

# SLOUGH NEWS

A quarterly community newsletter for the Yosemite Slough Wetlands Restoration Project



CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS FOUNDATION

## Project nears early completion date

Construction underway for North Side Phase I of the Wetlands Restoration project at Candlestick Point State Recreation Area

**San Francisco** – California State Parks announced this month that the Yosemite Slough Wetlands Restoration Project, Phase I, North Side, is now ninety percent complete. In December, a key project milestone was met when the contractor removed the protective shoreline barrier to restore tidal action to the seven newly created wetlands acres. Now

on winter hiatus, the restoration will resume in late February when planting will begin. The project began mid-year and is expected to be completed in May 2012, nearly 12 months ahead of schedule.

*For more information about the project, visit [calparks.org/Candlestick](http://calparks.org/Candlestick).*



An aerial view of the Yosemite Slough Wetlands Restoration Project from December 2011 shows newly-laid hydro-seed. The aqua green seeds have now turned a golden yellow in the sun. Photo courtesy Top Grade Construction, Inc. 2011.

### Have questions about the restoration project?

Please email them to [yosemite@calparks.org](mailto:yosemite@calparks.org). Or visit [calparks.org/Candlestick](http://calparks.org/Candlestick) for more project information. And, of course, keep an eye out for the next quarterly issue of Slough News.

# Managing a Wetlands Restoration Project



By Gary Smith  
Contributing Writer

I was introduced to the Yosemite Slough Wetlands restoration project last January when California State Parks officially announced the project to prospective construction bidders. My job would be to manage what was estimated by engineers to be a \$10 to \$15 million wetlands restoration project that would take approximately 730 calendar days to complete. The rationale for the project duration was based on how long it would take to clean up and remediate the site, create new wetlands acreage and re-plant. Because of its scale and scope, this was not going to be a typical State Parks construction project. When I met park staff for the first time and saw the project site I was really struck by the lack of existing green, i.e. grass and trees in the surrounding urban neighborhood and immediately thought, where do the kids play?

Out of five bidders, Top Grade Construction was awarded the project contract and construction officially began on Monday, June 20, 2011 with a contract completion date set for Tuesday, June 18, 2013. In the first two months the project site was cleared of all existing stock piles, vegetation and debris; existing structures were demolished along with concrete and asphalt pavement, and asbestos and lead base paint abatement was conducted.

Immediately adjacent to the Griffith Street storm water outlet was a magnificent cypress tree that was

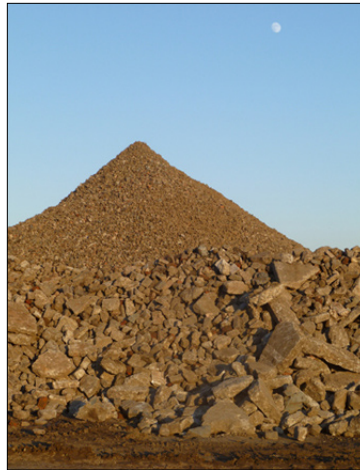
scheduled for removal on the project specs. At the end of June, I saw a juvenile red-tailed hawk perched in the tree so I convinced the project team to keep the tree. Sometimes construction oversight requires thinking beyond the hard hat...

After the buildings were demolished and the site cleared, but before any additional work could continue, the contractor was asked to further characterize the project site by providing a sampling and analysis report for approval by the state. The sampling was going to be an intensive soil analysis program that was going to “make or break” the project because final clean up and remediation of the site had to be economically viable to State Parks and CSPF (the primary fundraiser) for the project to work.

In September, after reviewing the results of the Sampling and Reuse Plan report, it was determined that the project could move forward. Northgate Environmental Management, the project geo-technical engineers, had broken down the entire site into 1,000 cubic yard cells, much like a huge Rubik’s Cube, in order to test for as balanced a site as possible. Thankfully, the site was cleaner than previously thought and I now had confirmation that we could continue on with the project and bring

on the “Yellow Iron.”

The most surprising item excavated from the site was an underground storage unit that turned out to be an old marine buoy from WWII. Apparently, it was common to re-purpose military surplus items like this around the Bay Area. The “tank” and its contents were subsequently disposed of as hazardous waste in the appropriate manner.



The project required stringent perimeter air monitoring and dust suppression constraints. We did not want fugitive emissions migrating into the local neighborhood. The contractor placed misters along Thomas Avenue and Griffith Street. In addition, Thomas Street was washed down every day to mitigate fugitive air

emissions.

Steps were taken to address specific soil conditions on the site. Soil that was contaminated with naturally occurring nickel was excavated and placed within an uplands mound that was first layered with a special liner then covered with two feet of clean cover. There were 4,000 units of lead contaminated soil that was excavated and stabilized on site prior to being transported to a hazardous waste facility in Utah.

