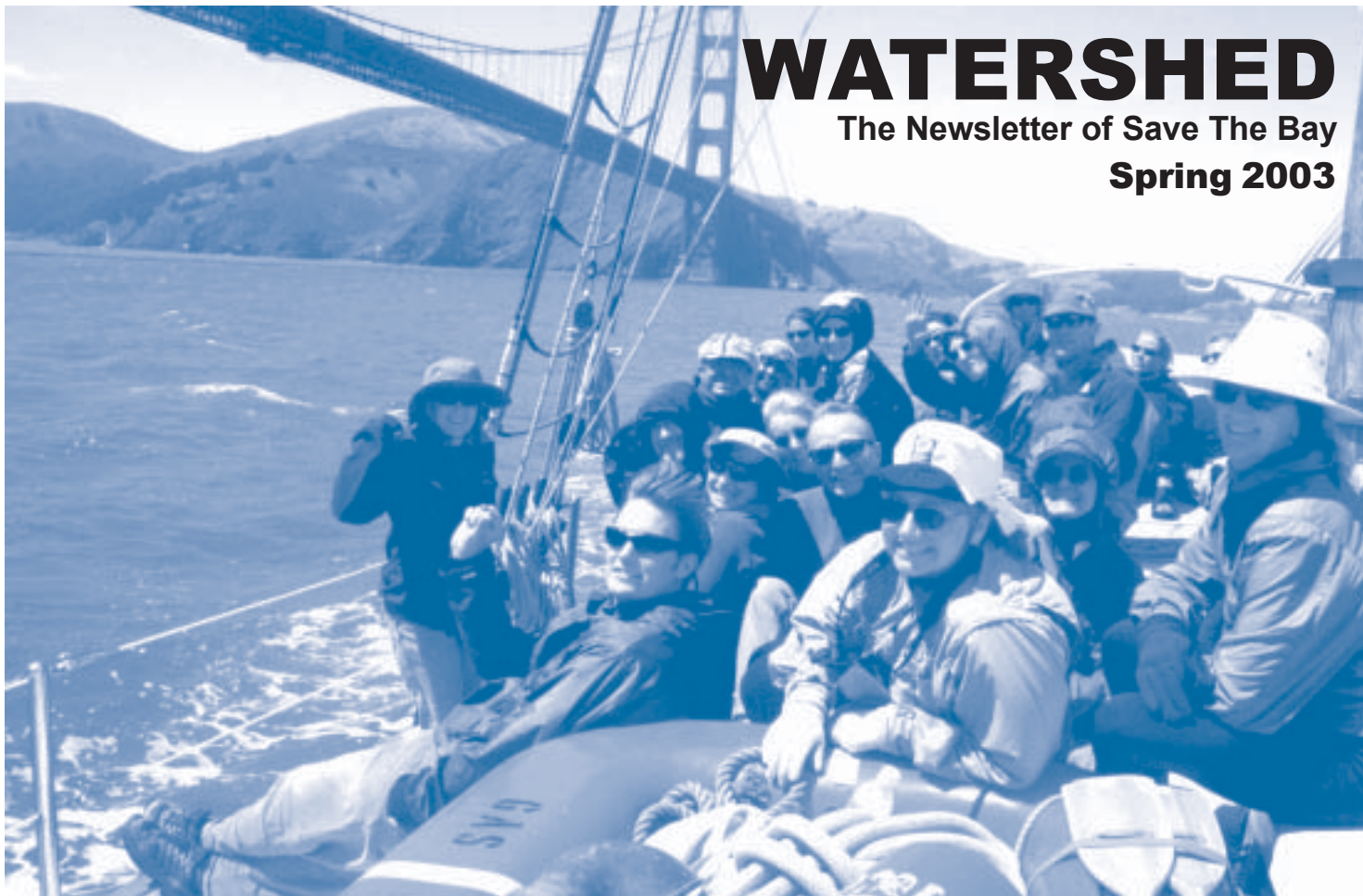


WATERSHED

The Newsletter of Save The Bay
Spring 2003



Celebrating San Francisco Bay Year-Round Join Us for an Outing Near You!

This issue of Watershed encourages readers to celebrate San Francisco Bay, the largest estuary on the Pacific Coast of the Americas. As longer days approach, our great inland sea offers many opportunities to experience its beauty. Soon, on sunny weekends, sailboats and windsurfers will skim the bluish-green waves, while fishermen dart about the various channels and inlets in search of stripers and sturgeon. A visit to the Bay's remaining wetlands and marshes will be rewarded by the sight of wintering birds, lingering a bit longer before returning to their breeding grounds. And on the gentle upland slopes around the Bay, wildflowers will be blooming in wondrous expressions of colors and shapes.

