



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Janet Cox 415.902.1795

San Francisco Estuary Partnership – 11th State of the Estuary Conference

Environmental Awards Recognize Contributions to Habitat Conservation and Sustainability

Oakland, CA... Friends of the San Francisco Estuary and the San Francisco Estuary Partnership are presenting environmental awards to Dr. Howard Shellhammer and five significant conservation and restoration projects around the Bay. The awards will be made during the Partnership's biennial State of the Estuary Conference in Oakland on October 29 and 30, 2013.

Dr. Howard Shellhammer, a longtime champion of the Bay Area's wetland and marsh ecosystems, will receive the Jean Auer Environmental Award on Tuesday, October 29. His efforts were behind the listing of the salt marsh harvest mouse as a federal endangered species in 1970. His work as ecological steward, researcher, planner, and activist has been essential to nearly all of the region's most important conservation projects, including the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, the California Clapper Rail Conservation Plan, the Tidal Marsh Recovery Plan, the Bay Ecosystems Goals Project, and restoration and management plans for Cooley Landing, Bair Island, and Suisun Marsh.

Previous recipients of the Jean Auer Award include Sylvia McLaughlin, co-founder of Save the Bay; Carl Wilcox, Bay Delta Regional Manager, California Department of Fish and Wildlife; Trish Mulvey, citizen activist with the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge; Tom Graff, attorney with Environmental Defense; Marcia Brockbank, former director of the San Francisco Estuary Project; and Will Travis, former executive director of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission.

Friends of the Estuary have selected five initiatives to receive Outstanding Environmental Project Awards on Wednesday, October 30:

- *Phase One of the Yosemite Slough Wetlands Restoration at the Candlestick Point State Recreation Area* in San Francisco was completed in June 2012. This project restored seven acres of seasonal wetlands, created a safe nesting island for shorebirds, and completed a segment of the Bay Trail. Funding was provided by California State Parks, the State Coastal Conservancy/Wildlife Conservation Board, Association of Bay Area Governments, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission, a San Francisco Bay Water Quality Improvement Fund grant to the San Francisco Estuary Partnership (awarded by U.S. EPA Region 9), the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, the San Francisco Foundation, and the Barkley Fund.

- ***The Big Break Visitor Center at Big Break Regional Shoreline*** in Oakley is one of the East Bay Regional Park District's proudest accomplishments. Completed in 2012, the 5,500 sq. ft. building is certified three Green Globes by the Green Building Initiative for building design, engineering, construction, and facility operations. The center is staffed by naturalists who provide visitor orientation and interpretive programs highlighting the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, its ecosystems, and wildlife. Big Break was once an upland farm, now submerged.
- The East Bay Regional Park District initiated ***the Tidewater Service Area Outreach Project*** with the opening of the Tidewater Boating Center at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Shoreline on San Leandro Bay, in 2011. The Center ensures that the youth of East Oakland can take full advantage of recreational and interpretive programs in their watershed, and the Estuary. The Park District partners with charter schools, community-based organizations, low-income housing developments, and other non-profits to empower and educate youth about the importance of a clean and healthy Estuary.
- Efforts by San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, Audubon California, and Greeninfo were successful this past winter in gaining recognition of the Bay's waterfowl habitats as a ***"Wetland of International Importance" under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance***, or Ramsar Convention. The Convention was signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971.
- ***The Western Recycled Water Coalition*** (formerly the Bay Area Recycled Water Coalition) is a highly successful collaboration among water districts, cities, and an investor-owned utility. The Coalition's current \$3.4 million planning project will develop 25 projects providing 120,000 acre-feet of reliable local water supplies for agriculture, industry, wetlands, and urban centers – while preserving overdrawn river and groundwater resources and protecting the health of the Bay-Delta Estuary. Membership in the coalition is open to all Bay-Delta municipalities that wish to join. Delta-Diablo Sanitation District is the lead agency.

The 2013 State of the Estuary Conference, at the Oakland Marriott City Center on October 29-30, marks 20 years since the San Francisco Estuary Partnership developed the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for San Francisco Bay. The conference is co-sponsored by the Partnership, a program of the Association of Bay Area Governments; and the San Francisco Estuary Institute. For more information about the conference, visit <http://www.sfestuary.org/soe-schedule>.

The San Francisco Estuary Partnership (www.sfestuary.org) is a coalition of resource agencies, non-profits, citizens, and scientists working to protect, restore, and enhance water quality and fish and wildlife habitat in and around the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary. Our estuary is one of 28 "estuaries of national significance" recognized in the federal Clean Water Act.

The Association of Bay Area Governments (www.abag.ca.gov) is the Council of Governments and regional planning agency for the nine counties and 101 cities and towns of the San Francisco Bay region, working to meet member needs by offering regional planning and cost-effective support services to local governments. ABAG is the home agency for the Estuary Partnership.

The San Francisco Estuary Institute (www.sfei.org) helps define environmental problems, advance public debate about them through sound science, and support consensus-based solutions that improve environmental planning, management, and policy development.