

March 13, 2009

Ms. Dyan C. White
Assistant Executive Officer
California Regional Water Quality Control Board,
San Francisco Bay Region
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, California 94612

Dear Ms. White:

I am writing on behalf of San Francisco Baykeeper and its 2000 members to state our support for the inclusion of funding for the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary's Aramburu Island habitat restoration project in the recently announced settlement with the Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin. San Francisco Baykeeper strongly believes in the value of Supplemental Environmental Projects in enforcement actions. Your dedication of this funding will launch important restoration and enhancement for this valuable conservation area that falls within the immediate area where the sewage was released. Projects like the Aramburu Island project will contribute enormously to increasing the ecosystem integrity of the Bay.

Development around the entire San Francisco Bay has greatly limited the habitat options for native birds and wildlife. Aramburu Island – created from dredge spoils and fill in the early 1960s – offers a rare opportunity to restore a variety of habitats on land that is relatively isolated from human disturbances and terrestrial predators. When completed, this restoration project should greatly improve habitat for resident and migratory birds, such as the San Pablo song sparrow, the salt marsh yellowthroat, shorebirds and terns, as well as mammals such as the harbor seal. It will also increase the cover of native plants, including marsh annuals such as Point Reyes bird's-beak, salt marsh owl's clover, and smooth goldfields that are rare in this region. In addition, the erosion reduction measures in this project may have indirect benefits for adjacent subtidal habitats, including native eelgrass that is likely to be limited by turbidity due to locally resuspended fine sediment. All of these actions will contribute to the regional restoration objectives presented in the Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Report.

The Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary has a 50-year presence on Richardson Bay and has the staff and project management expertise to undertake this important restoration project. Moreover, as a Center with strong education programs they will help ensure that the Aramburu restoration will engage volunteers from the community and use it as an opportunity to help children and families learn more about the San Francisco Bay.

Word of your decision to fund the Aramburu Island restoration project is great news not only for the birds and health of Richardson Bay, but for the community around it that enjoy these waters and shorelines. Thank you for your partnership on this important project.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Kovacs
Staff Scientist, San Francisco Baykeeper