Throughout the past year, our newest program - *Discover The Bay* - has led thousands of Bay Area residents out on the Bay for fun and inspiring outings - by canoe, kayak, foot or bicycle. To see what you have been missing, please take a look at our upcoming schedule on page 5. There is probably a trip just right for you and your friends.

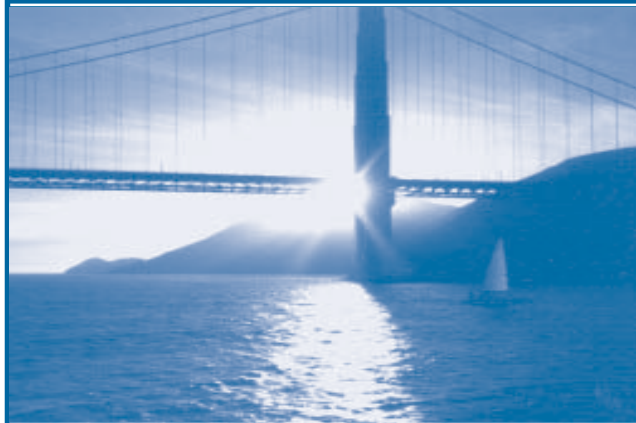
And don't miss our special "Opening Day on the Bay" ferry cruise on April 27. Celebrating the Bay couldn't be easier (or more fun).

We look forward to seeing you out on the Bay this year.

SAVE THE BAY

Save San Francisco Bay Association

Discover the Bay on April 27



"Opening Day on the Bay"

...is the official beginning of the boating season on San Francisco Bay. Our special chartered ferry will sail out under the Golden Gate Bridge and then alongside the parade of 250 decorated sailboats, antique vessels and working boats. From 12 noon to 2 PM. \$25.00.

(510) 452-9261 or register at: www.saveSFbay.org/baycruise

Celebrating Success—And Securing More

The acquisition of Cargill salt ponds reminds us to celebrate our victories and mark how far we have come in our drive to reclaim restorable parts of the Bay. In just the last decade, tens of thousands of acres of diked, historic Baylands have been spared from development and secured for restoration by resource agencies, with help from Save The Bay and our colleague organizations.

The change is not only in acreage, but also in attitude. We no longer have to convince people that expanding wetlands is essential for Bay health, or that salt ponds can and should be restored to more productive habitat – not filled in for development. Public funding for acquiring shoreline open space and wetland restoration is winning strong local and state-wide support at the polls. Cities now understand a restored Bay improves the quality of life of their residents, not just endangered species.

All nine Bay Area counties boast sizable Bay wetland restoration projects, from Bair Island in Redwood City to Hamilton Field in Novato, and from Oakland's Arrowhead Marsh to the Napa River in Vallejo. Save The Bay has collaborated with local leaders like the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge and Marin Audubon Society, and national organizations like Ducks Unlimited and The Nature Conservancy to create the will and the wallet for these projects and more.

This progress encourages us to forge ahead. We are already working to develop the steady restoration funding needed to manage decades of restoration planning and implementation. Ultimately, we know sustained success requires Save The Bay to get more people directly in touch with the Bay and involved in hands-on restoration work, to establish firmly in the Bay Area's culture a love of these places and strong, public stewardship for them.



David Lewis, Save The Bay's Executive Director (at the microphone), with Governor Gray Davis and Senator Dianne Feinstein at press conference on May 29, 2002 announcing the plan to acquire over 16,000 acres of the Cargill salt ponds for restoration.

Executive Director

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Bat Rays - Graceful Swimmers of The Bay

If you are lucky enough to chance upon a bat ray in the murky waters of a muddy slough, don't be ashamed to pinch yourself. This large, charcoal-colored fish has such an odd appearance that to catch sight of one swimming in the wild must be like watching a creature materialize from a fantasy novel.

The California bat ray, with its four-to-six foot "wing" span, has one of the most exotic combinations of features of any creature to be found in San Francisco Bay. A somewhat bulbous head and popping eyes give the ray an awkward, frog-like appearance. The head,

however, gives way to a sleek, graceful body, the sides of which form huge flapping "wings," which the bat ray uses to swim. And its long, whip-like tail looks like it belongs on some kind of rodent rather than a sea creature. Altogether, the bat ray looks like a mythical leviathan, embodying in one form the creatures of land, sea and air.

