



Friends of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge

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Polly Wheeler
Regional Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System
Pacific Southwest Region Headquarters
2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, CA 95825

RE: North Bay Refuge Manager

The Friends of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Napa-Solano Audubon Society, and Marin Audubon Society appreciate that refilling the San Pablo Bay Refuge Manager position continues to be a hiring priority for the San Francisco Bay NWR Complex. Acting Refuge Manager Meg Marriot recently informed us that the Complex is actively taking steps toward hiring for the position. We strongly encourage you to hire, in the near term, a permanent, full-time Refuge Manager to help manage and represent the North Bay Wildlife Refuges including San Pablo Bay, Marin Islands, and Antioch Dunes (the Refuges). The Refuge Manager works not only with agency staff but also with partners at Ducks Unlimited, local Audubon Society chapters, and other organizations who understand how important it is to have a designated Refuge Manager. Collectively, our organizations are active partners on many activities including land acquisition to expand the Refuge boundaries, wetland and upland habitat restoration, climate change resilience, improved recreational opportunities, environmental science, education and outreach, and stewardship. We strongly believe that the mission of the Refuges would be better served if the Refuge Manager position, vacated by Don Brubaker in October 2019, were backfilled as soon as possible. We also respectfully suggest that the responsibilities inherent in the on-the-ground oversight of the Refuges warrants a full-time, permanent Refuge Manager.

With almost 21,000 acres of open water, wetlands, and uplands across the Refuges, and with three active and two planned major restoration projects throughout, it is both important and beneficial that the team managing and maintaining the Refuges has the support and leadership of a full-time and on-site Refuge Manager. The significance of efforts to improve the Refuges is demonstrated by Measure AA funds in the amount of more than \$2.83 million granted for restoration projects on Refuge lands in the first round of authorizations. It is also vital that there be a designated Refuge Manager to represent the Refuges at public outreach events, interagency meetings and workgroups for efforts involving or affecting Refuge lands. Major efforts including The Sonoma Creek Baylands Strategy and planning for Highway 37

improvements are in and of themselves substantial and would be best served by the full support of a Refuge Manager.

We understand that federal budgets and hiring processes are constrained by available resources. We also recognize the dedication and excellent work of current Refuge staff, Melisa Amato, Susan Ewing (part of her time), Jim Griffin, Meg Marriott, and Louis Terrazas who have gone above and beyond to manage the demands of the Refuges without a permanent manager since last October. The incredible natural resources of the Refuges, the public who benefit from them, and the people working each day to protect, improve, and maintain them deserve to have the support of a permanent Refuge Manager.

We look forward to your response and offer our support for making this important personnel action a reality.

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