Notice of Availability of the Draft Feasibility Report and Draft Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIR/EIS)

and

Request for Comments on the Draft EIR/EIS for the

Napa River Salt Marsh Restoration Project

To: All Interested Parties

May 2, 2003

Summary of the Project

The California State Coastal Conservancy (Coastal Conservancy), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), and California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) (project sponsors) are proposing a salinity reduction, water delivery, and habitat restoration project for the 9,460-acre Napa River Salt Marsh. The Napa River Salt Marsh Restoration Project (project) is located at the northeast edge of San Pablo Bay, adjacent to the Napa River, California.

The purpose of the project is to restore a mosaic of habitats, including tidal habitats and managed ponds, to this property and provide for better management of ponds in the area to support populations of fish and wildlife, including endangered species, migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, and anadromous and resident fish. Other important benefits of the project include improved water quality, the use of recycled water, and enhanced public open space and wildlife-compatible recreation opportunities. The long-term goal is to produce a natural, self-sustaining habitat that can adjust to naturally occurring changes in physical processes with minimum ongoing intervention.

The 9,460-acre site consists of 7,190 acres of salt ponds and levees and 2,270 acres of fringing marsh and sloughs. The project site includes 12 former salt ponds, three of which are currently open to tidal influence (Ponds 1, 1A, and 2A), one which needs additional repairs to be managed correctly (Pond 2), and eight which are closed to tidal circulation and need varying levels of salinity reduction before restoration is possible [Ponds 3, 4, 5, 6, 6A (referred to as the ***lower ponds***) and Ponds 7, 7A, and 8 (referred to as the ***upper ponds***)] **(Figure 1)**. Pond 3 was breached in August, 2002, and is open to muted tidal action.

The project includes three primary components to achieve the project—salinity reduction, habitat restoration, and water delivery. Each of these components is analyzed separately then combined with one another to create complete set of project alternatives. The components or options analyzed in the Feasibility Report and EIR/EIS include:

No-Project Alternative. Under the No-Project Alternative, site conditions would continue to deteriorate and salinity in the ponds closed to tidal influence would continue to increase.

Salinity Reduction Option 1A: Napa River and Napa Slough Discharge. This option proposes to conduct the salinity reduction process in a phased approach, decoupling desalination of the upper ponds from desalination of the lower ponds. Primary discharges from the upper ponds would be to Napa Slough, and primary discharges from the lower ponds would be to the Napa River. The use of recycled water for dilution of the upper ponds may be included in this option.

Salinity Reduction Option 1B: Napa River and Napa Slough Discharge and Breach of Pond 3. This option also proposes