In reality, the bat ray's exotic looks derive not from myth, but from history. *Myliobatis californica* has been around for a long time in this area—fossils have been found that date back one million years—to the late Pliocene epoch. Today, bat rays are still a common sight in our bay and around the intertidal zone of the shallow ocean. Although its dark shadow gives off a vaguely menacing air as it cruises just under the water, the bat ray is far from being some fierce, marauding predator—unless you happen to be a crustacean or mollusk. In fact, it spends much of its time simply lying in the sand. There it waits for small mollusks, snails and crustaceans, laconically flapping its "wings" to cover itself with sand as camouflage. This action can also uncover juicy worms or shellfish, which the ray cracks open with its jaws, sucking out the meat for a quick meal. Bat rays can also dig out food using their snouts to probe into the mud or sand.

Any fearsome image the bat ray gives off may derive from a faint family resemblance to its cousins, the sharks. Unfortunately for *M. californica*, however, it resides a bit lower on the food chain than its relatives, and in fact, in the ocean can serve as a quick bite for a foraging

shark or hungry sea lion. An excellent adapter, the bat ray is an upstanding member of the undersea community—it is not particularly picky about what it eats, and gives back to other creatures in a unique way. While digging in the dirt for food, the bat ray exposes not just

the clams, crabs and worms it prefers, but also tiny organisms that smaller fish enjoy. As a result, many small fish rely on the bat ray for food, since they are unable to dig out their prey themselves.

But for humans, the beauty of this creature lies in the opportunity to observe its magnificent "flight." While it swims, a bat ray folds its side flaps in a motion that looks like a bird flapping its wings. The smooth and even rhythm it beats, as it glides along, is reminiscent of the most graceful of eagles. Bat rays can even take the simulation of flight one step further. They have been seen "jumping" out of the water, and can skim along the surface for several seconds—a motion that looks remarkably like flying.

Although often solitary, these rays have been observed to swim in packs of hundreds—and have even been seen traveling by the thousands. So next time you are visiting the bay's wetlands, keep a sharp eye out for the bat ray. If you are especially lucky, you will catch them in a social mood. But be warned—that tail IS armed with a stinger—the venom of which serves as a painful reminder to the curious to observe these unusual creatures from a respectful distance.

Bat Ray

Myliobatis californica

Size: Width to 6 feet.

Range: Oregon to the Gulf of California; common in bays and shallow sandy areas along the coast.

Feeding: Primarily bottom feeders: clams, abalone, snails, and echiuroid worms.



By: Sarah Dorsey, Journalism Intern

Here are some of the ways Bay residents have discovered the Bay...see our complete schedule of trips on page 5.



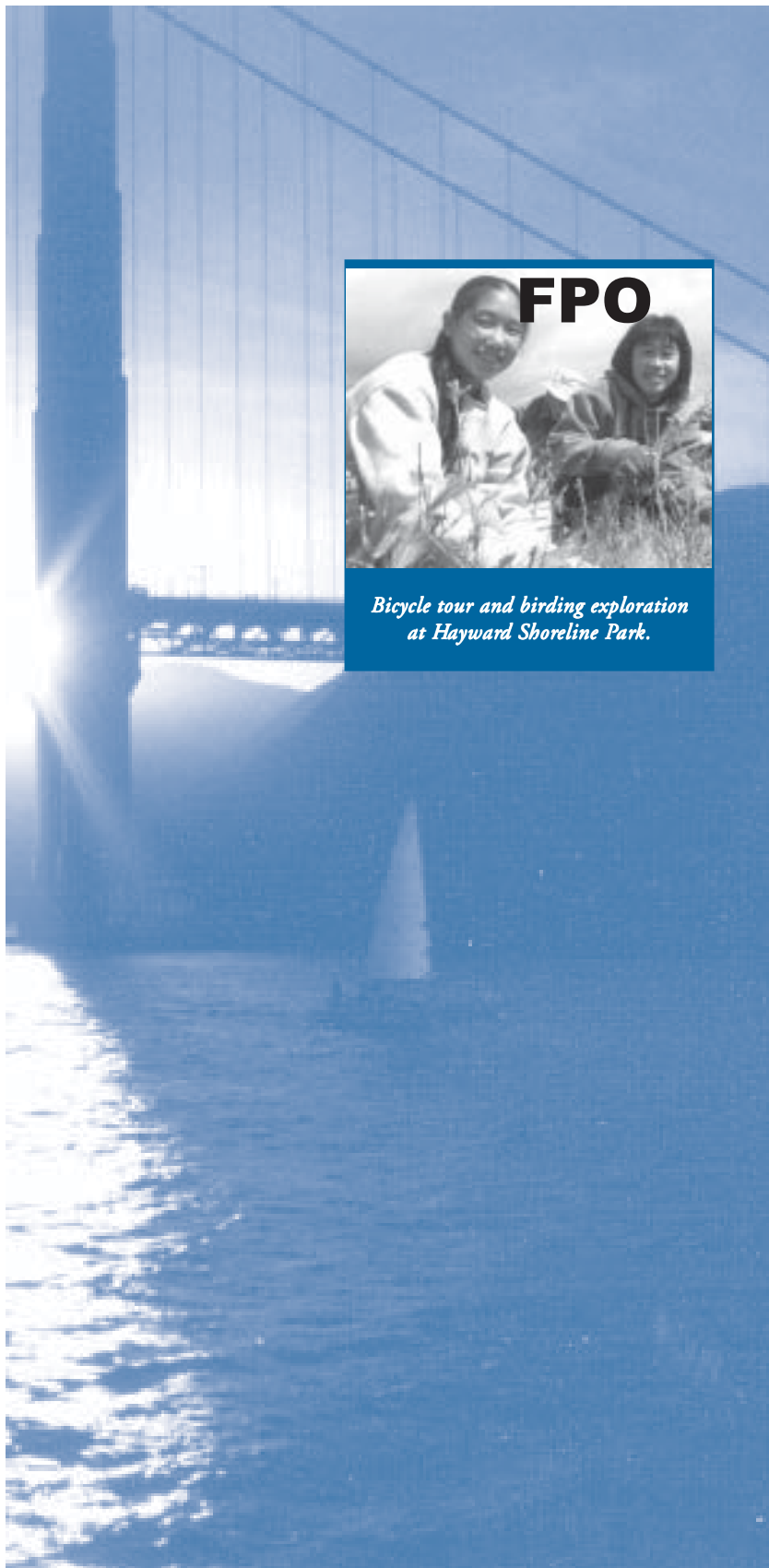
Exploring Brooks Island after kayacking over from the Richmond Marina.



