



## Friends of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge

7715 Lakeville Hwy  
Petaluma, CA 94954

FSPBNWR@gmail.com  
sanpablobayrefugefriends.org

November 10, 2020

Ocean Protection Council  
1416 Ninth St., Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: USGS Western Ecological Research Center proposal “*Evaluating Restoration Outcomes in the San Pablo Baylands to Enhance Community and Wildlife Resilience to Sea Level Rise.*”**

Dear Ocean Protection Council and Proposition 68 Grant Program Committee:

The Friends of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge support the proposal entitled “*Evaluating Restoration Outcomes in the San Pablo Baylands to Enhance Community and Wildlife Resilience to Sea Level Rise,*” submitted by the USGS Western Ecological Research Center (WERC). The San Pablo Baylands, one of the Bay Area’s largest remaining tidal marsh systems, is sensitive habitat that supports a variety of wildlife, including hundreds of thousands of migratory birds and several threatened and endangered species. This unique system lies adjacent to the heavily used Hwy 37, a major thoroughfare linking Interstate 80 in Vallejo and US 101 in San Rafael. Thousands of acres of wetlands are being restored across this corridor to improve habitat and ameliorate the effects of sea-level rise (SLR). Intertidal wetland restoration in the San Pablo Baylands region is a strategy to create wildlife habitat as well as provide natural flood protection for infrastructure and communities. However, there is much uncertainty about the effectiveness of restoration given the current and projected rate of SLR. Lack of long term, site-specific data and monitoring hampers our ability to assess wetland development and wildlife response, and devise management strategies that can be implemented to prevent loss of critical ecosystem services.

The proposal by WERC’s De La Cruz and Thorne would address these uncertainties through research efforts in the Napa-Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Area, and marshes within the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge, including Cullinan Ranch, the strip marsh, and Tolay Creek, which are part of the San Pablo Baylands. The project would combine new data with over 20 years of existing spatially explicit data on waterbird abundance and distribution, water quality, elevation, accretion, and vegetation colonization to model the evolution of restoring wetland habitat and how wildlife has responded. Modeled relationships, including triggers and thresholds, would project how habitat, wildlife, and infrastructure could be impacted under future scenarios of SLR and inform needed management actions.

The ***Friends of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge*** is excited to participate as stakeholders in this research proposal to provide input as USGS develops model scenarios and evaluates potential management actions, such as sediment augmentation, habitat islands, vegetation planting and other possible actions. Additionally, we are interested in the potential of this modeling approach for estimating other ecosystem functions such as carbon storage under different wetland scenarios.

This study represents a rare and much needed opportunity to help managers and community stakeholders understand potential ecosystem service co-benefits and trade-offs (i.e. wildlife and flood prevention) of a range of potential restoration actions. This work would leverage existing state, federal and non-profit partnerships and help to build coastal resilience for San Pablo Baylands, its wildlife, surrounding communities and infrastructure. Thus, we are pleased to support USGS's WERC proposal and thank you for your consideration of this relevant and timely research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Bodell', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending from the left side of the signature.

Justin Bodell

President

Friends of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge