

WATERSHED

The Newsletter of Save The Bay
Winter 2002



Community-Based Restoration Around The Bay It's All About Volunteers!

Since beginning our Community-Based Restoration program just two years ago, over 6,000 Save The Bay volunteers have restored wetland habitat at three sites around the Bay. Our CBR Program is a partnership among Save The Bay members, local schools, community groups, resource agencies, and other non-profits. We work closely with our agency site partners to plan meaningful stewardship projects at our sites, including the East Bay Regional Park District at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Shoreline Park in Oakland, the City of Palo Alto at San Francisquito Creek in Palo Alto, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service at Tolay Creek in Sonoma County. These projects provide opportunities for the public to directly participate in hands-on restoration of creeks and wetlands around the Bay. Activities include seed collection, native plant propagation, transplanting and non-native plant removal, water quality monitoring, site mapping, and bird,

plant, and native oyster monitoring.

Since 2000, we have removed over 12,000 pounds of non-native plants and 10,000 pounds of trash from our sites, and have planted over 15,000 native plants grown from seeds collected within the watershed at each site. In all, volunteers have donated over 15,000 hours of their time to help Save The Bay!

In addition to improving Bay habitat for fish and wildlife, this community-based work deepens the participant's ecological understanding of wetlands and strengthens their sense of community stewardship for the Bay.

We Need Your Help

We have over 20,000 native plants to place in wetlands around the Bay during the coming winter. To sign up, or for more information about our other restoration programs, call

**Marilyn or Anya at
(510) 452-9261, or check:**

www.saveSFbay.org/cbrmain.html

SAVE THE BAY

Save San Francisco Bay Association

Returning Native Oysters to the Bay

Save The Bay leads major regional restoration effort

The small native oyster (*Ostrea lurida*) was once abundant in many estuaries along the West Coast, including a large population in San Francisco Bay documented from extensive Ohlone Indian shell middens. Loss of habitat,



over-harvesting, and degraded water quality almost completely depleted the Bay's native oyster population, reducing a once-dominant local fishery resource to a few scattered, remnant populations.

Now, after a century of decline, Save The Bay has partnered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Community-Based Restoration Program, San Francisco State University, Restore America's Estuaries, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the California Department of Fish and Game, and numerous graduate students and community volunteers to help see if these important native oysters can be reestablished around the Bay.

We have conducted volunteer trainings and held special work days around the Bay Area, resulting in the construction and installation of numerous sets of shell strings at our five oyster monitoring sites. Volunteers have documented native oysters at three of these sites – Sausal Creek, Coyote Point, and on boat bottoms at Redwood Creek. At Sausal Creek volunteers have documented two years of oyster settlement as well as over 20 other species living on these shell settlements. Water quality monitoring information shows fairly healthy conditions present at all sites and is being used by SFSU researchers to look at individual site characteristics.

This Winter issue of *Watershed* is dedicated to Save The Bay's efforts to restore the Bay. We are working to restore tidal wetlands and habitat for endangered species around the Bay, and together with our many volunteers, are bringing degraded wetlands back to life through the labors of their many hands in community projects all around the Bay.



David Lewis
Executive Director

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SAVE THE BAY

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Native Oysters

Housekeepers of the Bay

If you examine the shell mounds left behind by Ohlone Indians, you will find an abundance of a small, unassuming mollusk – the members of an ancient population that has since shrunk to lilliputian proportions. The tiny native oyster *Ostrea lurida* – also known as the Olympia oyster – remains vital to the ecosystem of San Francisco Bay, but has been afforded little public attention, even as populations have declined rapidly. This silence is surprising, given the mysterious hold that oysters have always had over the human imagination. Despite its humble existence on sea beds, the oyster has managed to command such treasured status throughout history that it has crossed the line into myth. Rumor has it that to the Romans, oysters were worth their weight in gold – not to mention their importance as the birthplace of the goddess of love and as the source of pearls.