Canoes glide along Petaluma River near Lakeville in Sonoma County.



Wintering bird walk at Oakland's Lake Merritt.



*Bicycle tour and birding exploration
at Hayward Shoreline Park.*

Discover The Bay

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

Spring 2003

April 27

Opening Day of the Bay - Ferry Cruise
Noon—2:00 PM

May 3

May Day Paddle - Arrowhead Marsh
10:00 AM—3:00 PM

May 10

Bair Island Canoe Trip
9:30 AM—2:30 PM

May 15

Kayak Paddle - Full Moon Eclipse
Sausalito and Richardson Bay
6:30 PM—10:00 PM

May 17

Sonoma Wine and Wetlands Canoe Trip
Petaluma Marsh and Viansa Winery
9:30 AM—2:30 PM

May 31

Brooks Island Kayak Discovery
Sausalito and Richardson Bay
9:00 AM—4:00 PM



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>

Site Updates

Moffett Field:

Environmentalists and Peninsula communities were the winners in a struggle to get the Navy to clean up Moffett wetlands to a level that would allow future tidal restoration. Save The Bay is advocating for inclusion of the Moffett wetlands in the South Bay salt pond restoration research and planning studies now underway. Moffett wetlands are adjacent to the recently purchased Cargill salt ponds.

Breuner Marsh:

Save The Bay joined TRAC (Trails for Richmond Action Committee) and a coalition of environmental and citizen groups to appeal the recently completed Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Breuner Marsh Mitigation Bank & Edgewater Technology Park Project along the south Richmond shoreline. The project would have built on rare coastal upland, and the private, for-profit marsh mitigation bank would not have allowed public access along the shore. The Richmond City Council accepted the appeal and rejected the EIR, giving project opponents the opportunity to reshape this project and propose alternatives—such as purchase of the site for a public park.

Eastshore State Park:

Since approval of the new Eastshore State Park last November, acquisition of an additional parcel of land in the North Basin Strip has been approved by the East Bay Regional Park District. The parcel, a former parking lot for Golden Gate Fields, would provide a site for ballfields and sports. Save The Bay and Friends of Five Creeks have collaborated on a proposal to daylight Schoolhouse Creek and restore riparian habitat and salt marsh at the mouth of the creek in the North Basin.



Save The Bay tour of Moffett Wetlands and Stevens Creek



Save The Bay's New Native Plant Nursery

Save The Bay volunteers recently completed our new wetland native plant nursery, a joint community partnership with the East Bay Regional Parks District. We are now ready to grow native plants for our many Bay restoration projects in our new nursery, located near Garretson Point in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Shoreline Park. Our volunteers were involved in all aspects of building the nursery, from constructing tables to setting up irrigation systems and shade cloth. In just under three months we have worked with over 150 volunteers and have planted over 2,000 native wetland seedlings! We are excited about this new opportunity to involve volunteers in all stages of the restoration process, from non-native plant removal, to seed collection and plant propagation and outplanting.

