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February 19, 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

FEB 27 2009

Dear Ms. White:

Your inclusion of Richardson Bay Audubon's project in the recently announced settlement with the Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin is highly supported by Save The Bay. Save The Bay, the oldest and largest organization working exclusively to protect, restore and celebrate San Francisco Bay, strongly encourages all projects which aim to enhance and preserve vital salt marsh habitat in the San Francisco Bay. Scientists recommend that 100,000 acres of wetlands needs to be established and protected around the Bay for a sustainable ecosystem. Your dedication of funding will help make this goal a reality through of vital tidal and other important habitat.

Development around the entire San Francisco Bay, and along the Marin Coast in particular, 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.

Your decision to fund the Aramburu restoration project is great news not only for Richardson Bay, but for the greater San Francisco Bay ecosystem. Thank you for your partnership on this important project.

Sincerely,
Darcie Collins PhD, Habitat Restoration Director

SAVE THE BAY