

SAN FRANCISCO BAY



Audubon California supports Bay habitat ballot measure

Audubon California has long been committed to protecting the birds and habitat of San Francisco Bay, which is widely recognized as one of the most important places for birds in the Western Hemisphere. For this reason, Audubon California wants voters in the nine Bay Area counties to have the opportunity to make an investment in the long-term health of this vital natural place.

Clean and Healthy Bay Ballot Measure

Audubon California is working with a coalition to place a Clean and Healthy Bay ballot measure on the June 2016 ballot. The measure will create a \$12 per parcel tax for the next twenty years, which should raise approximately \$500 million for tidal marsh restoration throughout San Francisco Bay. It is expected that these monies will leverage additional state and federal funding for Bay restoration. Fortunately, more than 35,000 shoreline acres have already been acquired and are awaiting restoration. The only missing ingredient is the funding necessary to do the work.

Compelling issue for conservation

Audubon California supports this measure because:

- Restored wetlands and cleaner water will support shorebirds and waterfowl that use the bay, which is one of the anchors of the Pacific Flyway.
- Increased public access to the bay shoreline will provide recreational and educational opportunities.
- The restoration will improve the bay's ability to



Surf Scoter. Photo by Andrew Reding.

adapt to sea-level rise and provide flood protection.

- Two-thirds of bay area voters and more than 200 current and former elected officials, business groups, community leaders and environmental organizations support this measure.

Our support includes:

- Raising funds to support a multi-media voter education campaign;
- Working with Bay Area chapters and members to educate the public about the importance of San Francisco Bay to birds;
- Engaging chapter leaders in regional outreach for the measure;
- Providing scientific and technical advice about birds.

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San Francisco Bay's value for birds

The San Francisco Bay is recognized as an international biodiversity hotspot because of the vast number of species of birds, animals, and plants found here. The Bay and its delta is the largest estuary on the West Coast, and is considered one of North America's most important. It provides critical habitat for shorebirds, waterfowl, marsh birds, as well as 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 at the height of migration, and includes twelve spots designated 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 the bay and surrounding wetlands.

The area has also been recognized by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, which ranks it as being of "Hemispheric Importance" to shorebirds.

San Francisco Bay in 2013 was designated a "Wetland of International Importance" under the Convention on Wetlands, also known as the Ramsar Convention. Audubon California, working in partnership with the San Francisco Joint Venture and a number of other public agencies and non-governmental organizations, submitted the application for the Ramsar designation.

Audubon presence

Audubon California operates the largest estuarine reserve in San Francisco Bay, the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary, which protects 900 acres of San Francisco Bay habitat and provides a center for



Audubon California staff inspect the organization's wetland restoration site at Sonoma Creek in San Francisco Bay.

community education, restoration, and celebration of the Bay.

We have also conducted a number of habitat restoration projects in the Bay at Aramburu Island, Tubbs Island, and Sonoma Creek.

Audubon has more than 5,000 members in the San Francisco Bay area. There are eight Bay Area Audubon chapters in San Francisco Bay, each of which has an active membership.

San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority

Ultimately, the decision to place the Clean and Healthy Bay ballot measure on the ballot will be made by the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority, which was created in 2008 by the State Legislature to lead efforts to restore habitats in and around the bay. Its purpose is to raise resources for the restoration, enhancement, and enjoyment of habitat and wildlife in the San Francisco Bay and along its shoreline.

The Restoration Authority and its supporters have considered putting a parcel tax initiative on the ballots of the nine Bay Area counties for some time, but the political climate has never been as supportive as it appears to be now.