

# Baylands Tidings

NEWSLETTER OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR MARIN BAYLANDS

## Final Stretch to Save Bahia



For more than two decades environmentalists have sought to preserve Bahia, 654 acres of rare blue oak woodland and associated salt marsh lying along the Petaluma River in Novato. During this time, ongoing efforts to develop the site have been doggedly opposed by conservation advocates carrying the banner for preserving what remains of the Bay's precious wetlands.

Bahia includes 333 acres of diked salt marsh, approximately 18 acres of seasonal wetlands, six acres of ephemeral channels, multiple coves created by hills extending to the water and a 214-acre blue oak forest. It is the only known location in California where blue oak dominated woodland exists adjacent to salt marsh and is a singularly aesthetic remnant of the North Bay's historic bayshore.

Until a year ago it appeared Bahia would go the way of 90 percent of San Francisco Bay's historic

wetlands. A proposal for 424 residential units and allied recreational features had the approval of the Novato City Council and appeared unstoppable.

But years of projects built in the face of community resistance had left Novato citizens jaded; Bahia became the final straw for residents who wanted more control over their town's growth. A referendum last spring resulted in a landslide two-thirds vote overthrowing the Council's approval of the project, and putting it on hold for one year. Concurrently, Marin Audubon Society reached an agreement to purchase the site for \$18 million.

The May 1, 2002 close of escrow may be extended if 85 percent of the purchase price is raised by that date. The referendum that stopped the development expires in May – at which time another project could be submitted if the site is not acquired.

*continued on back page*

### FIELD TRIPS

#### Walking Tour of New Bayland Acquisitions

*Sunday, February 24*

*Saturday, March 23*

*Sunday, March 24*

*10 AM to 1 PM*

Join Marin Baylands Advocates for a field trip to Bahia wetlands and forest and, as time permits, the Simmons Slough wildlife corridor. Plan on 2 to 3 hours and wear comfortable shoes and layered clothing. Walks will be led by veteran guide Bruce Bajema and will start at 10 AM at the end of Bahia Drive.

#### DIRECTIONS:

Highway 101 to the Atherton exit in Novato. Exit, turn right and follow Atherton for almost a mile to intersection with Bugeia Lane. Turn left on Bugeia, which becomes Bahia Drive at the large Bahia sign. Drive to end of Bahia Drive, which ends at hikers' entrance to forest and wetland area.

#### INFORMATION:

Alison Fuller, 415-492-3439



THANK YOU TO...

- Funding partners, including the State Coastal Conservancy, State Lands Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Marin County Open Space District, Caltrans, and the Herbst Foundation
- Our real estate agent Joyce Applen of Coldwell Banker who donates her commissions associated with the baylands acquisitions to the Marin Baylands Fund.
- Northgate Environmental Management, Inc. which has contributed hazardous materials surveys and analyses for several sites.
- The many generous donors to the Marin Baylands Fund and Marin Baylands Advocates.

# Assembling Simmons Slough Wildlife Corridor

*Project would almost triple size of County Deer Island Preserve and create a 4-mile long wildlife corridor to the Bay*

Parcel by parcel Marin Audubon Society and Marin Baylands Advocates are patching together a new wildlife preserve in the northeastern corner of Marin County that would add to the size and enhance the value of existing protected wetlands. The preserve includes four separate parcels, beginning in the Simmons Slough headwaters just north of Marin County Open Space District's Deer Island Preserve. The southernmost of these parcels is contiguous to Deer Island and if the preserve is fully acquired it would eventually become a part of Deer Island – almost tripling the size of that public land. South of Deer Island, Simmons Slough joins Novato Creek and runs to the Bay.