What ancient cultures could not comprehend, however, was that the oyster is worth far more than gold in its native environment than on the emperor's plate. Native oysters form the bedrock of a thriving and healthy San Francisco Bay. On the busy floor of intertidal areas, *Ostrea lurida* and other filter feeders serve as living water purifiers, removing phytoplankton, algae, suspended particles, and pollutants from the water. This helps to allow sunlight to penetrate to the otherwise murky depths, making it possible for plants to photosynthesize, increasing the amount of dissolved oxygen available for fish and wildlife. As oysters excrete waste, nutrients are transferred to the sedimentary layer, enriching it in the process.

In addition to being the Bay's housekeepers, native oysters provide a home to a complex web of organisms. When *Ostrea lurida* populations are of healthy size, they form extensive reefs, as larvae and

invertebrates attach themselves to their shells. These three-dimensional landscapes serve as a fertile habitat for dozens of fish and invertebrates in San Francisco Bay. Today, loss of habitat, over-harvesting, and degraded water quality have nearly depleted Olympia

oyster stocks, leaving them unable to provide their important functions for Bay health. This leads to a spiraling effect, as pollution continues to thin the oyster population, thereby removing an excellent natural method of curbing pollutants.

Since May 2001, Save The Bay has been collaborating with citizen groups as

well as scientific advisers from San Francisco State University and the National Marine Fisheries Service to restore native oyster populations. The Native Oyster Project, as a part of Save The Bay's Community-Based Restoration Program, enlists the help of community volunteers to monitor oyster populations and water quality. Participants can actually watch new reefs being built as they learn to construct and monitor "shell strings" – 10 foot long stretches of rope with oyster shells attached. Volunteers hang these strings in the water and monitor them monthly to determine the amount and variety of new organisms that have settled on them. In addition to helping build new oyster populations, this volunteer effort is adding precious knowledge to our understanding of the oysters' specific ecological functions.

By infusing local communities with knowledge and appreciation of Olympia oyster populations, the Native Oyster Project is promoting a cleaner Bay as well as a stronger community. With enough effort, we will see the day when native oysters will once again proliferate as they did in the days of the Ohlone, and native oysters will again act as sentinels guarding a clear and healthy Bay.

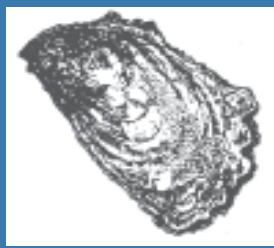
Olympia oyster

Ostrea lurida

Size: About the size of a 50 cent coin.

Range: Native to the Western U.S and Canada.

Feeding: As filter-feeders, oysters take in huge amounts of seawater (20 to 30 quarts an hour) to extract phytoplankton. Pollutants in the water are also extracted and become concentrated in the oysters' tissues.



By: Sarah Dorsey, Journalism Intern

“Wildlife projects will give you the chance to get reacquainted with animals, to deal with them as they really are, to consider their needs, to experience their vitality, and perhaps to rekindle in yourself a sheer childlike delight in their very existence.”

The Earth Manual, Malcolm Margolin

Save The Bay’s Community-Based Restoration programs address a sad fact that is little known to most Bay Area residents. Since the Gold Rush, San Francisco Bay’s wetlands – home to 32 endangered species and a host of birds, fish, and mammals – have shrunk to less than 10 percent of their original size. This means bad news for the health of the Bay as well as for the biodiversity of the creatures it supports. To reverse this unhealthy trend, Save The Bay has teamed up with community volunteers to restore bay wetlands, one region at a time.

Our Community-Based Restoration Project, meanwhile, is combating pollutants naturally, by propagating native oyster communities at Sausal, San Francisquito, Tolay, San Pablo, and Redwood creeks, and at Richardson Bay, Coyote Point, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Shoreline. Volunteers monitor oyster population growth and water quality at these sites.

With the help of our friends in the community, Bay wetlands are being restored creek by creek. As wetlands grow, the Bay once again becomes a healthy place for birds, fish and people. An urban estuary does not have to be a contaminated estuary. Come join our community in restoring the Bay to a clean place for working, playing, and living.