Thanks to everyone who has helped make our Community-Based Restoration Program grow even stronger with the addition of this special new nursery facility.

Save The Bay Supports Assembly Bill 204 Reduction of Polluted Runoff Into the Bay from Roads and Motor Vehicles

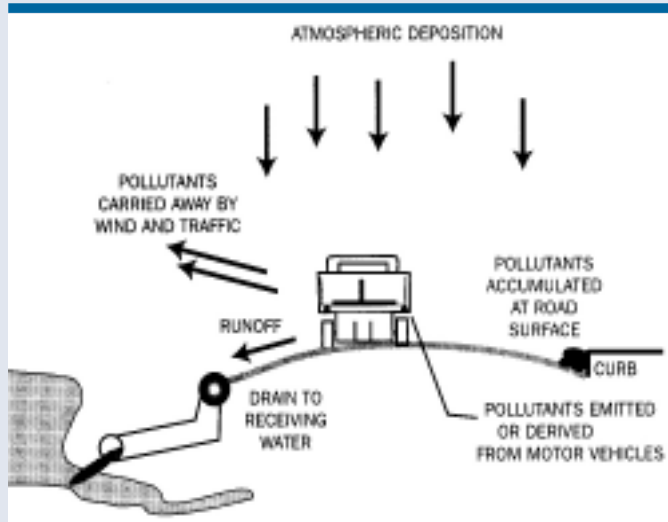
Save The Bay, working with the Bay Area Open Space Council, is sponsoring AB 204, legislation authored by Assembly Member Joe Nation of Marin. AB 204 establishes the Motor Vehicle Mitigation Fund, which will provide crucial funding for reducing the negative impacts of polluted runoff from motor vehicles and roads on Bay Area water quality.

The legislation would authorize a fee of up to \$4.00 per vehicle per year to be assessed on vehicles registered in the Bay Area counties choosing to participate in the program.

In the Bay Area, non-point source pollution from motor vehicles and roads poses the greatest threat to water quality in the region. Urban runoff carries pollution from motor vehicles into our creeks and streams, and eventually into the Bay, impairing water quality and wildlife habitat, as well as diminishing the recreational value of our watershed.

AB 204 will fund watershed projects throughout the nine-county Bay Area region that naturally filter pollutants from runoff before they enter the watersheds. This is an essential part of a long-term strategy to improve and protect San Francisco Bay and the habitat it provides for wildlife.

For more information about our Conservation Policy Program, please contact Save The Bay's Political Director, Felicia Borrego, at (510) 452-9261.



AB 204 will support projects that reduce, remediate, or otherwise mitigate the adverse impacts of motor vehicles and related facilities on the quality of the surface waters of the SF Bay Area.

FPO

Van splashing water photo

One of the ways untreated road run-off reaches the Bay

Take Action!

Contact your local Assemblymember and ask them to support AB 204.

If you don't know your Assemblymember's name or your district, please contact Jen at (510) 452-9261, or jjackson@saveSFbay.org or, visit this website for an easy to use interface:

www.npaction.org/article/archive/38

Thank you!

AB 204 Co-sponsors

Assemblymembers:

- Wilma Chan
- Loni Hancock
- Mark Leno
- Sally Lieber
- Gene Mullin
- Lois Wolk
- Leland Yee

Senator:

Tom Torlakson

SAVE THE BAY

Save The Bay has been working over 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.

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“Play Ball”

**Volunteer with
Save The Bay
at SF Giants Games**

**Help keep the Bay
clean, safe, attractive...
and HAVE FUN!**



Contact Jen for more information
(510) 452-9261 x 115 or email:
jjackson@saveSFbay.org.

Learn About Your Watershed Volunteer with Save The Bay!

There are many ways to become involved with Save The Bay!

For a complete list of opportunities see:

www.saveSFbay.org/volunteer.html.

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

* Earth Day is just around the corner and we need your help at our booths at various events around the Bay. Just a few hours of fun can help spread the word about important Bay issues.

* Volunteer to help clean McCovey Cove during weekend SF Giants games. Spend some time in the Bay Sweeper boat, and then enjoy a free pass to the ball game.

* If you want to learn more about fun volunteer opportunities with Save The Bay, attend our volunteer night on May 29, at 6:30 PM.

Please contact Jen for more information at:
(510) 452-9261, or jjackson@saveSFbay.org.

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