

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

February 21, 2024

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

State of the Estuary Conference



[Registration is open](#) for the State of the Estuary Conference! Early Bird deadline closes February 14th and Scholarship applications are due by February 16th!

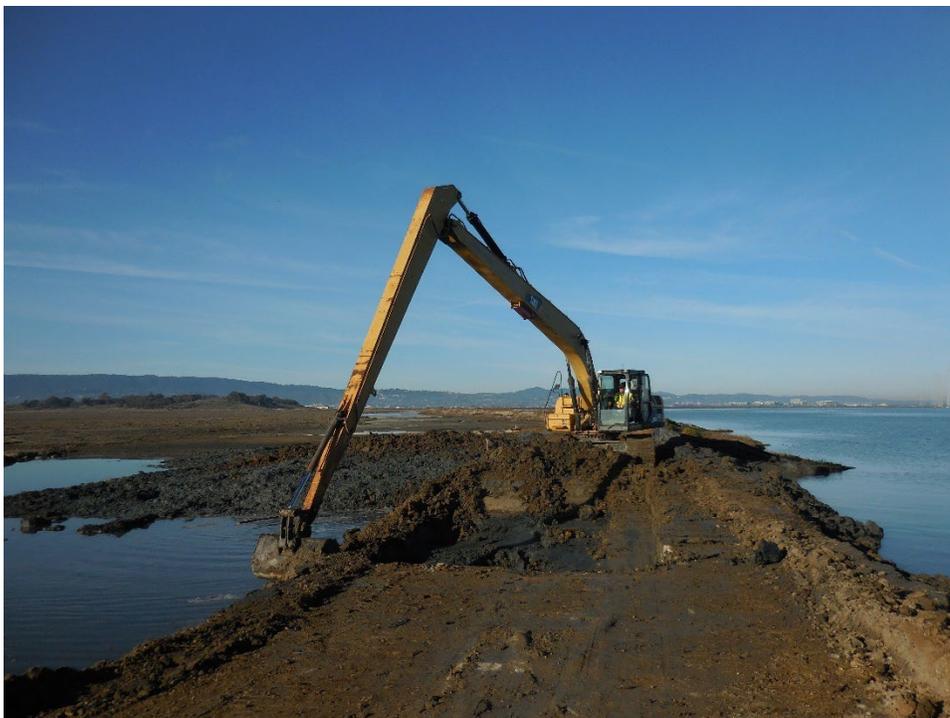
Advancing Equity Through BIL

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) program is well into its second year and has accomplished some important milestones in the Human Dimensions, Community Engagement and Justice Program task. The EPA-required BIL Equity Strategy was approved in December, setting a target of 50% of BIL funding to benefit Tribes and disadvantaged and underserved communities. The SFEP Equity Team met for the first time in January, 2024 to begin its work, which will entail a full review of the Equity Strategy with community and Tribal stakeholders, the creation an Equity Implementation Plan, and coordinating with MTC's Access(ibility), Culture, Racial, Equity (ACRE) Office to examine internal policies and procedures and recommend changes to better advance equity from within the agency.

San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority Making Progress

The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority (SFBRA), co-staffed by SFEP and the State Coastal Conservancy, continues to make progress restoring habitat on the shoreline of San Francisco Bay. One of the most recent highlights is the breach at Ravenswood R4 pond by the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project partners and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This project is located in San Mateo County and opened a 300-acre former industrial salt pond to the Bay. The SFBRA is one of many

fundes for this project, highlighting the importance of leveraging local, state, and federal funds ([Link to article with a full list of funders](#)). At the March 22nd Governing Board meeting, staff will present the list of recommended projects from the most recent grant round and the SFBRA Annual Report, highlighting the progress made to date. Program updates can be viewed on the website: <https://www.sfbayrestore.org/>.



December 13, 2023 Ravenswood Pond Breach. Photo Credit: Karen McDowell

NEW FUNDING

Integrated Regional Water Management Prop 1 Round 2 - \$32,214,479 (Department of Water Resources)

The funds awarded to SFEP by DWR under the IRWM program will support the implementation in coordination with local partners of 12 regional projects that include water conservation, water supply, flood damage reduction, habitat restoration, and stormwater management.

Science Partnership to Support the Estuary - \$728,756 (Delta Stewardship Council)

We have entered into a new 3-year contract with the Delta Stewardship Council which will support SFEP staff time in coordination with DSC to develop the State of the Estuary Platform as well as to plan and execute State of the Estuary Conferences.

