



Media Release

‘New path forward’: Point Buckler Island sold to John Muir Land Trust for environmental restoration

After years of legal battles, small Suisun Bay island poised to become model of environmental stewardship

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OAKLAND – After years of legal battles and environmental degradation, Point Buckler Island in Suisun Bay has been sold at auction to the [John Muir Land Trust](#), a nonprofit environmental group that has committed to restoring the island’s wetlands and preserving its ecological significance.

Today’s sale, overseen by the Solano County Sheriff, follows the former owners’ failure to comply with state judgments related to the unauthorized construction of a levee around the island in 2014 and 2015 that caused ecological harm to the Suisun Marsh. In 2016, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board issued [a cleanup and abatement order](#) directing the owners to restore the tidal circulation and marsh habitat at Point Buckler Island and [imposed a \\$2.8 million fine](#) that reflected the extent of the environmentally harmful activities.

Eileen White, executive officer of the San Francisco Water Board, described the sale as a turning point:

“The prolonged legal issues were unfortunate. Instead of being cooperative and following the requirements of an order designed to protect water quality and aquatic life, the owners of the island chose not to comply. The sale of Point Buckler Island offers a new path forward, and we are confident that the nonprofit John Muir Land Trust will restore it into an example of responsible environmental stewardship.”

The island is a key component of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, one of the most biodiverse estuaries on the West Coast. Its restoration is expected to benefit endangered species, improve water quality and serve as a model for sustainable wetland management.

The island’s previous owners faced extensive fines and penalties — totaling millions of dollars — after refusing to remediate environmental violations that severely impacted the sensitive tidal ecosystem. Five years following the regional board’s enforcement actions, the California Court of Appeal [affirmed](#) the board’s orders and a related administrative order by the Bay Conservation and Development Commission that imposed substantial penalties as well as restoration and monitoring requirements.



The state administrative orders and ensuing appellate opinions are consistent with rulings issued by the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California in a [case brought by the federal government](#) that also required the former owners to restore the island due to their violations of the federal Clean Water Act.

Since 2021, the former owners repeatedly refused to comply with the state judgments and had been in contempt of court since August 2022.

The new owner of the island is required to ensure its restoration in compliance with the state and federal orders. The John Muir Land Trust's mission to preserve, protect and steward vital habitat for local wildlife is in alignment with the state and federal restoration obligations. The trust plans to implement a comprehensive restoration plan to rehabilitate the island's wetlands and comply with the cleanup and abatement order. Known for its commitment to conservation and environmental education, the trust says it sees the project as an opportunity to restore critical habitats while raising awareness about the importance of preserving the Delta's fragile ecosystems.

"This is a victory not just for the environment, but for everyone who values the health of California's Delta," said Linus Eukel, executive director of the trust. "We are honored to take on the responsibility of restoring Point Buckler Island and ensuring it fulfills its ecological potential."

The sale marks the conclusion of a contentious chapter in the island's history and signals a renewed focus on collaboration and conservation. Any proceeds from the sale will be used to offset the state's enforcement costs and support environmental restoration efforts.

The mission of the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California's water resources for the protection of the environment, public health and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper water resource allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations