help achieve the goal of improving public access to, within, and around the bay, and in Section 31162 (d) to promote and assist projects that provide open space and natural areas that are accessible to urban populations for recreational and educational purposes. This project is consistent with both of these goals in that the supplement will describe the significance of existing and planned

wetland restoration projects around San Pablo Bay and its adjacent uplands, including a description of recreational opportunities and a map illustrating publicly accessible sites.

This project is a high priority under the selection criteria set forth in Section 31163(c) because it (1) is supported by the *Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Report* (1999) and the San Francisco Joint Venture's implementation strategy *Restoring the Estuary* (2001), (2) serves a regional constituency in the north bay (Napa, Sonoma, Solano, and Marin Counties) and beyond, (3) will be implemented quickly to be ready for the July 2007 issue of *Bay Nature* magazine, and (5) includes matching funds from several sources as described above (see "Project Financing").

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 9, Objective A**, the Restoring the San Pablo Baylands supplement in *Bay Nature* magazine will present an up-to-date and detailed profile of a selection of north bay high-priority restoration projects with information on opportunities for public access to and around the bay and adjacent upland open spaces.

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective C**, this special removable section in *Bay Nature* magazine will educate local and regional restoration practitioners about successful approaches to complex wetland restoration projects while also providing examples of projects that have integrated public access with resource protection and enhancement.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted January 24, 2001, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Support of the public:** This project is supported by the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, Ducks Unlimited, Sonoma Land Trust, Department of Fish and Game, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and The Bay Institute (Exhibit 3).
4. **Location:** The project will focus on the wetlands and associated uplands in Napa, Sonoma, Solano, and Marin Counties.
5. **Need:** The project will receive matching funds but will not have adequate funding without Conservancy participation.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The publication will include a discussion of the complex factors involved in planning, assembling, funding, implementing and monitoring successful multi-jurisdictional restoration projects with multiple project partners. As such, wetland restoration practitioners around the region and beyond will be provided with pertinent information for projects with similar habitats and challenges.

Additional Criteria

9. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
12. **Readiness:** The grantee has identified personnel and funding to be able to meet a July 2007 publication date.
13. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** It is likely that several Conservancy-funded restoration projects will be among those discussed in detail in the supplement. The publication will increase public awareness of recreational opportunities and of the collaborative work in which the Conservancy participates.
15. **Cooperation:** The San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, Ducks Unlimited, Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sonoma Land Trust and others have participated in the projects profiled as well as contributed to the research for the proposed supplement.

CONSISTENCY WITH SAN FRANCISCO BAY PLAN:

The proposed project is generally consistent with the Public Access Findings and Policies of the *San Francisco Bay Plan* (Bay Conservation and Development Commission, 1968), as amended. Those findings and policies direct the inclusion of public access to shoreline areas where appropriate and feasible. The *Bay Nature* special publication would serve to increase public knowledge of the existence, location, and opportunities for public access around the San Pablo Baylands.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA: Under California Code of Regulations Title 14, Section 15060, activities that will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment are not subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review. The proposed educational article about restoration and public access in the San Pablo Baylands will be solely educational and descriptive in nature.