It is a testament to Top Grade

*Managing*  
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## INSIDER INTERVIEW



## Bay Program Manager Amy Hutzel on the protection of open spaces in the Bay Area

This year the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy (“Bay Program”) celebrates its 15th anniversary in supporting programs throughout the nine-county Bay Area. The Conservancy has been a supporter of the Yosemite Slough Wetlands Restoration at Candlestick Point State Recreation Area since 2003 when they provided initial funding to the California State Parks Foundation for technical studies and field tests, design and engineering specifications and, CEQA permitting. They have subsequently granted more than \$4 million towards the construction of Phase I, North Side, Yosemite Slough, in partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Board. California State Parks Foundation Program Manager Cecille Caterson talks to Amy Hutzel, program manager for San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy, State Coastal Conservancy on the finer points of the Bay Program.

**Cecille Caterson: Can you tell me a little about the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy and its history?**

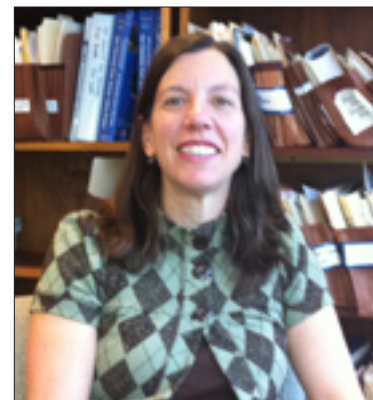
**Amy Hutzel:** In 1997, California State Senator Byron Sher introduced a bill to establish the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. Signed into law later that year by then Governor Pete Wilson, the bill was the culmination of years of

work by the Bay Area Open Space Council. The Bay Program’s intent is to address resource and recreational goals by funding projects to protect open space, habitat restoration, and regional trails and parks. To date, more than \$250 million in grants has been provided to both non-profit and public agencies to undertake projects.

So that the Program could immediately be up and running within a state agency, the program was housed within the State Coastal Conservancy (established in 1976). The principal funding source of the Bay Program has been through the passage of state park and water bonds.

**CC: What kinds of projects has the Bay Program funded?**

**AH:** Projects have included large land acquisitions to protect open space and agriculture, and to provide new parkland. The Bay Program’s contribution towards acquisition of Tolay Lake in Sonoma, now a county park, is an example of this. Other kinds of projects have provided access to natural areas for urban populations including regional trails – namely the San Francisco Bay, Ridge and Water Trails. We have also funded the planning and implementation of the South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration Project. Yosemite Slough is a perfect example of a multi-objective project funded by the Bay Program with restoration of wetland habitat for wildlife, recreational opportunities within an underserved community, and completion of a segment of the Bay Trail.



Amy Hutzel

**CC: How long have you been with the Conservancy Program?**

**AH:** I started with the Bay Program in 2000. My educational background is in Urban Planning. Before joining the Conservancy, I worked as an environmental educator. I saw the opportunity to join the Bay Program as a chance to become involved in the community in ways that would make a difference in every-day lives.

**CC: What are future plans for the Bay Program?**

**AH:** Well, we are all in belt-tightening mode these days and as with other state programs, our funding resources have been greatly affected which will mean more modest grants to applicants in the future. Our enthusiasm and support, however, has not diminished one bit and we will continue to look for innovative projects that benefit the Bay Area’s resource and recreational goals and hope to be around in another 15 years to celebrate our third decade!

*To learn more about the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program go to [scc.ca.gov](http://scc.ca.gov).*

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Construction that they have been able to greatly accelerate the schedule to complete the project in what will end up being less than twelve months. This was largely achieved by working six, then seven, ten hour plus days a week and mobilizing additional heavy equipment.



Bird Island at sunrise.

The contractor worked hard to complete all of the final grading for the wetlands so that a tidal breach could be completed the end of November when three days of favorable tides were anticipated. The crew worked around the clock. A silt curtain was put in place across the Slough to prevent any incidental erosion from the project entering the Bay. By the end of the week the new man-made bird island was visible.

The project now has all erosion control measures in place including straw wattles and hydro seeding. These are consistent with best management practices recommended by the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

The last element of the project will be to install the wetland marsh tidal plants. This will commence on March 1, 2012. The project is essentially a year ahead of schedule. Congratulations and thanks go to the entire project team including Top Grade Construction, WRA, Inc, Northgate Environmental Management, Noble Consultants, 4 Leaf, WSP Environment and EBS, Inc.

*Gary Smith is a project and construction manager with California State Parks.*

## PROJECT TEAM AND SPONSORS

### Project Leads

California State Parks Foundation  
California State Parks



### General Contractor

Top Grade Construction, Inc.

### Project Design

WRA Environmental Consultants, Inc.  
Northgate Environmental Management, Inc.  
Noble Consultants, Inc.



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