Update on Suisun Marsh Plan

May 2005

Charter Group

Science Advisor Named

Dr. Stuart Siegel, founder of Wetlands and Water Resources, Inc., has been selected as Science Advisor to the Suisun Marsh Plan. Dr. Siegel brings years of experience in environmental restoration, particularly tidal marsh systems.

Dr. Siegel has four degrees from UC Berkeley: bachelors in Environmental Science and Chemistry and a Masters and a Ph.D. in Geography. He began working on estuarine wetlands during his undergraduate studies and received his certificate as a Professional Wetland Scientist in 1994 from the Society of Wetlands Scientists. As a restoration scientist, Dr. Siegel combines multidisciplinary integration with his technical expertise in wetland hydrology and geomorphology to address restoration projects, regional restoration planning, and applied restoration science.

His work and studies have incorporated considerable emphasis on the related disciplines of ecology, environmental planning, regulation and policy, management, and business. The primary focus of Dr. Siegel's more than 100 projects has been estuarine wetland restoration, especially in the San Francisco Estuary.

Dr. Siegel will: 1) assure that the SMP management, restoration and preservation activities are based on sound science, 2) coordinate a Technical Work Group of scientific experts and independent peer reviewers of the SMP, and 3) ensure application of good scientific practices to the final plan and its implementation.

"Dr. Siegel and his team of experts will help us do the very best job possible of maintaining and restoring the vigor of the Suisun Marsh," said Laurie Briden, Project Coordinator.

Technical Work Group Being Formed

To support the Suisun Marsh Science Advisor, a Technical Work Group is being formed. The group will add a significant dimension of scientific validation for activities undertaken by the SMP. The SMP agencies seek experts in the fields of waterfowl management, soil science, levee engineering, plant ecology, ornithology, and other fields to help in analyzing the EIR/EIS and in developing habitat restoration and enhancement projects. This summer the SMP will advertise for people qualified to serve on the Technical work group. For more information, call Dr. Siegel at (415) 457-0250 or check this Web site for future announcements.

Potrero Hills Landfill Expansion Raises Concerns for Marsh

A proposal under consideration by Solano County to nearly double the Potrero Hills Landfill has generated concerns about its possible impact on the Suisun Marsh.

The Republic Services landfill expansion is close to the marsh. Concerns focus on its impact on water that reaches the marsh, weakening of preservation laws to facilitate the landfill expansion, seagulls, blowing trash, illegal dumping nearby and heavy traffic. The landfill expansion would impact 260 acres of California tiger salamander (a federally-protected species) habitat, which Republic proposes to mitigate.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game will analyze the proposal's direct effects on the tiger salamander and also potential indirect effects on other listed Marsh species such as the California clapper rail, black rail, and soft bird's beak (an endangered plant).

Land Owners Work to Reduce Blackwater Conditions

Some Suisun Marsh neighbors have voiced a concern over seasonally occurring "blackwater," a phenomenon resulting from bacterial decomposition of vegetation in wetlands occurring under low dissolved oxygen (DO) levels. When this water is released into tidal sloughs, the Marsh's fish can become stressed and die. Blackwater presents the greatest problem at the upstream ends of dead-end tidal sloughs with slow-moving currents.

Blackwater is a priority for the SMP and will be addressed under Goal 5 of the SMP (Water and Sediment Quality). This goal addresses DO issues, methyl mercury loading, and channel salinity. Some land owners have already made changes on their managed wetlands adjacent to Boynton and Peytonia sloughs to reduce low DO events by:

- Eliminating discharge points into dead end sloughs.
- Re-direction of discharge locations to the larger Suisun Slough to minimize impacts on smaller channels.

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The Suisun Marsh Plan is:
Local, state and federal agencies that, through the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, help improve the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary are partnering on a plan to protect and enhance wildlife values and water quality in Suisun Marsh, the largest brackish wetland in the western United States. Members of the partnership, known as the Suisun Marsh Charter Group, are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Department of Water Resources, and the California Bay-Delta Authority. The partnership also includes the Suisun Resource Conservation District, which represent the interests of private landowners. The Charter Group works with other participating agencies, including the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in developing this plan.

Green Sturgeon Considered for Federal Protection

In April, the National Marine Fisheries Service proposed listing the southern population of the green sturgeon as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act, due largely to loss of habitat in the Central Valley river system. The slow-growing anadromous fish lives most of its life in the ocean. But around age 15, green sturgeons move upstream to spawn, primarily in the Sacramento River system. During that period, sturgeons travel through Suisun Marsh. More information may be obtained at:
http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/news/Green_Sturgeon_News_Release.pdf

Delta Levee Workshop, June 6

What makes Delta levees work—or fail—and what can be done to strengthen them is the focus of a workshop sponsored by the California Bay-Delta Authority, The Delta Protection Commission, The Department of Water Resources, the State Reclamation Board and the Water Education Foundation. The session will be held on Monday, June 6 in the Pacific Theater at the University of Pacific in Stockton. The workshop will provide useful information to anyone engaged in levee protection or maintenance, including people concerned with Suisun Marsh levees. For more information, contact the Water Education Foundation at (916) 444-6240 or Steve Chappell of Suisun Resource Conservation District at (707) 425-9302.

CALFED Legislation Will Help Suisun Marsh

Enacted late last year, H.R. 2828 authorizes federal participation in the Bay-Delta Program and confirms the link between CALFED and Suisun Marsh. The measure will require annual *appropriations* by Congress to actually fund the authorized activities.
A link to the new law is **http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi--in/query/D?c108:6:./temp/~c108pbqEpB::**

It's a Wonderful Spring in the Marsh!

The Suisun Marsh is a fascinating and eventful place almost any time of year. But spring is usually more exuberant, and the spring of 2005 is exceptional!

Bird numbers are up and the breeding season is better than ever for some species. If you travel in or near the marsh, watch especially for great egrets and snowy egrets, which are taking full advantage of a good year to boost their numbers with a bountiful crop of chicks.

Any part of the Marsh is highly attractive this time of year. Almost without exception, plant life is eye-popping green with a rush of new growth, although regrettably some are exotic species that pose threats to native plants.

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