

# Sketches

NOVEMBER 2016 • VOLUME 68 • NUMBER 3

# SAN DIEGO AUDUBON

## *ReWild* MISSION BAY

*Just How Wild Will It Be?*

*A glowing dusk at Kendall-Frost Mission Bay Marsh Reserve. Photo by Robert Little.*

# Conservation In Action

## San Diego Audubon's ReWild Mission Bay project unveils eight draft restoration alternatives to the public

By Rebecca Schwartz Lesberg, Director of Conservation

On Tuesday, September 27th, San Diego Audubon's effort to protect and restore wetlands in Mission Bay took a major step forward. After nearly two years of work by the ReWild Mission Bay project teams (Science and Technical Advisory Committee, Wetlands Working Group, Community Representative Group, and a diverse team of technical consultants), over 135 community members joined us at Mission Bay High School to view and comment on eight initial draft restoration alternatives for how wetlands can be restored in Mission Bay.

These plans are based on input we received from our community at the two public workshops we held earlier in the year – one in March and another in June.

Using the Mission Bay Park Master Plan as a guide (which the Coastal Commission approved in 1994 to help lead the City of San Diego in developing and restoring Mission Bay), the ReWild Mission Bay project team took this community input and used it to create these draft wetland plans. Our hope was to capture the full range of feasible solutions to restoring wetlands in Mission Bay's northeast corner.

Some of these alternatives describe a scenario where the full range of Rose Creek's historic estuary is restored so that the ecosystem services it provides can be maximized (water filtration, coastline stabilization, habitat for wildlife, and more). Some of the scenarios look at what the Mission Bay Park Master Plan recommends as the bare minimum for habitat restoration and suggest ways it can be done to minimize the harmful effects of human development on sensitive ecosystems. And still others try to reimagine how we think about the artificial contours of Mission Bay's northeast corner (the points and coves carved out of the region's once thriving wetlands) so that we can maximize both the recreational and habitat value of this public land simultaneously.



From here, these eight initial alternatives will be narrowed down to three or four final plans that will be included in the *ReWild Mission Bay Feasibility Report*, to be released in May 2017. To get there, we will review comments we receive on these draft alternatives (from the public, the City, and the scientific community) to figure out which features of these alternatives will be carried forward. It could be that a couple existing alternatives move forward in their entirety, but more likely features from several alternatives will be used to create better plans that will make it to the final four.

Once we have draft versions of the final three or four plans, our technical team will analyze them (including the development of construction methods, construction quantities, cost estimates, habitat analyses, tidal modeling, flood modeling, etc.) and evaluate how well each of the alternatives achieves the goals of the ReWild Mission Bay effort. These goals were developed in partnership with our community and fall into three broad categories: restore, protect, and provide (see page 4 for the full ReWild Mission Bay goals).

This is an exciting time for ReWild Mission Bay and our whole team will be busy over the next few months refining these eight draft alternatives into something we can bring to the City as a feasible solution for fixing Mission Bay's broken ecosystem. But really, this is just the beginning.

Once the Feasibility Report is released, and even before, we have to make it clear that Mission Bay deserves a brighter future than the dredging and pollution of its past. When the park planners set out to develop the Mission Bay Park Master Plan, they envisioned "Parks within a Park" where each corner served a purpose. There was space for hotels, space for high-speed boats, space for sailboats. And the northeast corner was supposed to be the space for nature, a space for wildlife and our communities to thrive together.

We have a chance to make that vision a reality. Through ReWild Mission Bay, we can bring back a piece of California's native wildlands and make it clear San Diegans care about our coastline.

Three of the concepts are shown on the facing page. To view all eight initial draft restoration alternatives in detail, provide your input to the project team, and sign up to stay up to date on the effort, visit <http://rewildmissionbay.org>.



Little Blue Heron, American Wigeons, Marbled Godwits and Western Sandpipers.

*Connecting with nature. Protecting our communities from impacts of climate change. Restoring habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife. Generating environmentally friendly revenue. Providing opportunities for San Diegans to swim, fish, and play in clean, healthy water.*

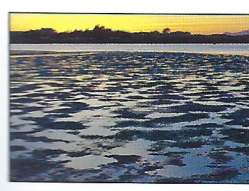
*That's what ReWild Mission Bay is all about.*



RUPERT ESSINGER



| LEGEND                          | HABITAT              | EARTHWORK     |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Study Area                      | Upland               | Cut           |
| Restoration Focus Area          | Transitional         | Fill          |
| Recreational Use Medium to High | Intertidal Vegetated | Optional Fill |
| Recreational Use Low to Medium  | Mudflat              |               |
| Proposed Channel                | Subtidal             |               |
| Existing Channel                |                      |               |



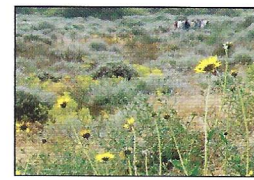
Mudflats



Intertidal Vegetated



Transitional



Upland



Camping



Recreational

To view all eight initial draft plans and provide input, go to [rewildmissionbay.org](http://rewildmissionbay.org)