Community-Based Restoration Partnerships and Supporters

The National Partnership between NOAA Fisheries’ Community-Based Restoration Program and Restore America’s Estuaries
and

California Coastal Conservancy
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
US Fish and Wildlife Service
The Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund
The Community Foundation of Silicon Valley
East Bay Regional Park District
The City of Palo Alto
San Francisco Estuary Project

Working to Restore The Bay’s Native Oysters

Save The Bay believes restoration of this essential habitat is critical to restoring the Estuary’s functions to sustainable levels. Our Native Oyster Project is a highly collaborative effort, combining environmental nonprofits, university researchers, and Bay Area residents. Partners include Restore America’s Estuaries, the NOAA Community-Based Restoration Program, the National Marine Fisheries Service, San Francisco State University, and the California Department of Fish and Game. Graduate students and community volunteers work simultaneously to monitor native oyster populations in the San

Francisco Estuary through water quality testing, habitat assessment, and oyster shell monitoring at historic oyster sites located throughout the region.

Oyster Site Partners Include:

- Friends of Sausal Creek
- Friends of San Pablo Creek
- Richardson Bay Audubon Center
- Coyote Point Museum
- Marine Science Institute



Save The Bay restoration volunteer looks through oyster shells to identify native oyster growth and other organisms packed onto this highly desirable underwater real estate, including nudibranchs, amphipods and skeleton shrimp.

People like you...

...are restoring the Bay.



Eighty PG&E employees and their families helped collect seeds, remove debris, build tables, and install posts for our new jointly-sponsored native plant nursery with the East Bay Regional Park District, at Oakland's MLK Shoreline Park.



*Students from Oakland's **Project YES** planting marsh gum plants at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Shoreline Park.*



Student volunteers restoring native plants at San Francisquito Creek in Palo Alto.



Oakland High School students volunteering for Coastal Clean-Up Day at the mouth of Sausal Creek in Oakland.

Volunteering For The Bay



"Play Ball" Save The Bay Teams Up with the SF Giants

Pledge to help keep the Bay clean, safe and attractive

In June of this year, Save The Bay and the San Francisco Giants formed an exciting partnership to keep McCovey Cove clean and debris-free during weekend GIANTS' day games. Throughout this first great season together, Save The Bay volunteers skimmed McCovey Cove from a Boston Whaler provided by the South Beach Yacht Club, keeping the waterway clean and safe for both boaters and for the creatures who live in the Bay.



The Save The Bay/SF GIANTS BaySweeper boat was provided by the South Beach Yacht Club.

Save The Bay volunteers arrived approximately one and a half hours before game time to prepare the boat, learn a little about the Bay, and scout out the cove for any floating debris that could damage or surprise boaters. On some days the cove was jam-packed with a number of various vessels—from surfboards to rubber dingys to fishing boats to 70 foot yachts. There have been some very unusual watercraft as well, such as a pontoon-mounted golf green, a giant fish boat, and a floating taco.

Save The Bay's volunteers provided information about the Bay to fellow boaters and to the thousands of spectators on their way to the game. They also collected trash and floating debris (to keep it out of the Bay), and once even performed a Bay rescue.

In the coming 2003 season we will be covering some 80 games from McCovey Cove. If you are interested in helping during one of these games, please contact Jen Jackson at (510) 452-9261 or jjackson@saveSFbay.org. In addition to having lots of fun on the Bay, volunteers are given a pass to get into the stadium to watch the game between innings 2 and 7, before returning to cove duties.

Next year when you are visiting Pacific Bell Park or watching the Giants on television, keep your eye out for the Save The Bay boat!



Save The Bay's Dave Reid (foreground) piloted the BaySweeper boat for many of the games this past season.



A BaySweeper volunteer skims trash and debris from McCovey Cove during a GIANTS' home game, helping to keep the

Want to Learn What's Happening in Your Watershed? Volunteer with Save The Bay!

