



Proposed Marin Baylands National Wildlife Refuge

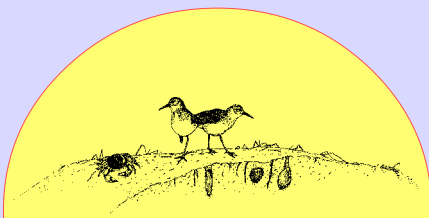
Planning Update 4, July 2002

Greetings!

This is the fourth in a series of updates from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designed to inform and involve you in the planning process for the proposed Marin Baylands National Wildlife Refuge in Marin County, California.

Thank you to all of you who participated in our planning process and to those of you who commented on the preliminary land protection alternatives. Of the 266 letters, e-mails, etc. received, 166 supported the establishment of a national wildlife refuge in Marin County, 76 supported no action, and 24 had comments or questions but did not indicate a preference.

Your comments helped us gather information and identify issues affecting you, your community, and the natural resources of the Marin Baylands.



*Thank you for participating
in the study.*

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE MARIN BAYLANDS STUDY?

Following a two-year evaluation process, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reconfirmed that the Marin Baylands and associated habitats are essential for a variety of fish and wildlife, including endangered species. All four preliminary action alternatives under review by the Service include habitats appropriate for a national wildlife refuge and the alternatives received strong support from the community in Marin County.

Other considerations were also evaluated during the process, these include:

- On the national and regional levels, the priorities for the Service's land acquisition program focus on lands within existing refuge boundaries as opposed to new or expanded refuges. Costs for refuges include not only funds needed for acquisition, but also ongoing operation, maintenance, and capital improvements. As budgets dwindle and operation and maintenance costs increase, the current reevaluation of land acquisition priorities is imperative.
- On the local level, the Service recently committed to significant new acquisitions at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex. These include the former Navy bases at Skaggs Island, Mare Island, and Alameda, and the south bay Cargill salt ponds. These will all require substantial personnel, time, and operational funding.
- With the anticipated staffing and funding needs for the ongoing refuge acquisitions in the Bay area, it is not an appropriate time to continue studying the establishment of another new refuge.

Based on these considerations, the Service has decided to defer planning for a proposed Marin Baylands National Wildlife Refuge. The Service will reevaluate this decision in a few years, when budgets are stabilized, the backlog of operation and maintenance needs on existing refuges is reduced, and national and regional acquisition priorities are clarified. Given the strong environmental ethic in Marin County, the Service will continue to work with our partners to help preserve and restore important habitats in the Marin Baylands even though refuge planning has been deferred.

Important Points of Contact

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