



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY AND FIGHT GLOBAL WARMING: SAVE THE BAY SEEKS HUNDREDS OF VOLUNTEERS TO PLANT 20,000 NATIVE WETLAND SPECIES THIS WINTER
Restored Wetlands Sequester Carbon from Greenhouse Gases, Strengthen the Health of the Bay and Provide Critical Habitat for Bay Wildlife

OAKLAND, CA – December 8, 2008 –Save The Bay, the oldest and largest membership organization working to protect and restore San Francisco Bay, is simultaneously improving the health of the Bay *and* combating effects of global warming by restoring vital wetland habitat. This winter Save The Bay is in need of hundreds of volunteers to help meet its ambitious goal to plant **20,000 native plants** at six wetland sites along the shoreline.

"People in the Bay Area understand that a thriving Bay is vital for our region's quality of life and economy; and this deep support from volunteers and the larger community is a critical asset in making the Bay healthier for people and wildlife," says David Lewis, Executive Director for Save The Bay.

Restoring Wetlands Helps Curb Global Warming

Scientists have found that tidal salt marshes capture carbon from greenhouse gases in the air efficiently and effectively, helping to counter global warming. Further, estuarine wetlands, such as those surrounding San Francisco Bay, sequester ten times more carbon per area than any other wetland ecosystem. Wetlands also keep the Bay healthy by providing vital habitat for endangered species, filtering runoff pollution to improve water quality, and preventing erosion. Additionally, wetlands act as a sponge, providing flood control when water levels are high and acting as a buffer in the event of sea level rise. Save The Bay is working with local partners to establish 100,000 acres of healthy wetlands ringing the Bay by protecting remaining wetlands and restoring former wetlands, like portions of the South Bay salt ponds, back to their natural tidal marsh state.

Volunteer Support is Key to Saving the Bay

Save The Bay is relying on the supportive Bay Area community to help plant 20,000 native wetland seedlings during the crucial winter planting season and is offering **70 volunteer programs** for schools, business and community groups, families, and individuals. Planting during the wet season ensures that rainfall will give each young plant the water it needs to grow and thrive. Further, Save The Bay volunteers will help improve upland transition zones—thin strips of vegetation located between Bay water habitats and land habitats. These unique and fragile buffer zones are particularly important because they provide habitat for wildlife seeking refuge from the high tides of winter.

When it comes to restoring the Bay shoreline, Save The Bay involves volunteers in every stage—people help collect seeds in the summer and sow the seeds in the fall. In addition to growing and planting native wetland plants, volunteers play an important role in cleaning up the shoreline and removing invasive weeds. This year several corporations, including Kaiser Permanente, Oracle, Budweiser, Intel and REI, are making a commitment to the Bay and have already scheduled private restoration programs.

"Our hands-on restoration programs are a fun and proactive way for the community to help address climate change issues by increasing our coastal resilience to future impacts of rising Bay waters," says Save The Bay Habitat Restoration Director Darcie Collins, Ph.D.

How to Volunteer

To volunteer as an individual visit www.saveSFbay.org/bayevents or contact Save The Bay at bayevents@savesfbay.org or (510) 452-9261. All volunteer restoration programs are free, but an RSVP is required. Save The Bay is in particular need of volunteers to help with winter plantings during the week of December 15-19 at any of three sites in Oakland, Hayward and Palo Alto. Please contact Jocelyn Gretz, Community Programs Manager, at jgretz@savesfbay.org or (510) 452.9261 x109 to set up a volunteer event for your community group or employee team.

Following are highlights of Save The Bay's upcoming community volunteer projects:

➤ **A Unique Collaboration for Restoration**

At **Bair Island National Wildlife Refuge** in Redwood City, volunteers can join Save The Bay for monthly canoe paddles out to Middle Bair Island, a former salt pond that is normally off-limits to the public, where they will help plant 2,500 native seedlings such as marsh gumplant and sea lavender. This December marks the beginning of a unique collaboration including environmental groups, Redwood City officials, the Port of Redwood City, planners, engineers and elected officials. As of December, dredge material from the port's shipping channel will be used to raise the level of Inner Bair Island, expediting the restoration process.

➤ **Greening Former Salt Ponds**

Eden Landing Ecological Reserve in Hayward is a 6,000 acre complex of former salt ponds undergoing restoration as part of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project. In October 2008, a planned breach adjacent to a new portion of the Bay Trail allowed tidal flow to return to a dried up salt pond. Also part of the Salt Pond Restoration Project, **Ravenswood Pond** in Menlo Park will be revitalized to include nesting islands for avocets and snowy plovers, as well as a public trail and wildlife viewing platform. This winter, Save The Bay volunteers will help plant 3,000 native seedlings at Eden Landing and begin to prep Ravenswood for restoration—activities that will create vital habitat for many species of Bay wildlife.

➤ **Restoring Wetlands Near Urban Areas**

Two of Save The Bay's restoration sites are tucked within highly populated urban areas, providing natural spaces for residents to visit, view wildlife and get away from the hustle and bustle of city life. At the **Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve**, volunteers are helping Save The Bay plant 4,000 native seedlings such as sticky monkey flower and mugwort. And volunteers are restoring some of the last remaining wetland habitat in the East Bay by planting 4,000 seedlings including bee plant and salt grass at **Martin Luther King Jr. Shoreline**.

➤ **Restore North Bay Habitat for Migrating Birds**

This winter Save The Bay volunteers are planting 1,500 seedlings like tufted hairgrass and yarrow at **Bothin Marsh** in Mill Valley. This gorgeous wetland area is located at the north end of Richardson Bay with a well-traveled portion of the Bay Trail weaving alongside the marsh. On any given day, one can see dozens of wildlife species, as well as the endangered California clapper rail and salt marsh harvest mouse. This mix of tidal wetlands and sloughs provides habitat for many Bay animals, and is a welcome stop for migratory birds traveling on the Pacific Flyway.

About Save The Bay

Save The Bay is the oldest and largest organization working exclusively to protect, restore and celebrate San Francisco Bay. As the Bay's leading champion since 1961, Save The Bay is committed to making the Bay cleaner and healthier for people and wildlife. Save The Bay wages and wins effective advocacy campaigns to increase public access to the Bay, establish 100,000 acres of healthy wetlands around the Bay, and protect the Bay from today's greatest threats: pollution and urban sprawl. Save The Bay educates 10,000 students and adults on the Bay each year and engages volunteers to improve vital wetland habitat. www.saveSFbay.org

Save The Bay's Site Partners

Save The Bay's volunteer projects are made possible through partnerships with local, state, and federal resource agencies with the goal of engaging student and community volunteers in wetland restoration.

Martin Luther King Jr. Shoreline: East Bay Regional Park District www.ebparks.org

Palo Alto Baylands: Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve www.cityofpaloalto.org

Bair Island: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service www.fws.gov/sfbayrefuges

Eden Landing Ecological Reserve: California Department of Fish and Game www.cdfg.ca.gov

Bothin Marsh: Marin County Open Space District www.marinopenspace.org

Ravenswood Pond: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service www.fws.gov/sfbayrefuges

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