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## **SAVE THE BAY EXPANDS BAY WETLAND RESTORATION PROGRAM** ***Community Volunteers Contribute to Re-establishing 100,000 Acres of Healthy Bay Wetlands and Help Combat Global Warming Impacts***

**OAKLAND, CA – February 2, 2009** –Save The Bay is now helping to restore two San Francisco Bay wetland areas - **Bothin Marsh in Mill Valley** and **Ravenswood Pond in Menlo Park**, bringing back and enhancing critical habitat that provides a natural buffer against sea-level rise. This expansion of Save The Bay's *Community-based Restoration Program* contributes to the larger goal of re-establishing 100,000 acres of healthy tidal marsh around the Bay, the amount of acres scientists say are needed for a sustainable Bay ecosystem. Save The Bay – the oldest and largest organization working to protect and restore San Francisco Bay – now works with 10,000 community, business and youth volunteers each year to restore six wetland sites all around San Francisco Bay.

"Healthy wetlands are important in the fight against global warming," says David Lewis, Executive Director for Save The Bay. "Restoring more wetlands around the Bay is essential to maintaining a sustainable Bay ecosystem, and will improve our quality of life in the region."

### **Ambitious Restoration Planned at New Sites**

Save The Bay works in partnership with Marin County Parks and Open Space District at **Bothin Marsh**—a gorgeous wetland area located at the north end of Richardson Bay. With a well-traveled portion of the Bay Trail weaving alongside the marsh, it is home to sandpipers, egrets, great blue herons, curlews, grebes, finches and hawks, as well as the endangered California clapper rail and salt marsh harvest mouse. This mix of tidal wetlands, sloughs and Bay also provides habitat for migratory birds traveling on the Pacific Flyway. Because this area provides critical food, shelter and nesting grounds for countless species, it is imperative that the health and viability of the marsh is maintained by planting native seedlings and removing weeds. Iceplant, a pervasive weed, is a primary target because it is extremely invasive, taking over large areas of the marsh and crowding out native plant species. Further, it is not a viable food source and it is thick, dense and low to the ground, which prohibits wildlife from using it for shelter and protection from predators.

**Ravenswood Pond**—a former salt pond at the western end of the Dumbarton Bridge—is a critical piece of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, the largest tidal wetland restoration project on the West Coast of North America. Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the pond will be reconfigured to provide nesting islands and habitat for shorebirds, including the threatened snowy plover, and other pond-dependant species. Save The Bay volunteers are prepping the site now by removing trash and non-native plants, and after tidal influence is introduced, will plant site-specific tidal marsh and upland grassland native plants along the pond's banks. The information Save The Bay gathers from work at Ravenswood Pond will influence future restoration activities within the larger South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project.

### **Wetlands Help Counter Global Warming Impacts and Boost Economy**

Wetlands act as an absorbent sponge, providing flood control when water levels are high and provide a natural buffer as sea levels rise. Scientists have found that estuarine wetlands, such as those surrounding San Francisco Bay, sequester ten times more carbon per area than any other wetland ecosystem, helping to counter global warming. Wetlands also keep the Bay healthy by providing vital habitat for endangered species, filtering runoff pollution to improve water quality, and preventing erosion.

Wetlands provide economic benefits, too. A 1992 case study estimated that California's wetlands provide as much as \$22.9 billion in value to the state annually. The San Francisco Bay Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge generates \$33.2 million in annual visitor expenditures to the Bay Area. Further, each acre of restored tidal marsh produces the equivalent of \$4,650 in flood control compared to engineered dams, reservoirs and channels.

### **Science-based Restoration Program Uses Innovative Techniques**

Save The Bay's *Community-based Restoration Program* uses innovative scientific techniques, a highly skilled staff, and 5,000 trained volunteers annually to restore wetland habitat at six sites around San Francisco Bay. Restoration staff use scientific methods to develop best practices in wetland habitat restoration and continually hone techniques based on careful site-monitoring data. Save The Bay is a pioneer in restoring upland transition zones—narrow areas of vegetation located between Bay water and land. These areas provide vital habitat for wildlife seeking refuge from high tides and buffers for local communities that face rising sea levels associated with global warming.

"Our hands-on restoration programs are a fun and proactive way for the community to establish vital habitat for sensitive and rare species, while also helping to 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**

Individuals can sign up to volunteer at [www.saveSFbay.org/bayevents](http://www.saveSFbay.org/bayevents) or contact Save The Bay at [bayevents@savesfbay.org](mailto:bayevents@savesfbay.org) or (510) 452-9261. All volunteer restoration programs are free, but an RSVP is required. Community groups and employee teams are also encouraged to pitch in. Interested parties can contact Jocelyn Gretz, Community Programs Manager, at [jgretz@savesfbay.org](mailto:jgretz@savesfbay.org) or (510) 452.9261 x109 to set up a customized volunteer event.

### **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 nearly 10,000 students and adults on the Bay each year and engages volunteers to improve vital wetland habitats. [www.saveSFbay.org](http://www.saveSFbay.org)

Save The Bay is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization.