



San Francisco Estuary Partnership  
Strategic Plan 2013–2018

## Partnership Goals 2013–2018

### **Goal 1: Build Estuary readiness to deal with the effects of climate change**

Expand the habitat protection toolbox needed under a changing climate regime. Provide the necessary baseline information to adaptively manage the health of our waters.

### **Goal 2: Increase watershed health**

Increase the health and resilience of watersheds. Build additional active partnerships in the region to improve water quality and habitat for fish and wildlife. Integrate projects within key watersheds, from headwaters to tidal waters.

### **Goal 3: Improve water quality**

Focus on pollution prevention, urban runoff/stormwater quality, and “Green Infrastructure” projects (“low impact development,” or LID).

### **Goal 4: Champion the Estuary**

Through conferences, workshops, print media, and our website, provide local decision makers and the general public with a reliable source of information needed to make policy and personal decisions in favor of Estuary health.

### **Goal 5: Continue to improve the Partnership and diversify funding**

March 2013



In 2010, the Partnership released its first Strategic Plan, which set out goals and key objectives to guide our work through 2012.

This 2013–2018 Strategic Plan builds on the previous effort, and emphasizes key issues, such as regional watershed protections and climate change planning, which have taken on more urgency since 2010. This is a five-year plan due to the challenges before us and, realistically, the time it will take to effect significant improvements in the health of the Estuary and our preparedness for inevitable changes in the physical environment due to global warming. We have organized the 2013 Strategic Plan into five broad goals that will focus the Partnership’s work on improving the water quality of the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary.

Much progress has been made in all of these areas since we published the 2010 Strategic Plan. We are committed to continuing our progress through the next five years. I thank the many organizations and individuals who contribute to the ongoing work of the Partnership and look forward to our combined future accomplishments.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Judy A. Kelly".

