



Sonoma Land Trust Wins Regional Award for Baylands Restoration Project October 7, 2005

Every two years, the San Francisco Estuary Project (SFEP) awards one wetlands restoration project that makes a significant contribution to the health of the San Francisco Estuary. Yesterday SFEP presented that award to Wendy Eliot, Sonoma Land Trust's Conservation Director, at the 7th biennial State of the Estuary Conference in Oakland. The award recognizes the Land Trust's 2,327-acre Baylands acquisition as an Outstanding CCMP Implementation Project.

Sonoma Land Trust's recent purchase near the intersection of Highway 37 and Lakeville Road is the single largest Baylands land purchase since the state bought South Bay Salt Ponds from Cargill in 2003. The site includes about 1,400 acres of agricultural baylands and 900 acres of upland grasslands. The project offers the only place in the entire Bay Area for restoration of a complete transition from hilltops 400 feet above sea level down through seasonal streams and wetlands to tidal marsh. Sonoma Land Trust is shaping a comprehensive wetlands restoration plan for the baylands portion of the property, the area historically affected by tidal action.

In the late 1800s, thousands of acres of historic North Bay wetlands were diked and drained and the land was used as dairy lands and for growing oat-hay. Overall, over eighty percent of the North Bay's wetlands were destroyed. Now, groups like Sonoma Land Trust are seizing opportunities to recreate wetlands in their historic locations. Restoration of the Baylands will provide critical habitat for dozens of species of migrating ducks and shorebirds as well as resident wildlife, including endangered species like the California clapper rail and the salt marsh harvest mouse.

Sonoma Land Trust will complete geologic, cultural resources and hydrologic studies for the wetlands restoration plan in May 2006. The first on-the-ground restoration work could begin



as early as 2008. Until that time, the Land Trust is working with local farmers and cattle ranchers to maintain agricultural activities across the property.

Along with major contributions from private individuals throughout the greater Bay Area, Sonoma Land Trust received generous support from the California State Coastal Conservancy and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. The Moore Foundation is funding development of the restoration plan.