



To: Dyan Whyte

From: Brooke Langston

Re: SASM Hearing Public Comments

Date: 24 October 08

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Although much has been done in the last several decades to arrest and reverse the degradation of the waters of San Francisco Bay caused by the previous century-and-a-half of pollution, water diversion and wetlands removal, the Bay still faces tremendous challenges. The November 2007 fuel spill was a shock to many who have long fought to preserve these globally important waterways. And yet still more surprising was the fact that, just months later, several agencies had released millions of gallons of raw sewage into the Bay. At this same time, we monitored a significant die-off of migratory birds in the Bay. While avian cholera was determined to be the cause of some of the deaths, the fact that many of the birds did not have the avian disease was a serious warning that the combined insults to these waterways was weakening the ability of these birds to survive.

Unlike the November oil spill, the releases of sewage and toxic chemicals into the bay from these public agencies are not one-time events, but a continued failure of trust. As the owner of the largest marine sanctuary in San Francisco Bay – the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary – Audubon California demands that much greater measure be taken to prevent these spills from happening, and in the event that they do, clean them up in a timely manner and punish the agencies responsible.

The San Francisco Bay is the largest and most ecologically important estuary on the Pacific Coast. But the importance of clean water also scales down to the fact that we have people – both staff and volunteers – in the water nearly every day conducting our important conservation work. Children in our education programs and general visitors enjoy our beach. We need guarantees that all of us coming in regular contact with this water will be protected. Moreover, we need to know that our meticulous efforts to study and restore these fragile ecosystems are not thwarted by carelessness and outdated equipment.