Marin Audubon Society purchased the first of the four parcels, an 84-acre wetland facing onto Atherton Avenue, in late 2000. An adjacent property owner is expected to donate another parcel. Marin Audubon is currently in purchase agreements on the two remaining sites: a total of 70 acres for \$1.8 million. Escrow is expected to close in February on the smaller 19-acre site thanks to grants from the State Coastal Conservancy and Marin County Open Space District, and private donations to the Marin Baylands Fund. *Funding for the larger site is not complete and must be raised this spring.*



Most of the lands between the new acquisitions and the Bay are already in the protective ownership of entities including the Marin County Flood Control District, Novato Sanitary District, State Lands Commission, State Coastal Conservancy and California Department of Fish and Game. Thus the Simmons Slough parcels along with these adjacent downstream sites would create a

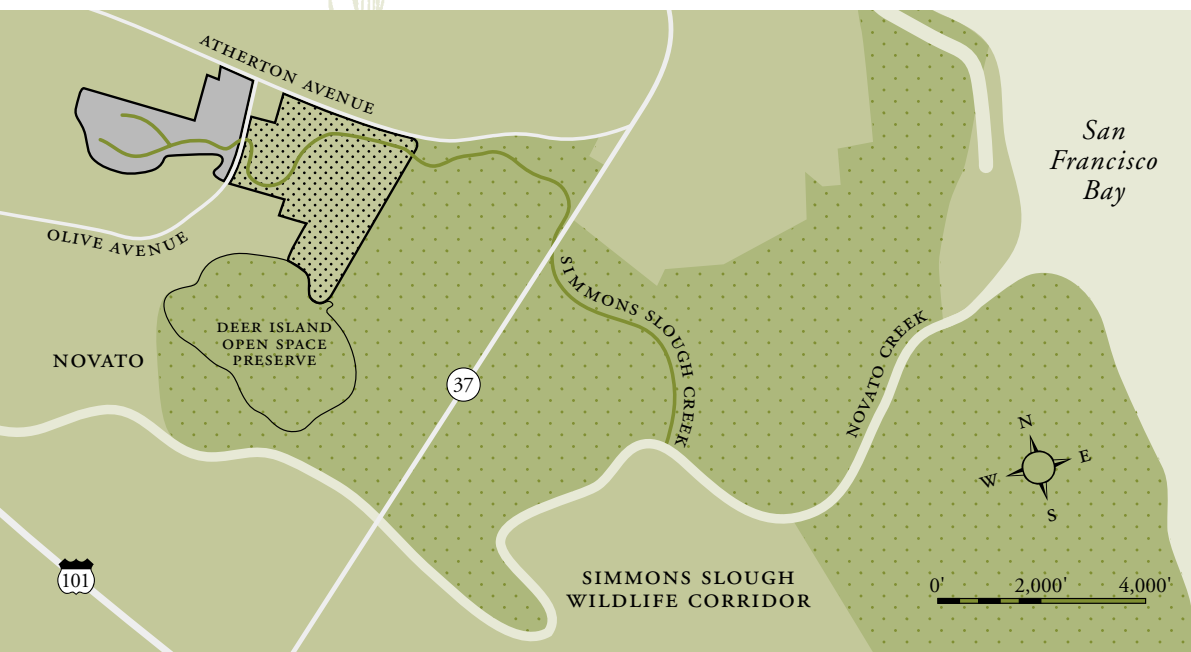
four-mile wildlife corridor to San Pablo Bay.

In addition to its value for wildlife, protection of a corridor of this size would benefit water quality in the slough, Novato Creek and San Francisco Bay.

The two sites being purchased consist of approximately 40 acres of diked baylands and about 30 acres of related uplands, including grasslands and riparian woodland. The seasonal wetlands provide wintering habitat for migratory shorebirds and waterfowl.

SIMMONS SLOUGH WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

- Sites Currently Being Acquired
- Property to Be Donated or Already Acquired by Marin Baylands Campaign
- Public Ownership



# Campaign for Marin Baylands

## Status Report on Acquisition and Restoration Efforts

**1 PETALUMA MARSH EXPANSION** This 180-acre site between Highway 101 and the Petaluma River is being purchased and will be restored to tidal marsh through the cooperative partnership of a number of agencies. These include Marin Audubon Society, CalFed, the State Coastal Conservancy and Caltrans.

Current Status: Option agreement is being finalized, all funding has been secured and a restoration plan is being developed.

**2 BAHIA** The acquisition of this 654-acre site on the Petaluma River would be one of the the most significant conservation events in Marin County in years. When it is acquired, 333 acres of diked baylands would be restored to tidal action.

Current Status: Site is under option and fund-raising is underway to purchase by mid-2002.

**3 SIMMONS SLOUGH WILDLIFE CORRIDOR** Four parcels will ultimately be combined to create this new 210-acre habitat area.

