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5<sup>th</sup> District of California  
1040 Main Street, Suite 101  
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Honorable Mike Thompson,

San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge is situated in a unique area of San Francisco Bay. Along the top end of the Bay, State Route 37 provides east/west travel through the Refuge going to Novato in Marin County or to Vallejo in Solano County. Some 40,000 vehicles per day travel the 37 and the drivers and passengers may not know such interesting facts as the route 37 takes was once the original edge of the Bay. Or, those flat stretches were once estuarine marsh habitat where fresh water mingled with ocean waters creating one of the most diversified habitats on Earth. The Refuge is in a transition where farm fields that early on produced hay to fuel horse-drawn carriages in Oakland and San Francisco, are now being restored back to estuary where they will once again become nurseries for fish and crab that can eventually be slathered in a white wine and garlic-butter sauce. Perhaps after such a culinary experience, visiting the Refuge may be a great way to get outside and view the wildlife and habitats found in what to a lot of people around the Bay is wilderness.

To better serve the visiting public, the Refuge has been looking to co-locate under one roof with the Western Field Office of the U.S. Geological Survey on Mare Island. In a central location at the current Refuge office at Sears Point, just west of the intersection of State Routes 37 and 121, these two Department of Interior bureaus could work closely to provide tidal marsh research and climate change science for subsequent use on the Refuge for management of salt marsh habitats. Both science-based entities would also be able to provide environmental education through on-site classroom projects and interpretive displays. The back half of a building would work out the science and management, while the front half conveys the information to the public and school groups. An auditorium could invite presentations in a venue situated out in the country to convey topics of the natural world. All under one roof . . . covered with solar panels of course.

San Pablo Bay NWR and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Napa-Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Management Area provide a number of hiking trails for the visiting public. However, water trails have become a popular means to enjoy the outdoors. With the restoration of Cullinan Ranch Unit of San Pablo Bay NWR and the eventual restoration of both the Navy and Haire Ranch Units of Skaggs Island, a canoe/kayak trail could allow visitors to ply the slough channels among the Refuge and Management Area units. A brand new canoe/kayak dock exists at Cullinan Ranch Unit, and the Management Area maintains a boat ramp at Hudeman Slough. A number of routes exist between these two public use facilities, however, being able to haul-out on to the shore along the way would enhance the water trail experience. At a number of spots along the way, benches and interpretive kiosks would invite trail paddlers to stop, rest, and learn the natural and cultural history of their surroundings. The two land management agencies have a great working relationship that could prove advantageous to the outdoor enthusiasts around the Bay.

The bridge to nowhere? In 1967 the U.S. Navy, working with local governments, constructed the Skaggs Island Bridge to cross over Napa Slough providing a south entrance to Skaggs Island. This bridge was named the Tom Roth Bridge in honor of Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey' assistant who ushered through legislation to have the Navy use State funds to clean up Skaggs Island before conveyance to the Refuge. The bridge was damaged during the Napa Earthquake of 24 August 2015. And a rightful owner is hard to come by being on the border of two Counties and the Refuge. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service engineers, seismic engineering contractors, and CalTrans engineers have all concluded the bridge needs to be fixed before heavy trucks can use the bridge once again. This will make restoration of Skaggs Island more costly should trucks have to come down from the north route which is also in need of repair. Additionally, this bridge will service the public as a segment of the Bay Trail accessing future trails along the Navy and Haire Ranch Units of Skaggs Island. Furthermore, the bridge provides a panoramic view of what was once one of the largest estuarine habitats in San Francisco Bay. Not a bridge to nowhere. Just a bridge needin' fixin'.

As mentioned above, two entrances are available to access Skaggs Island. The north entrance was the historic access to Skaggs Island coming off Ramal Road. This road is owned and maintained by San Pablo Bay NWR. The Refuge has a certain obligation to the neighbors along this route as the road is their legal access. A business, residences, agricultural interests, and a Sonoma County Parks and California Department of Fish and Wildlife boat dock depend on the road. The Refuge has worked with the Refuge Roads liaison in the Federal Highways Administration to develop a solution. The Refuge has had a geotechnical analysis done on the road as a first step towards a repair that should last 15 to 25 years. San Pablo Bay NWR strives to work with surrounding private land owners to provide good land stewardship and neighborly relationships.

Please let me know if you any questions. Thank you for your interest in the Refuge and the Friends.

Best Regards.

Francesca Demgen, President