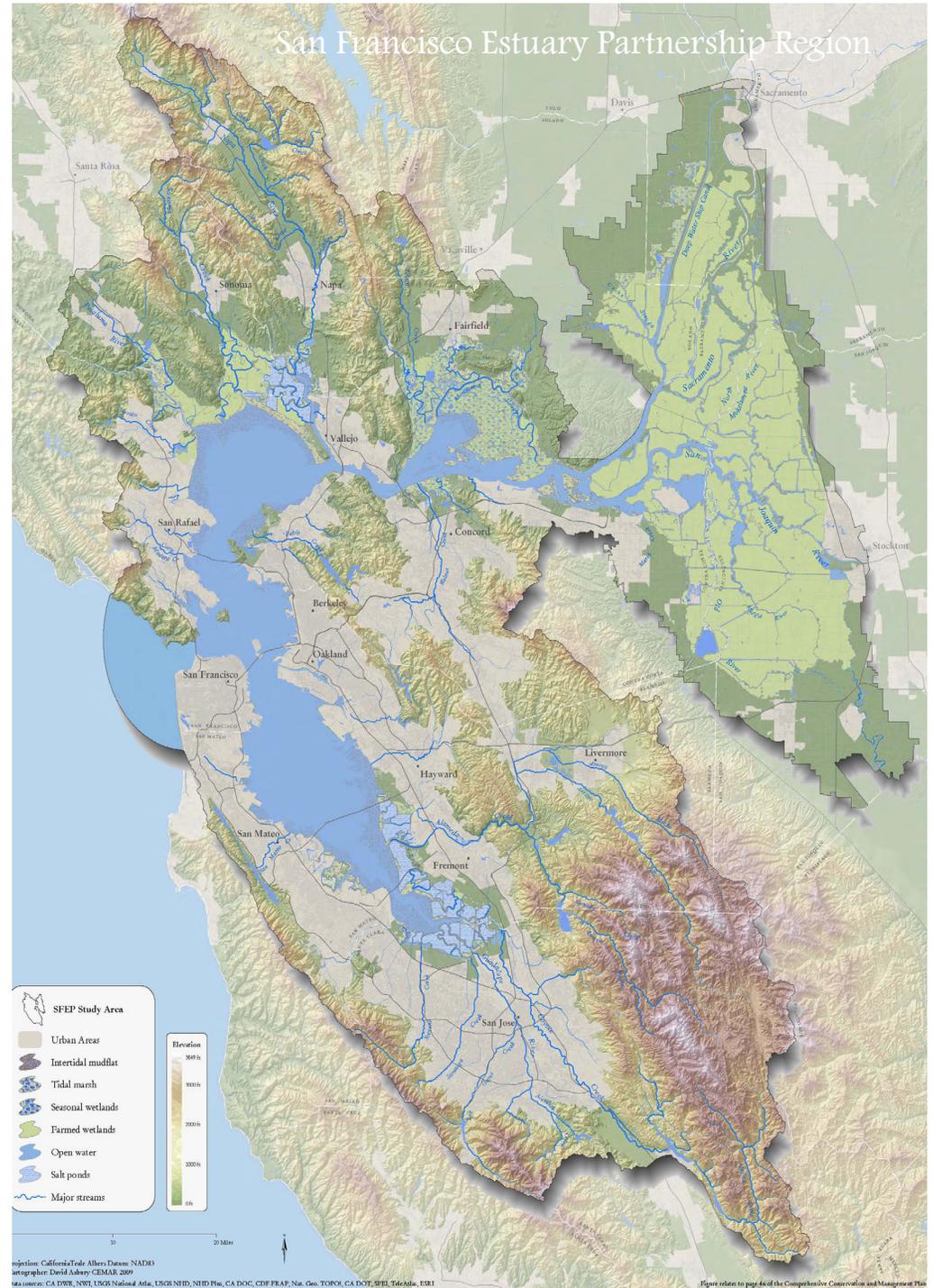
Judy A. Kelly  
Director

## The San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary

Our Estuary, the largest in western North America, extends from the mouth of San Francisco Bay to the upstream portion of the San Joaquin-Sacramento River Delta southwest of the city of Sacramento. The Estuary's watershed extends to the ridgeline of the Sierra Nevada, almost 60,000 square miles and nearly 40 percent of California. The Estuary's waters are a biological resource of tremendous importance—providing critical winter feeding habitat for over a million migratory birds, a productive nursery for many species of juvenile fish and shellfish, and a year-round home for a vast diversity of plants and animals. Half of California's surface water supply falls as rain or snow within this region, and about half of that is diverted from the Delta for use by the state's farms, factories, and households.

The upstream portion of the Estuary, the San Joaquin-Sacramento River Delta, is a thousand-square-mile triangle of diked and drained wetland. Only small remnants of once-extensive tule marshes still fringe the sloughs and channels that wind between flat, levee-rimmed farmlands on the Delta islands. Before it was diked and drained, the fresh waters of the Sacramento, San Joaquin, Mokelumne, and Cosumnes rivers converged in the Delta and moved downstream, through a meandering array of tidally influenced channels, into salty San Francisco Bay. Today, the heavily engineered Delta is the junction of one of the world's largest plumbing systems, where fresh water is diverted to supply California's population centers and Central Valley agriculture. The Delta's physical, ecological, and consequently economic fragility is a topic of sustained political debate and scientific study. The San Francisco Estuary Partnership's science-based conferences add valuable information to the continuing controversy about how to secure both the environmental health of the Delta and the economic health of the businesses and communities that depend on it.

Map by the Center for Ecosystem Management and Restoration  
Cover photo of Coyote Hills from the Shoreline Trail,  
Don Edwards San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge, by Ryan Koenigs





Juvenile steelhead in the Napa River

## Implementing the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan

SFEP's work and mission are detailed in the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan, or Comprehensive Plan, the region's roadmap for restoring the Estuary's physical and biological health.

After more than 150 years of intensive settlement and exploitation by the region's ever-growing human population, the ecological health of the system and the economic viability of its formerly rich fisheries have been severely compromised. The Comprehensive Plan's more than two hundred recommended actions lay out the work that needs to be done in order to ensure restoration of the Estuary to a healthy state. Completed in 1993 and revised in 2007, the document is organized around key issue/program areas, each with goals, objectives, and actions.

With this five-year strategic plan, the Partnership builds on our progress and streamlines our approach to the Estuary's issues, focusing on key areas where we can anticipate progress in the near and medium term. Our work continues to reflect the priorities defined in the 2007 update to the Plan:

- » Facilitate regional adaptation to climate change and sea level rise
- » Protect and enhance freshwater inflows to the Estuary
- » Promote land/water use policies that protect the health of the Estuary
- » Minimize pollution
- » Protect and preserve healthy streams and wetlands

### Notable accomplishments:

- » Thousands of acres of wetlands around the Bay are being restored.
- » Total urban water use in the Bay Area is 20 percent below where it was in 1986, while the population has increased by 20 percent.
- » From 2001 to 2010, use of recycled water has increased by 50 percent.
- » Levels of copper and nickel in the Bay have been reduced by almost 50 percent.
- » We have seen a significant increase in the beneficial reuse of dredged material.

## The Work of the Partnership

While Partnership staff and Executive Council and Implementation Committee agencies are directly responsible for implementing the Comprehensive Plan actions, many agencies and organizations take part in related work that furthers the Plan's goals. More than 40 agencies endorsed the Plan when it was first adopted; they are consequently responsible for including relevant actions in their own local and specific plans.

