



May 21, 2009

Opposition Statement to Proposed Redwood City Saltworks Development on San Francisco Baylands

Audubon California has long been committed to protecting San Francisco Bay and its wetlands. As a matter of policy, Audubon is opposed to filling Bay wetlands and supports active restoration of wetlands and other Bay habitats. We prioritize the continued acquisition and restoration of remaining Bay wetlands parcels as part of meeting Bay-wide tidal marsh goals. Given the hemispheric importance of the San Francisco Bay estuary, losing major tidal wetland restoration opportunities and other bay habitats undermines the potential for a sustainable Bay lands ecosystem including 100,000 acres of tidal marsh which Audubon California is working to help establish and protect.

Audubon California supports our local Audubon chapter, Sequoia Audubon Society, in its opposition of the Redwood City Saltworks development. A development on San Francisco Bay lands is inconsistent with Audubon's long-standing commitment to protecting and restoring San Francisco Bay. These remaining bay lands should be protected and restored.

Background

Audubon California is dedicated to protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitat that supports them. Audubon California has recognized 145 sites of exceptional bird habitat and conservation value throughout California as Important Bird Areas. Important Bird Areas are part of a global and international network of bird conservation, representing the most critical habitats for bird populations worldwide. The tidal wetlands of San Francisco Bay, including those proposed for development under the Redwood City Saltworks project, fall within this conservation network of Important Bird Areas.

Audubon California has long been committed to protecting San Francisco Bay and its wetlands. Historically, industrial development, salt production, urbanization have resulted in the filling of one-third of San Francisco Bay, and the loss of 85 percent of its wetlands. Yet despite these losses, San Francisco Bay retains incredible importance as wildlife habitat. San Francisco Bay is the largest estuary on the West Coast and provides critical habitat not only for shorebirds, waterfowl, marsh birds, but over 500 species of fish, mammals and plants, many of which are either threatened or endangered. San Francisco Bay is a critical stopover point along the Pacific Flyway migration route of shorebirds and waterfowl, which number over one million birds in the height of migration. The importance of San Francisco Bay's shorebird habitat has been recognized by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, which ranks it as being of "Hemispheric Importance" to shorebirds. San Francisco Bay is also a designated Area of Continental Significance for waterfowl by the North American Waterfowl Conservation Plan. Audubon California recognizes San Francisco Bay's wetlands as Important Bird Areas due to the high number of rare and endangered bird species and the sheer number of shorebirds and waterfowl supported by these wetlands.

Audubon California supports the protection and restoration of San Francisco Bay's wetlands and opposes filling and degradation of these wetlands. This position was articulated in the "Wetlands Policy Statement" issued by the Bay Area Audubon Council in 1984. (The Bay Area Audubon Council is composed of the eight local Audubon chapters of the San Francisco Bay Area: Golden Gate Audubon Society, Madrone Audubon Society, Marin Audubon Society, Mount Diablo Audubon Society, Napa-Solano Audubon Society, Ohlone Audubon Society, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, and Sequoia Audubon Society.)

Audubon California's position is consistent with the vision put forth by the San Francisco Bay conservation community in the Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Report (1999). Central to the Goals Report is the establishment of 100,000 protected and restored acres of tidal wetlands within San Francisco Bay. Continued acquisition and restoration of remaining Bay front wetlands parcels is required to meeting these goals. Given the hemispheric importance of the San Francisco Bay estuary, losing major tidal wetland restoration opportunities and other in-bay and adjacent habitats undermines the potential for a sustainable Bay lands ecosystem which Audubon California is working to help establish and protect.