To learn about all the ways you can help make an important (and fun!) volunteer contribution to Save The Bay, please email or call Jen Jackson at jjackson@saveSFbay.org, or (510) 452-9261. We currently have volunteer opportunities in our office, with our newsletter and communications' activities, in our Community-Based Restoration and Discover The Bay programs, and in our many outreach and education projects. Also, in March we will be developing the SF Giants/BaySweeper volunteer list for the 2003 season.

To be placed on our BaySaver Action Alert email list, contact Jen, Save The Bay's Community Organizer.
For additional information, check our website: www.saveSFbay.org

A Holiday Gift Idea for the Bay
Give A Gift Membership in Save The Bay

As you make your gifts this holiday season, please consider giving the gift of membership in Save The Bay. By doing so, you will help protect, restore and celebrate our national treasure, the San Francisco Bay. The recipient will enjoy 12 full months of discounts on exciting Save The Bay outings on and around the Bay, receive a one year subscription to *Watershed*, our information-packed newsletter, and will take pride in being part of one of the longest running, regional environmental non-profit organizations.

Save The Bay has prevented thousands of acres of landfill, restored many acres of rich wetland habitat and have helped increase miles of shoreline access all around the Bay. Our members have made these accomplishments possible, and we thank you for all that you have done through your commitment to Save The Bay.

Save The Bay Staff Corner

Our Education staff teaches people about the Bay.



Office staff help keep our members informed of Bay issues.

New Staff at Save The Bay

Felicia Borrego, Political Director

Kimia Mizany, Policy Associate

Jen Jackson, Community Organizer

2002 ChevronTexaco Conservation Awards to Sylvia McLaughlin and the late Dwight Steele

On September 26, Save The Bay's Co-founder, Sylvia McLaughlin, attended the 48th Annual ChevronTexaco Conservation Awards' ceremony in Houston. In addition to receiving one of this year's awards, Sylvia also accepted an award for Dwight Steele. Dwight, who sadly passed away this past summer, had served on Save The Bay's first Board of Directors.

Together, Sylvia and Dwight pooled their talents and energies towards preserving and protecting San Francisco Bay. They led countless battles to protect the Bay from being filled and to preserve its wetlands, wildlife and water quality. They also helped form the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, the first coastal protection agency in the U.S. For three decades, as part of Citizens for Eastshore State Park, they worked to create the Eastshore State Park which encompasses 8.5 miles of shoreline along the San Francisco Bay, covering 260 acres and bordering five cities.

An independent panel of leading conservationists selected the winners, who each received \$10,000.

"Their passion, ingenuity, and vision to conserve natural resources are examples for all of us to emulate," said Warner Williams, ChevronTexaco vice president of Health, Environment and Safety.

SAVE THE BAY

Save The Bay has been working for four decades to celebrate, protect, and restore the San Francisco Bay-Delta and to improve public access to its shoreline. We are committed to keeping the Bay alive, healthy, and beautiful.

IN THIS ISSUE

- ◆ Save The Bay Restoration – All Over The Bay 1
- ◆ Returning Native Oysters To The Bay 2-3
- ◆ Community-Based Restoration Photos 4-5
- ◆ Save The Bay Teams Up with The SF Giants 6



Photo: David Sanger

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Public Hearing Eastshore State Park:

Friday, December 6, 2002
9:30 AM at the Berkeley
Marina Radisson Hotel

The State Parks and Recreation Commission will meet to vote on recommendations to name and classify the Eastshore Project. Save The Bay is urging a classification that will protect natural resources and allow less development.

Discover The Bay

Here is a sampling of some of our exciting upcoming trips:

January 11

Alameda Creek Salmon Walk
9 AM – 2 PM

January 12

Tolay Creek Photography Walk
9 AM – 1 PM

January 25

San Pablo Bay Flyway Festival
“Paddles”
9 AM – 2 PM

February 8

Lake Merritt Birding for Beginners
9 AM – 12 Noon

For a complete schedule of our Bay outings,
call Sarah at (510) 452-9261,
or check our website at:
<http://www.savesfbay.org/Discover.html>

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