

## The Emergence of Partnerships for Wetlands and Wildlife

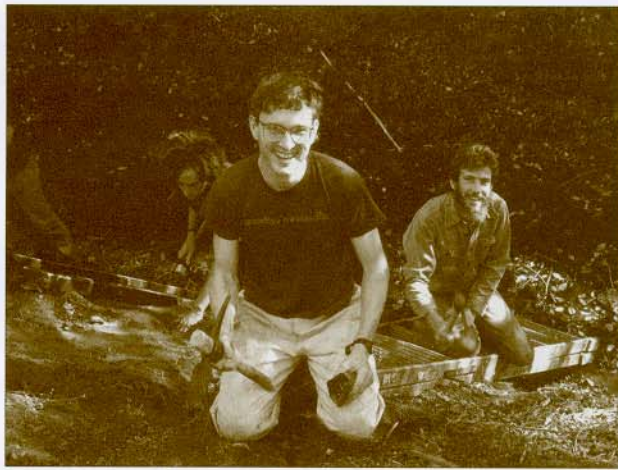
The implications of these trends have prompted a number of organizations to form partnerships to work toward reversing the tide of wetland losses. Many of these organizations are now working in association with the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture.

The San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, like the other joint ventures, is an outgrowth of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), an international agreement signed in 1986 by the United States and Canada and later joined by Mexico, in response to a decline in waterfowl populations during the preceding decades. Habitat joint ventures were to be formed as vehicles for accomplishing the Plan's major goal: to "maintain and enhance the habitat values of areas identified as internationally significant to waterfowl." As of early 2000, a total of 14 such collaborations had been formed in North America, 11 in the United States and three in Canada, bringing together the fiscal resources and management capabilities of a spectrum of agencies and organizations.

Like the others, the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture provides a framework for sharing skills, funding, and information. Using an integrated and non-regulatory approach, it has been working through its partners to complete on-the-ground habitat projects that benefit wildlife populations by leveraging resources, developing new funding sources, and creating project-specific partnerships.

The partners of the SFBJV recognize that wetlands and riparian habitats are vital not only to wildlife, but also to flood control and water storage and quality improvements. They buffer the impact of floodwaters, cleanse pollutants from runoff, and help to recharge overdrawn water supplies. The diversity of project partnerships being created within the SFBJV suggests a growing awareness that wetlands also provide economic and other benefits, including open space and recreational opportunities. In short, wetlands help to sustain a higher quality of life for residents in the densely populated San Francisco Bay Area.

Understanding the current and potential importance of the Bay's wetlands, the 27 organizations and agencies



Volunteers build support for restoration at the grass roots.  
JOHN STEERE

on the SFBJV Board have agreed to pursue this primary goal: "To protect, restore, increase, and enhance all types of wetlands, riparian habitat, and associated uplands throughout the San Francisco Bay region for all types of wildlife." Within the context of this goal, restoration is viewed as the conversion of one habitat type to another (e.g., diked baylands to tidal wetlands), while enhancement is seen as an improvement in the functioning and biological diversity of an existing habitat.

To implement the Board's primary goal, SFBJV partners have defined several objectives:

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*Secure, restore, and improve wetlands, riparian habitat, and associated uplands by applying incentives and using non-regulatory techniques*

*Strengthen and promote new sources of funding for such efforts*

*Improve habitat management on public and private lands through cooperative agreements and incentives*

*Support the monitoring and evaluation of habitat restoration projects and research to improve future restoration projects.*

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## A Blueprint for Action

The Joint Venture has adopted an Implementation Strategy to help SFBJV partners fulfill their shared habitat objec-

tives by building on what has been accomplished and planning for the future. This Strategy is based on an ecosystem perspective that considers the biological requirements of wetlands, along with issues of public health and safety. It establishes region-wide habitat goals and subregional objectives for the restoration of the Bay Estuary using three broad categories: bay habitats, seasonal wetlands, and creeks and lakes.

Over the next two decades partners plan to protect 63,000 acres, restore 37,000 acres, and enhance another 35,000 acres of Bay habitats that include tidal flats, marshes, and lagoons. They

will also work to secure habitat values of adjoining seasonal wetlands, with protection and restoration/enhancement goals of 37,000 acres and 30,000 acres respectively. In addition, Joint Venture partners intend to protect 4,000 acres of riparian corridors and restore and enhance over 1,000 miles of creeks, as shown in the table below.

The SFBJV's goals offer an ambitious but well-researched and achievable vision for the restoration of the Estuary. Its partners will work only with willing landowners in the pursuit of its goals and objectives, with a focus on conservation easements as a major land protection tool.

The foundation and primary framework for the SFBJV's habitat goals is *Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals (1999)*, (*Habitat Goals*) a scientifically based ecosystem management plan for restoring the San Francisco Bay Estuary. This document grew out of the San Francisco Bay Area Wetlands Ecosystem Goals Project, a visionary effort begun in 1995. Its intent was to map and document the changes that have occurred in the Bay's wetlands over the past two centuries and to develop a clear statement of the potential for future restoration based on sound science. The principles and goals of the Goals Project have been incorporated into the Joint Venture's efforts.

To help the SFBJV's partners accomplish this vision for wetlands, acreage objectives were developed for each of the geographic subregions: North Bay, Suisun, Central Bay, South Bay, and the San Francisco/San Mateo Coast. Strategies to accomplish these objectives for each subregion recognize the organizational partners and the unique qualities of each area. To further respect regional differences, watershed working groups within each subregion have been or will be established to inform Joint