

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT  
October 11, 2017]

ITEM: 11

SUBJECT: Informational Item: Cleanup Activities in the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge. (*Laura Samrad*)

PURPOSE: To provide the Board and the public with an update on the status of cleanup efforts for the Sweetwater Marsh.

RECOMMENDATION: This is an informational item and the Board will not take an action.

KEY ISSUES: N/A

PRACTICAL VISION: This item is consistent with the mission of the Recovery of Stream, Wetlands, and Riparian Areas Chapter of the Practical Vision. This chapter is dedicated to providing measureable improvements in the extent and health of stream, wetlands, and riparian systems, in this case improvements and restoration of the Sweetwater Marsh and the Lower Sweetwater River watershed.

DISCUSSION: This is an informational item about the future cleanup efforts planned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) at the San Diego Wildlife Refuge (Supporting Document No. 1). The Sweetwater Marsh is a key area of San Diego Bay for the habitats and ecosystems key use.

The San Diego National Wildlife Refuge was established to protect endangered and threatened species. The Refuge includes the Sweetwater Marsh Unit<sup>1</sup> and South San Diego Bay Unit.<sup>2</sup> The Refuge is located at the south end of San Diego Bay and is surrounded by urban development.

The South San Diego Bay Unit currently consists of approximately 2,300 acres, most of which are leased to the FWS by the

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<sup>1</sup> Designated as a Refuge in 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Designated as a Refuge in 2004.

California State Lands Commission. The South San Diego Bay Unit includes portions of open Bay, active solar salt evaporation ponds, (salt ponds) and the western end of the Otay River drainage basin (referred to as the Otay River Floodplain).

Most of what remains of San Diego Bay's historic coastal salt marsh and intertidal mudflat habitat is preserved within these two Refuge Units. The Refuge System is the largest collection of lands and waters specifically managed for fish and wildlife conservation in the nation. Unlike other Federal Lands that are managed under a multiple-use mandate (e.g., lands administered by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service), the Refuge System is managed for the benefit of fish, wildlife, plant resources, and their habitats.

The FWS is in the process of cleaning up historical discharges to the Refuge system and has been proceeding with the cleanup under the federal CERCLA<sup>3</sup> Program. The results of investigations and consideration of cleanup alternatives are contained in two Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analyses (EE/CAs) that include the Paradise Marsh and the Connector Marsh (OU1). (Supporting Document No. 1).

Operable Unit No. 1 (OU1) consists of Paradise Marsh, Connector Marsh, portions of Sweetwater Marsh, and properties adjacent to the Refuge that have become contaminated with burn ash created at a now-defunct burn dump located north of OU1. Development in the vicinity of OU1 began with construction of the rail line in the late 1800s. Railroad support offices, slaughterhouses, and manufacturing shops discharged wastes into Paradise Marsh. In addition, burn-ash wastes from a burn dump, which operated from the 1920s to the 1950s (known as the Davies Dump or National City Dump), routinely discharged into Paradise Marsh (Supporting Document No. 2).

Operable Unit 2 (OU2) includes a natural upland area known as Gunpowder Point (Supporting Document No. 3), which was the site of intensive industrial activity from 1916 until the early 1930s (Supporting Document No. 4). The San Diego Wildlife Refuge

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<sup>3</sup> Comprehensive Environmental Restoration and Liability Act (CERCA) more commonly known as the "Superfund" Program.

Manager (Mr. Andy Yuen) will be here to talk about the proposed cleanup actions described above.

LEGAL CONCERNS: N/A

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

1. Map of the Sand Diego Wildlife Refuge Sites.
2. Fact Sheet for Cleanup of OU1 of the Sweetwater Marsh Unit
3. Map of Gunpowder Point – OU 2
4. Fact Sheet for Cleanup of OU2 (Gunpowder Point)

PUBLIC NOTICE: Notice was provided in the agenda for the October 11, 2017 Board Meeting. The complete Administrative Record is posted by FWS.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See FWS web page at:  
[https://www.fws.gov/refuge/san\\_diego\\_bay/what\\_we\\_do/resource\\_management/Sweetwater\\_Marsh\\_Restoration.html](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/san_diego_bay/what_we_do/resource_management/Sweetwater_Marsh_Restoration.html)