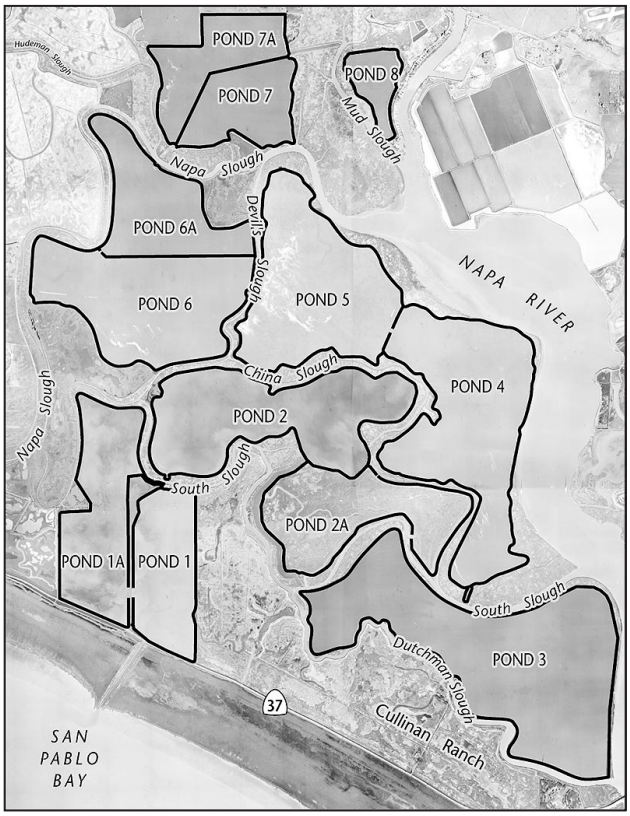

Figure 1. Project Area

to conduct the salinity reduction by separating the upper and lower ponds. Primary discharges from the upper ponds would be to Napa Slough. Salinity reduction of the lower ponds would occur by creating a 50-foot breach on the Pond 3 levee during a high flow event and constructing an intake on Pond 5 and a discharge on Pond 4. The use of recycled water for dilution of the upper ponds is included in this option.

Salinity Reduction Option 1C: Napa River and Napa Slough Discharge with Breaches of Ponds 3 and 4/5. This option is similar to Salinity Reduction Option 1B except that the Pond 4/5 levee would also be breached and the intake and discharge would not be constructed. Salinity reduction of the lower ponds would occur by strategically timing the levee breaches during a large storm event when the Napa River flow is high. The use of recycled water for dilution of the upper ponds is included in this option.

Salinity Reduction Option 2: Napa River and San Pablo Bay Discharge. This option also proposes to conduct the salinity reduction process in a phased approach; however, desalination of the upper ponds is coupled with desalination of some of the lower ponds. Primary discharges from the upper ponds would be conveyed through Ponds 6A, 6, 2, and 1/1A, then under SR 37 to San Pablo Bay. Primary discharges from Ponds 3, 4, and 5 would be to the Napa River. The use of recycled water for dilution of the upper ponds could be included in this option.

Water Delivery Option. This option focuses on project-specific and programmatic delivery of recycled water to the project area. Project-specific water delivery component would occur from the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District (SCVSD) WWTP, the Napa Sanitation District (NSD) WWTP, and the City of American Canyon (CAC) WWTP. The programmatic water delivery component could come from Novato Sanitary District WWTP, City of Petaluma WWTP, and Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District WWTP in the north bay region **(Figure 2)**.

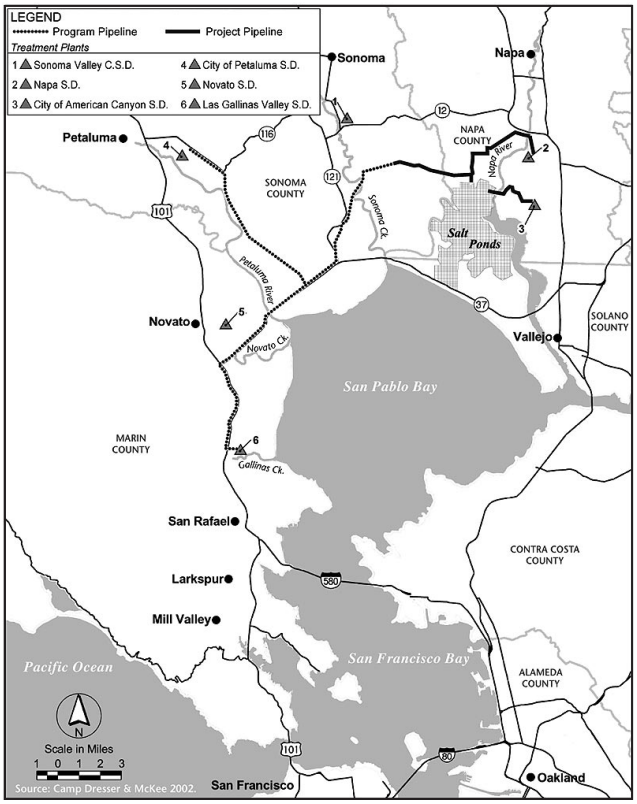

Figure 2. Water Delivery Option: Project and Program Component

Habitat Restoration Option 1: Mixture of Tidal Marsh and Managed Ponds. This option provides a balanced mix of tidal marsh habitat and managed pond habitat, with an emphasis on restoring Ponds 3, 4, and 5 to tidal marsh and maintaining the remaining ponds as managed ponds. Ponds 6 and 6A would be managed as ponds in the short term (the initial 10–20 years). Adaptive management criteria would be used at that point to determine whether these ponds should also be opened to tidal action, or whether they should remain as managed ponds.