At the core of this effort, Partnership staff act as both implementers (taking action using grant funds and Partnership dollars) and as facilitators of projects (obtaining and passing along grants and contract dollars to other organizations, and administering funds).

We directly manage dozens of important projects, including regional trash reduction efforts, aquatic invasive species planning, urban pesticides pollution prevention, estuary-wide boater education work aimed at reducing direct discharges of sewage into the bay. Staff plan and manage biennial State of the Estuary conferences. Our outreach and education efforts include publication of the award-winning *ESTUARY* news magazine and the State of the Bay 2011 report, as well as numerous fact sheets, booklets, videos, films, brochures, and other materials that educate the public and decision-makers about the Estuary.

In related work, Partnership staff assist over 100 partner organizations by finding funding and helping to manage important projects. With the millions of grant dollars we have been awarded we have funded habitat restoration projects around the region, as well as work such as the investigation of methylmercury and low dissolved oxygen in Suisun Marsh; installation and study of demonstration green infrastructure projects that treat and reduce stormwater runoff; preparation of stream and wetlands protection policies for the state and regional Water Boards; and development of regional Baylands and Subtidal Habitat Goals.

Implementation Committee agencies and many other participating organizations are critical to our success.

Our partners have acquired and are restoring thousands of acres of wetlands and riparian areas. They have made hard-won gains in controlling non-native invasive species such as *Spartina alterniflora* and in monitoring status and trends of pollutants in the Estuary. Both in the Bay Area and in the Estuary's Central Valley watershed, partners are developing critical pollutant load limits (total maximum daily loads, or TMDLs) and working to meet them—for pathogens, nutrients, salts, selenium, sediment, pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), dissolved oxygen, and mercury.



California clapper rail. Photo by Verne Nelson

The Partnership is led by a Director and staffed by approximately 20 environmental professionals who manage and oversee our work. The Executive Council and the Implementation Committee provide advice and guidance. The Implementation Committee meets quarterly and includes representatives of over 25 organizations including resource agencies, nonprofits, local, regional, and federal government, and the business community. The Executive Council is made up of heads of local, state, and federal agencies, and meets when needed.

# SFEP Goals and Objectives

**GOAL 1: Build Estuary readiness to deal with the effects of climate change.**  
*Expand the toolbox of habitat protection measures needed under a changing climate regime; provide baseline information needed to adaptively manage the health of our waters*

Creating new wetlands and improving the health of existing wetlands and riparian corridors are key objectives of the Partnership's current efforts – essential to preparing the region for rising seas and other effects of global warming. Long term, the viability of existing and restored wetlands will rely on effective adaptive management informed by accurate monitoring data, clear reporting of results, and our understanding of the fate of Bay sediment and sand.

Objective 1.1 Support research and analysis into the effects of climate change on the ecology of the Estuary

Objective 1.2 Support and implement stream, wetland, riparian, and fluvial/tidal restoration and enhancement projects to increase resilience and adaptive capacity of watersheds. Implement climate adaptation strategies that provide multiple benefits including flood protection and improved habitat

Objective 1.3 Support sediment/sand research studies to improve understanding of sediment/sand supply, fate, transport and associated contaminants. Develop and promote appropriate sand management policies to preserve and enhance habitat health and resilience

Objective 1.4 Refine existing and create new meaningful environmental indicators to measure and report on the health of the Estuary

Objective 1.5 Develop and implement methodology to measure and credit climate change adaptation benefits from wetland restoration projects. Assist partners in participating in a carbon market for restoration projects



Mouth of Pinole Creek. Photo by Jennifer Krebs

## GOAL 2: Increase watershed health.

*Increase the health and resilience of watersheds. Build additional active partnerships in the region to improve water quality and habitat for fish and wildlife. Integrate projects within key watersheds, from headwaters to tidal waters.*

- Objective 2.1 Build, promote, and support coordinated community-based approaches to watershed protection, restoration, and stewardship
- Objective 2.2 Help implement and integrate regional goals projects and management plans (i.e., Habitat Goals update, Subtidal Habitat Goals, Upland Habitat Goals, regional sediment plans)
- Objective 2.3 Assist the state and regional Water Boards in developing and adopting new stream and wetlands protection policies that preserve and enhance natural watershed functions
- Objective 2.4 Support implementation of California Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan. Support regional and national task forces working on invasive species issues
- Objective 2.5 Support and promote new methods of water conservation within the Estuary's watershed
- Objective 2.6 Support studies and efforts to restore adequate flows in the Bay's tributary streams to better protect aquatic resources
- Objective 2.7 Increase the watershed management capacity of local governments



