

Draft Tidal Marsh Recovery Plan

Questions and Answers

February 10, 2010

Q. What species are covered by the Plan?

A. This draft TMRP is a revision of *The California Clapper Rail and Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse Recovery Plan* (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1984). It also covers three plant species that were listed as federally endangered in the 1990s (*Cirsium hydrophilum* var. *hydrophilum* [Suisun thistle], *Cordylanthus mollis* ssp. *mollis* [soft bird's-beak], and *Suaeda californica* [California sea-blite]) and discusses 11 species of concern, plus additional species associated in some way with tidal marsh habitats. This draft recovery plan focuses on restoration over land acquisition, covers a geographic area that is highly urbanized, and carries a high level of interest with the conservation community.

The draft TMRP includes six federally-listed species: the federally endangered California clapper rail (*Rallus longirostris obsoletus*), salt marsh harvest mouse (*Reithrodontomys raviventris*), California sea-blite (*Suaeda californica*), soft bird's-beak (*Cordylanthus mollis* ssp. *mollis*), Suisun thistle (*Cirsium hydrophilum* var. *hydrophilum*) and salt marsh bird's-beak (*Corylanthus maritimus* ssp. *maritimus*).

Also treated in this draft TMRP are 11 non-listed tidal marsh species of concern: two tidal marsh shrew species (*Sorex vagrans halicoetes* and *S. ornatus sinuosus*), San Pablo vole (*Microtus californicus sanpabloensis*), California black rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis coturniculus*), three local tidal marsh races of song sparrows (*Melodia melospiza* spp.) saltmarsh common yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas sinusus*), old man tiger beetle (*Cicindela senilis senilis*), delta tule pea (*Lathyrus jepsonii* ssp. *jepsonii*), and Pacific cordgrass (*Spartina foliosa*).

In addition, six associated federally listed species are considered in this draft recovery plan: the Pacific coast population of western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*), California least tern (*Sterna antillarum browni*), tidewater goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*), delta smelt (*Hypomesus transpacificus*), Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), and steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus*).

Q. What are the threats to the tidal marshes and these species?

A. These species occur in a variety of tidal marsh habitats where they are limited by the requirements of moisture, salinity, topography, soil types, and climatic conditions. Adjacent uplands and ecotone areas are also crucial habitats for many of these species. Primary threats to all the species include historic and current habitat loss and fragmentation (due to urban development, agriculture, and diking related to duck hunting), altered hydrology and salinity, non-native invasive species, predation,

disturbance, contamination, sea level rise due to climate change, and vulnerability of small populations to extirpation due to random naturally occurring events.

Q. What is the purpose of the recovery plan?

A. The draft recovery plan describes recommended actions that will contribute to the conservation of these species. It also includes estimates of the time and costs necessary to implement the recommended actions to recover the listed species to the point where they can be downlisted or removed from the endangered species list.

Release of the draft plan is intended to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the plan and to provide additional information that may be relevant and useful in completing the plan.

Q. What information should the public submit?

A. The information sought by the Service generally falls into the following categories:

- (1) Biological, commercial trade, or other relevant data concerning any threat (or lack thereof) to the species noted above;
- (2) Feedback on the durability of the science regarding climate change and its treatment presented herein and comments on how best to ameliorate threats to the species in that regard;
- (3) Additional information concerning the range, distribution, and population size of these species, including the location of any additional populations;
- (3) Current or planned activities in the subject area and their possible impacts on these species; and
- (4) The suitability and feasibility of the recovery criteria, strategies, or actions described in the Draft Plan.

The public comment period for review of this document will run for 120 days, beginning on Feb. 10, 2010. Public input is invaluable to this process and will greatly increase the quality of the recovery plan. Members of the public who have recent information about species or habitats covered in this draft recovery plan should send it to:

Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office

2800 Cottage Way, W-2605

Sacramento, CA 95825

Attention: Valary Bloom or Josh Hull.

Q. Where can I get more information about the plan?

A. The full draft plan is available on-line: ecos.fws.gov/docs/recovery_plan/TMRP_Intro_1.pdf

The service will hold two public meetings where biologists will explain the plan in more detail and answer questions. The meetings are being scheduled for early March.

Q. Will this plan limit my ability to use and enjoy the Bay?

A. No. The plan is an entirely voluntary program in which we expect lots of people to participate. Certainly there are people-impacts adversely affecting the species in some ways, but our intent is obtain understanding of the species needs and cooperation from people to help the species.

Q. Does the plan consider climate change and the possible impacts on the tidal lands?

A. Yes, it identifies the anticipated threats from climate change, primarily due to sea level rise, and calls for collaborative approaches to meeting this substantial challenge, including research and monitoring to help develop responses to rising sea levels.

Q. Cargill owns a major piece of South Bay tidal land that seems key. Is it designated for restoration?

A. The Cargill parcel is within one of the potential recovery areas but is not a specific restoration target. It is possible that it could become a restoration site in the future, but only if the property owner were to decide that they wanted to restore it. The important principle here is that the Recovery Plan is a *voluntary* effort, it is not regulatory.

Q. How long will the plan take to complete and how much will it cost?

A. The draft plan has a 50-year horizon. A long horizon is typical for Recovery Plans, recognizing that the complex threats and challenges facing native species will take time and effort, including research and rallying of support and resources to achieve success. The ultimate goal is to restore the protected populations to a healthy enough condition that they no longer need the protection of the Endangered Species Act. The draft plan projects a potential cost of about \$1.3 billion over the 50-year time frame of the plan.