



# DIRECTOR'S REPORT

August 13, 2025

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### Call for Award Nominations for the 2025 State of the Estuary Conference

The Estuary Partnership and Friends of the Estuary invite you to submit nominations for award categories: Outstanding Environmental Project, Creative Environmental Award, and the Jean Auer Environmental Award. The awards will be presented at the seventeenth biennial [State of the Estuary Conference](#), October 28-29, 2025, at the Oakland Scottish Rite Center near Lake Merritt in Oakland. Nominations close on August 23, 2025. [Learn more about the awards.](#)

Keep your eyes peeled for the opening of registration for the conference in late August!

### Friends of the Estuary

The Friends of the Estuary has completed their search for new Board members and will be introducing ten new Directors in the weeks to come. Several previous Directors have agreed to stay on during the transition time to help get the new Board up and running. The new Board will have several meetings over the summer and fall and, as always, will host the Outstanding Environmental Project and Creative Environmental Awards at the State of the Estuary Conference.

### Palo Alto Horizontal Levee to Begin Construction!

The [Palo Alto Horizontal Levee Pilot project](#) will begin on-site construction in early September, 2025. The Estuary Partnership and City of Palo Alto issued a notice to proceed to Corcus Construction in early July, 2025. The team is rounded out by our lead designers, Environmental Science Associates and HDR, and our construction management team, Zoon Engineering. Planting will be completed by Save The Bay.

With thanks to our funders, US Environmental Protection Agency, State Coastal Conservancy and the City of Palo Alto, the project is expected to be completed in early 2026.

## Estuary Youth Council 2<sup>nd</sup> Cohort Launched



Photo: Alexis Gabriel

We have officially launched the second cohort of the Estuary Youth Council (EYC). For its 2025 cohort year, EYC welcomed eight youth who will participate in a six-month program offering hands-on learning experiences, small-group mentorship, and professional development. So far this year, youth have visited India Basin Waterfront Park in San Francisco's Bayview-Hunter's Point neighborhood, Damon Slough in East Oakland, and the salt marshes of Alviso in San Jose. From now until December, EYC youth will meet once a month at a new waterfront site to learn about local ecology, environmental history, and meet organizations and individuals working to improve the health of the Estuary. The program will culminate in the completion and presentation of original capstone projects that will address a critical environmental challenge faced by the San Francisco Estuary.

## Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program Enters Data Collection Phase

Thanks to generous funding from the SF Bay Restoration Authority and the EPA San Francisco Bay Program Office, the Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program is forging ahead with its first season of full data collection! Site-specific monitoring includes data about wetland fish, vegetation, sediments and elevation, and wetland condition. At the regional scale, the WRMP is mapping wetland habitats and tracking changes in wetland extent, mapping public access to wetlands and the benefits they provide, and surveying wetland decision-makers to enable more effective processes. The WRMP is

also organizing Estuary-wide LiDAR data collection for this summer, which will be useful for a range of organizations and agencies including shoreline planners, restoration ecologists, and land managers. The WRMP's standardized monitoring provides a more cost-effective way of collecting information about the region's wetlands and is critical for accelerating the pace and scale of successful wetland restoration and adaptive management. All this data will be publicly available on the WRMP's new website, which will be released in the Fall.

*Dr. Chris Janousek of Oregon State University sets up an accretion plot at Eden Landing Marsh. A layer of white feldspar powder is applied to the marsh surface, where it adheres to the underlying mud. Over time, sediment accumulates above this marker layer. In future years, core samples taken from the plot will reveal how much sediment has built up, providing a measure of marsh growth.*



*SFEP's Sea Grant Fellow, Dr. Miranda Melen, collects a core sample of marsh soil at each plot to prepare for salinity testing. Water will later be extracted from each sample and analyzed using a refractometer to determine soil salinity levels.*



# COMPLETED PROJECTS

## IRWM Proposition 1 Grant: East Bay Municipal Utility District's Bay Area Water Conservation Project

We are wrapping up a \$4,177,875 Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Grant funded under Proposition 1 by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) with the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD). They received grant funding in 2019 to work with eleven Bay Area water agencies on the Bay Area Regional Water Conservation Project. The project lasted for about five years and was a regional partnership with the goal of helping customers save water through seven components ranging from rebates to water efficient landscaper training to smart meter devices. Collectively the rebate programs, meter installations, trainings, and analyses/reports are estimated to save approximately 13,723 acre-feet of water per year. SFEP staff will continue to work with EBMUD and DWR to close out the project by the end of summer.

# COMMUNICATIONS

## Pacheco Marsh & Water Trail featured on OpenRoad



*Pacheco Marsh Restoration Project (photo by Ben Botkin)*

In a recent OpenRoad episode aired on NBC this summer, two San Francisco Estuary Partnership-supported projects were featured: the newly completed Pacheco Marsh and the Bay Area Water Trail. The episode highlighted the transformation of the

Pacheco Marsh restoration and public access project, where a decade of collaboration and investment has revitalized it into an 84-acre thriving tidal wetland that now features 2.4 miles of trails, including pathways, elevated vistas, a bird blind, a kayak launch, and an environmental education pavilion. Its restoration was partially made possible through funding from several Estuary Partnership programs. The episode also introduced its audience to the Bay Area Water Trail, focusing on the amazing water network that allows residents across the Bay Area to access some of the most scenic and species-rich environments in our region. While no SFEP staff appeared in this episode, staff consulted with the producer, providing information that helped identify potential guests, vital program information, and photographs for the episode.

To see the [featured episode](#), visit the NBC site.

## PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

### U.S. EPA 5-Year Program Evaluation

SFEP is currently undergoing our 5-year program evaluation by EPA. The Program Evaluation team has completed their preliminary assessment which will be presented to the IC at the August meeting. The Program Evaluation Team will also be touring several project sites, including the Palo Alto Horizontal Levee and the Novato Baylands Project. IC members are welcome to join the Palo Alto Horizontal Levee site visit immediately following the IC meeting. Please contact me if you wish to join the site visits and have not already RSVP'd – [Caitlin.Sweeney@sfestuary.org](mailto:Caitlin.Sweeney@sfestuary.org).

## IC CHANGES

### CA Department of Water Resources

After a very long and successful career, John Andrew has resigned from DWR. John is a long-time partner of the Estuary Partnership - through his early years with CALFED, later on the Friends of the Estuary Board, and most recently serving on the Implementation Committee for over 15 years. I have really appreciated John's logical, reasoned, and collaborative approach to the various challenges we have faced over the years, both big and small. He will be missed!

I'm happy to report that Lindsay Correa will continue on the IC as the primary representative for DWR and Alyssa Whittacker will serve as the alternate.

## In Memoriam - Trish Mulvey

Patricia “Trish” Mulvey passed away on June 23, 2025 at 82 years old. Trish was a long-time environmental advocate who worked tirelessly to improve watersheds around the San Francisco Bay. She was a long-standing member of the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, and was the very first recipient of the distinguished Jean Auer Award at the 2005 State of the Estuary Conference, and an early member of the Estuary Partnership’s Implementation Committee. Trish remained very active into her later years, still emailing me periodically about creek and watershed issues and always signing off with her signature “Hugs.” An obituary for Trish was published in the Palo Alto Online: <https://www.paloaltoonline.com/community/2025/06/27/trish-mulvey-environmental-champion-and-watershed-advocate-dies/>.