Green street demonstration project in El Cerrito. Photo by Josh Bradt

### GOAL 3: Improve water quality.

*Assist with TMDL implementation throughout our region. Expand the use of “green infrastructure” projects that improve water quality, improve aesthetics, and provide wildlife habitat and opportunities for outdoor recreation.*



Installing a large trash capture device, San José

- Objective 3.1 Assist local agencies with TMDL compliance projects that treat and decrease stormwater pollution
- Objective 3.2 Assist in implementing and tracking Bay Area Urban Creeks Diazinon and Pesticide Toxicity TMDL through projects that reduce pesticide use, continuing to apply the goals of the Urban Pesticide Pollution Prevention Project and supporting integrated programs for pollution prevention
- Objective 3.3 Remediate legacy pollutants such as mercury, selenium, and other pollutants from sources such as contaminated mine sites
- Objective 3.4 Prevent trash from polluting waters of the Estuary by supporting municipal pollution prevention efforts. Develop trash flux measurement, BMP evaluation tools
- Objective 3.5 Implement local green stormwater projects to treat and decrease stormwater runoff in Bay cities including cisterns, rain gardens, bioswales and other green infrastructure
- Objective 3.6 Promote green infrastructure throughout the Bay Area:
  - » Develop tools for local governments to site and design green infrastructure projects
  - » Facilitate compliance with the LID requirements in the Municipal Regional Stormwater Permit
  - » Educate planners, public works departments, and builders on sustainable design and building practices, and stormwater BMPs.
- Objective 3.7: Collaborate with the Region’s Sustainable Communities Strategy to integrate water use efficiency and good stormwater planning into the Strategy as well as local planning efforts

## GOAL 4: Champion the Estuary.

*Through conferences, workshops, print media, and our website, provide local decision makers and the general public with a reliable source of information needed to make policy and personal decisions in favor of Estuary health.*

SFEP provides current information about the ecology of the Estuary and protection/restoration initiatives throughout the Bay-Delta region.

Objective 4.1 Promote public involvement in Estuary protection and restoration through expanded use of interactive, web-based information delivery

Objective 4.2 Educate the regional community through the biennial State of the Estuary conference

Objective 4.3 Create and publish the State of the Estuary 2015 report

Objective 4.4 Staff and support partner-sponsored science conferences and workshops critical to improving knowledge about estuary health

Objective 4.5 Develop long-term educational programs to prevent water pollution, such as boater education on sewage disposal; invasive species; trash pollution

Objective 4.6 Change public behavior re: water quality protection through social marketing strategies and mechanisms

Objective 4.7 Continue and expand publication/distribution of ESTUARY news magazine

Objective 4.8 Support student involvement in restoration projects

Objective 4.9 Prepare a multifaceted communications campaign that develops and promotes SFEP's core messages



State of the Estuary conference, 2011

## GOAL 5: Continue to improve the Partnership and diversify funding

The Partnership is well positioned to implement its historically modest base-funding budget. In order to support expansion of our efforts, we need to increase both our program capacity and our funding.

SFEP and each of the National Estuary Projects receives a fixed amount of federal funding each year, subject to Congressional appropriation. These “base” fund support administration, conference planning and most of our public outreach activities. They also enable us to write the grants that support the projects we undertake with our many partners.

Objective 5.1 Strengthen science input into Partnership decision making and annual workplans

Objective 5.2 Continue to improve SFEP staffing expertise and capacity in order to carry out priority actions

Objective 5.3 Continue to diversify funding sources to strengthen SFEP’s capacity to implement projects

Objective 5.4 Expand collaboration with municipalities, counties, and special districts on projects of common interest

Objective 5.5 Plan for and accomplish a revision of the CCMP to streamline the document, integrate new science and policy issues, and strengthen accountability for Comprehensive Plan actions



Volunteers at Bahia Marsh

## Implementation Committee Agencies

Bay Area Clean Water Agencies

Bay Area Joint Policy Committee

The Bay Institute

Bay Planning Coalition

California Coastal Conservancy

California Department of Water Resources

City of San José

City of Sunnyvale

Contra Costa County Resource Conservation  
District

County of Marin

County of Napa

Delta Protection Commission

Delta Stewardship Council

Friends of the San Francisco Estuary

Marin Audubon Society

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,  
National Marine Fisheries Service

The Nature Conservancy

North Bay Watershed Association

San Francisco Bay Conservation & Development  
Commission

San Francisco Bay Joint Venture

San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research  
Reserve

San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality  
Control Board

San Francisco Estuary Institute

Save the Bay

Sonoma County Water Agency

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, San Francisco District

U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, National Resource  
Conservation Service

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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