



## Smithsonian Environmental Research Center

March 10, 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 to thank you for including funding for the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary's Aramburu Island habitat restoration in the recently announced settlement with the Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin. These funds will help launch an exciting project which involves the restoration and enhancement of a valuable conservation area within the area where the sewage was released.

As I am sure you are aware, development around the entire San Francisco Bay, and along the Marin Coast in particular, has greatly limited the habitat options for native birds and other wildlife. Aramburu Island 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 marine 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.

We at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center in Tiburon have had the pleasure of working with the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary on a community-based invasive species monitoring program for the past two years and on native oyster restoration-related research for the past three years. This has given us a firsthand view of the level of staff commitment and project management expertise at the Center. I have complete confidence the Center's ability to undertake this important restoration project. In addition, the Center's strong education and community outreach programs will help ensure that the Aramburu Island 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 restoration project is great news not only for the birds and health of Richardson Bay, but for the many members of the community around it that enjoys these waters and shorelines. Thank you for your partnership on this important project.

Sincerely,

Chela Zabin

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