COMPLETED PROJECTS

Healthy Watersheds, Resilient Baylands



Panoramic view of Pond A8

The Healthy Watersheds, Resilient Baylands Program concluded last fall after seven years. The program, a portfolio of science-based tools and implementation projects in Silicon Valley and the South Bay, received funding from the EPA's Water Quality Improvement Fund in 2016 for \$1,667,683, with matching funds from SFEI and Valley Water.



Volunteers planting along the Bay Trail in East Palo Alto

The program sought to integrate natural processes in the design and implementation of multi-benefit environmental projects along the shoreline and within the urban fabric of South San Francisco Bay. Under the guidance of SFEI, the program developed essential science-based tools to advance habitat restoration, water quality improvement, and urban

greening goals. These tools were then applied by South Bay partners including Grassroots Ecology, Canopy, Valley Water, City of Sunnyvale, and City of East Palo Alto, to demonstration projects that ranged from public parks in underserved communities to private tech company campuses, offering benefits to thousands of people who live and work in Silicon Valley and the South Bay.

Implementation Projects	Scientific Reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Greening along the Bay Trail at San Francisquito Creek, East Palo Alto • City of Sunnyvale Green Street Demonstration Project • City of East Palo Alto Green Street Project • Urban Greening at Rich May Field, East Palo Alto • Native plant landscaping at four Google campuses in Mountain View • First stage horizontal levee at Pond A8 • Realignment of Calabazas and San Tomas Aquino creeks at Pond A8 (feasibility study) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sediment for Survival • Making Nature’s Canopy • Trees and Hydrology in Urban Landscapes • GreenPlan-IT toolkit upgrade • SediMatch Phase 2 • Other web-based tools and presentations

COMMUNICATIONS

Draft Communications Plan Completed

FullCourt Press Communications completed a draft communications plan for SFEP, which SFEP staff, led by the Communications Team, is currently reviewing. The goal of the plan is to: 1) help SFEP become more well-known among key audiences; 2) more concisely and crisply define SFEP and tell our story; 3) better communicate SFEP’s impact; and 4) better differentiate SFEP from other organizations in the field. The plan lays out goals for both external and internal communications, defines key audiences, outlines a messaging framework, as well as covers strategies for internal alignment, regional coordination, reaching key audiences, and adding implementation capacity.

Transforming Urban Water Initiative and Palo Alto Horizontal Levee Project Highlighted

SFEP’s work through the Transforming Urban Water Initiative (TrUW) is highlighted in the recently updated White House Guide on Nature-based Solutions (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Nature-Based-Solutions-Resource-Guide-2.0-FINAL.pdf>).

The Palo Alto Horizontal Levee Pilot (PAHLP) project is a novel and innovative initiative that links nature-based solutions to achieve habitat improvement, public access, flood protection and water quality improvement. The project is a unique partnership between the City of Palo Alto and SFEP. PAHLP is slated to begin construction this year. We were excited to see our work with our partners highlighted in a Bay Nature article about horizontal levees and the PAHLP project.



WRMP Winter 2023 Newsletter

The Wetland Regional Monitoring Program's [Winter newsletter](#) highlights some of the key accomplishments of the WRMP staff, Steering Committee, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and Science Workgroups during the fourth quarter of 2023.

IC CHANGES

To facilitate more consistent representation on the IC, the US Army Corps of Engineers has designated **Hannah Fertel**, Environmental Manager, as the primary representative, with **Elizabeth Campbell**, Regional Fish Biologist, as her alternate.

With the departure of primary California State Natural Resources Agency representative Mark Gold, **Jenn Eckerle**, Deputy Secretary for Oceans and Coastal Policy for Natural Resources and Executive Director of the Ocean Protection Council, is now the primary representative. Jenn has designated **Sreeja Gopal**, Coastal Habitats Program Manager at the Ocean Protection Council as her alternate.

I will be working with the Chair and Vice Chair over this next year to fill additional vacancies on the IC.

STAFF CHANGES



Say it isn't so! It is with mixed emotions that I announce that Darcie Luce will be leaving the Partnership at the end of March. Darcie joined the staff of SFEP in 2016, after working as a contractor both for SFEP and for Friends of the Estuary. Darcie successfully managed the complex multi-year Estuary Blueprint update process and has been leading the tracking and reporting of progress since then. She has also been managing projects, including the Healthy Watersheds, Resilient Baylands project highlighted in this report. In her spare time, Darcie has been diligently building SFEP's

Communications Program, growing it from a few activities to a full-fledged comprehensive yet strategic program with a workplan, budget, and staff! In everything she does, Darcie brings a deep commitment to the health and vitality of the Estuary and its surrounding communities, a collaborative lens, a bit of perfectionism, and a contagious enthusiasm. She will be sorely missed by all who have had the pleasure of crossing her path. Please join me sending Darcie our best wishes for whatever is next for her.