Habitat Restoration Option 2: Tidal Marsh Emphasis. This option provides a larger amount of tidal marsh habitat and proposes to reconfigure the levee in Pond 2 because of deteriorating site conditions. Ponds 3, 4, 5, 6 and 6A, and the eastern half of Pond 2 would be restored to tidal marsh.

Habitat Restoration Option 3: Pond Emphasis. This option provides a larger amount of pond habitat; only Ponds 3 and 4 would be restored to tidal marsh.

Habitat Restoration Option 4: Accelerated Restoration. This option adds design features such as more extensive starter channels and berms, the use of imported sediment to fill an area to near tidal marsh elevation, and to accelerate marsh restoration.

Based on the Draft EIR/EIS and discussions with local regulatory agencies, the project sponsors are currently inclined to implement the alternative that includes either Salinity Reduction Option 1B or Salinity Reduction Option 1C, Water Delivery Project Component, and Habitat Restoration Option 1.

Comment Period

Comments on the Draft EIR/EIS are due to the Coastal Conservancy and Corps on June 16, 2003, within 45 days of the date of the publication in the Federal Register and receipt by the State Clearinghouse of the Notice of Completion (NOC). The Final EIR will be issued in Summer 2003.

Public Meetings

A public meeting for the Napa Salt Marsh Restoration Project EIR/EIS will be held May 21, 2003 from 7 – 8:30 p.m. at the Napa City-County Library, Community Meeting Room, 580 Coombs Street, Napa, CA. Please contact Brad Norton at (916) 737-3000 if special needs or additional services are desired.

Project Effects

The Draft EIR/EIS identifies the significant, less-than-significant, and beneficial effects associated with the project. Significant project effects can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level through the implementation of mitigation measures. The project's adverse effects include: the short-term degradation of water quality; an increase in localized flood risk if unintentional levee breaches occur; construction-related disturbance and mortality of special-status species; long-term changes in existing plant and wildlife habitat; potential unintended erosion; potential exposure to and/or release of hazardous materials/waste associated with construction activities; potential increased risk of instability of power towers; potential for increased mosquito production; and potential for ground-disturbing activities to damage subsurface unidentified cultural resources. A detailed analysis of the natural resource topics is provided in the Draft EIR/EIS.

In general, the project's beneficial effects include: a reduction in the risk of flooding; long-term improved water quality; long-term improvement in DFG's capability to manage the area; long-term enhancement of plant and wildlife habitat; substantial increase in plant and wildlife habitat for most species; and enhanced recreational opportunities.

Available Information

Electronic copies of the Draft EIR/EIS, Draft Feasibility Report, and Technical Appendices are available for review at *www.napa-sonoma-marsh.org*.

Hard copies of the Draft Feasibility Report and Draft EIR/EIS are available for review at the following locations.

San Francisco Public Library
100 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA (415-557-4400)

Napa City-County Library
580 Coombs Street, Napa, CA (707-253-4235)

John F. Kennedy Library
505 Santa Clara Street, Vallejo, CA (707-553-5568)

Hard copies of the Draft Feasibility Report, Draft EIR/EIS, and Technical Appendices are available for review at the following locations.

California Department of Fish and Game
7329 Silverado Trail, Napa, CA (707-944-5500)

California Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94612 (510-286-1015)

Comment Address

Please direct all comments by June 16, 2003 to:

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