Current Status: The 84-acre Atherton Wetland was purchased in 2000 and an adjacent property owner is expected to donate another parcel. Purchase of a 19-acre site at the intersection of Olive and Atherton Avenues should be completed in February, *but funding is still needed* for the final site, a 50-acre headwaters parcel.

**4 BEL MARIN KEYS UNIT V** The Coastal Conservancy purchased this 1,600-acre site in early 2001 after years of development threats and negotiations. The Marin Baylands Fund was able to contribute some of the required matching funds due to the generosity of donors.

Current Status: Restoration planning is underway. When completed this site and the contiguous Hamilton Wetland Restoration, a total of 2,500 acres, will be one of the State's largest restored wetlands.

**5 TRIANGLE MARSH** This 34-acre site, along San Francisco Bay in Corte Madera was the Campaign's first success. The \$750,000 purchase price was raised and the loan was paid off in January 2001.

Current Status: A plan is being prepared to remove fill on about six acres to restore tidal marsh. The site will eventually be donated to the Department of Fish and Game.

## Marin Baylands Fund Report to Donors

Since its inception in 1997 through January 2002 the Marin Baylands Fund at the Marin Community Foundation has attracted more than \$740,000 in donations. A major advantage of the Fund has been leveraging its resources to attract partners and matching funds – as has been the case with all acquisitions to date. Since 1999 Marin Baylands Advocates has leveraged these funds to purchase three sites valued at more than \$1.4 million, contributed \$72,000 in required matching funds toward purchase of Bel Marin Keys Unit V, made it possible to secure an option on Bahia and financed pre-acquisition needs for other bayland sites.

## Wildlife Refuge Proposal

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is continuing to work on the proposed Marin Baylands National Wildlife Refuge. Any land designated as suitable for inclusion in the national wildlife refuge system is eligible for federal funding, which is not available for lands not so designated, if the owner decides to sell the site.



Marin Baylands Advocates  
P.O. Box 415  
Larkspur, CA 94977

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## VOTE YES ON PROPOSITION 40

TUESDAY, MARCH 5

\$2.6 billion bond act would provide funding for state, local and urban parks, clean beaches, habitat protection, air and water quality projects, preservation of agricultural lands and coastal watersheds and baylands. Further information: [www.voteyeson40.org](http://www.voteyeson40.org)

## MARIN BAYLANDS ADVOCATES

### Final Stretch to Save Bahia

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Marin Baylands Advocates is seeking funds to complete the purchase. The Marin Open Space District has already committed \$1 million and the State Coastal Conservancy is contributing \$2 million. In addition the Conservancy's Board of Directors has authorized \$3.75 million to the Bahia acquisition contingent on matching funds in this amount being raised from non-state sources.

Private contributions in any amount are welcome and will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$3.75 million. The California Native Plant Society Marin Branch has pledged \$1,000 and Marin Conservation League has pledged \$5,000 toward the acquisition.

### How We Work!

Marin Baylands Advocates works jointly with our fiscal sponsor, Marin Audubon Society, to acquire and restore properties. Marin Baylands Advocates works on negotiating and fundraising to purchase sites. Marin Audubon takes title, assuming insurance and other ownership costs, and oversees restoration and/or enhancement as needed. Acquired properties will eventually be turned over to a public agency, such as the Marin County Open Space District or the California Department of Fish and Game, for permanent ownership. Marin Baylands Advocates is an all volunteer group with no paid staff.

Assistance with bayland acquisitions is needed. Donations to the Marin Baylands Fund may be sent to:

Marin Baylands Advocates  
P.O. Box 415  
Larkspur, CA 94977 or to  
Marin Baylands Fund  
c/o Marin Community Foundation  
17 East Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, Suite 200  
Larkspur, CA 94939  
Information on giving:  
Alison Fuller, 415 492-3439

Baylands Tidings

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Ann Thomas

Design and production:

Cuccia Design

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Alicen Armstrong Brown

Michael Bull

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#### MISSION STATEMENT

*To assure the  
permanent protection,  
restoration and  
biological enhancement  
of Marin Baylands as  
part of the ecosystems  
of San Pablo and  
San Francisco Bays.*