

## PETALUMA WETLANDS PARK ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

17 JULY 2002

**THE PWPA IS A GRASS-ROOTS GROUP OF LOCAL CITIZENS COMMITTED TO THE CREATION OF A NEW WETLANDS PARK WITH FUNCTIONAL POLISHING WETLANDS AS A PART OF THE NEW PETALUMA WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT. WE ARE A “NOT FOR PROFIT” GROUP ADVOCATING PUBLIC AWARENESS, EDUCATION, AND THE PARTNERING OF GRANTING AGENCIES WITH THE CITY TO SUCCESSFULLY FUND THE POLISHING WETLANDS/PARK PORTION OF THE PROJECT.**

**Chairperson: David Yearsley      Secretary: Elizabeth Howland  
Treasurer: Sylvan Eidelman**

**Newsletter: Mary Edith & Gerald Moore      Outreach Chair: Gerald Moore**

**Contact PWPA AT: 521 Walnut St. Petaluma, CA 94952; 763-2310, or  
[dmy@Sonic.net](mailto:dmy@Sonic.net)**

---

### **WELCOME TO ISSUE NO.2**

**by Gerald & Mary Edith Moore**

**This issue contains an update of PWPA activities over the past three months. Judging from the pace of our activities and the progress being made on the project, this newsletter will appear approximately on a quarterly basis. In this issue we also include a philosophical article by David Yearsley, the chairman of PWPA, in which he shares his core beliefs about the importance**

**of bringing people back into contact with the natural world. This concept also reflects the underlying beliefs of most of the founders of the PWWA. These shared core ideas glue us together and motivate us to continue working to insure that this wetlands sanctuary and park becomes one of the finest in the country. Bob Dyer discusses what is going on at Shollenberger Park and Gerald Moore presents a review of PWWA outreach activities and talks about a meeting with the Joint Ventures umbrella funding agency. The connection between the wetlands park and Audubon is discussed by Sylvan Eidelman. The city tells us they are on track with design, permitting and land purchase issues. Enjoy!**

**\* \* \* \* \***

## **NEW TRAIL WILL LINK PETALUMA MARINA TO SHOLLENBERGER PARK by Bob Dyer**

**A new one-mile trail is being constructed from the Petaluma Marina, by the Sheraton Hotel, to Shollenberger Park near the bridge at the park spanning Adobe Creek. Funded by the state (primarily the California Coastal Commission) it's anticipated the trail will be ready for use sometime in August.**

**Several bridges will cross drainage channels on the city-owned property, called "Alman Marsh". Part of the trail is next to the Petaluma River, and closer to the surface of the water than the levee-topped trail at Shollenberger, allowing more of a "duck's-eye" view of the river.**

**Approximately 80 acres in size, the marsh is a favorite haunt for several species of raptors, including the White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, and American Kestrel. Occasionally, Golden Eagles are also seen overhead.**

**Alman Marsh is home to the endangered Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse (SMHM), and extra precautions are being taken not to disturb this animal's**

**habitat. Signs will be posted, for example, advising trail users not to leave the trail. The trail was designed to skirt the mouse's habitat. . The SMHM loves pickleweed, saltgrass as well as freshwater green grasses. Although preferring fresh, it can also drink salt water.**

**With the trail's completion, one can take a four-mile nature hike - starting at the parking lot of the new Sheraton Hotel or Shollenberger - two miles round Shollenberger and two more, back and forth on the marsh trail. Dogs on leash and bikes will be allowed on the new trail, however, because the trail is narrow, care must be taken when passing other users. Looking further into the future, this system could basically be doubled in length according to the latest plans for the city's new Water Recycling Facility. The latter envisions approximately four additional miles of trails, meandering around the 45 acres of polishing wetlands and linking to Shollenberger.**

**\* \* \* \* \***

## **THE ALLIANCE HAS A WEBSITE!! by Bob Dyer**

**PWPA's website is open for inspection, and includes scads of information on the Wasterwater Treatment Plant Project including the proposed Wetlands Park, and everything you wanted to know about Shollenberger Park. The website is [www.petalumawetlandspark.org](http://www.petalumawetlandspark.org). You can see the project design for the polishing wetlands and wetlands park , take a visual tour of Shollenberger Park, obtain a park bird list, find out about recent events related to the wastewater treatment plant project, or get a calendar of upcoming events. Webmaster Ron Storey has been assisted by Gerald Moore and Bob Dyer with site content and photos. This site has won praise from all who have visited it and will be constantly updated.**

**\* \* \* \* \***

## **SUMMER AND SHOLLENBERGER PARK by Bob Dyer**

**Summer brings significant changes to the park - and not all pleasant! The central pond was filled with rain during the winter and spring and is now evaporating. All the migratory waterfowl have left. The Canada Geese that nested here will leave as soon as their goslings have fledged. Even the pair of Mute Swans will leave, as soon as their three cygnets are strong enough, in search of fresher vegetation. There is bright green vegetation at the park surrounding the brackish central pond, but it is Common Pickleweed, a salty plant which the birds do not like.**

**This past season, a number of species successfully nested at the park: Mallard Duck, Cinnamon Teal, Canada Geese, Mute Swan, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Red-winged Blackbird, Killdeer, Horned Lark, as well as others. One stilt pair waiting until June to nest but were also successful.**

**The birds that remain at the park are mostly year-round residents. These include heron, egrets, Mallard Ducks, Common Moorhen, Common Coot and a few shorebirds. We will have some interesting visitors such as American White Pelican during the summer as well as various raptor species. Organized docent tours will not be conducted again until the fall. At that time we plan to expand our docent corps and offer more tours than previously. Tours will be available for adults as well as school children.**

**\* \* \* \* \***

## **AUDUBON AND THE WETLANDS PARK by Sylvan Eidelman, VP Madrone Audubon**

**As Petalumans and residents in the surrounding area learn of the potential for a wetlands park, they become greatly enthused. They are excited by the potential to experience the many habitats and enjoy the wildlife on the trails**

**of the proposed park. People ask what they can do to make the wetlands park a reality. It is almost astonishing that we can have so much natural peace and beauty while purifying wastewater.**

**What is the Audubon connection, and how does Audubon support the park? In 1999, a group (agencies, scientists, and academics) known as the San Francisco Bay Area Wetlands Ecosystems Goals Project published a report with recommendations to either protect or restore areas around San Francisco Bay. Because 90% of the wetlands around the bay have been filled, diked, or otherwise lost to nature, wetlands are extremely important to water quality and wildlife of California. Audubon members read the report, agreed with the findings, and decided to use the strength of the Audubon organization to help achieve the wetlands' goal of restoring 100,000 acres around the bay by 2020. The National Audubon Society set up the San Francisco Bay Restoration Office which is working with federal, state, and local governments, advocating for wetlands' restoration. Audubon has worked with Sonoma County, the Joint Venture, and the Coastal Conservancy to help attain funding for the Petaluma project.**

**Within the next five years, the National Audubon is planning to build 10 education centers in northern California, and the Petaluma Wetlands Park is a leading candidate for one of those centers. Because of the proximity to people and the bay area and the potential to demonstrate to people about tidal wetland restoration and the use of created wetlands for water treatment, the Petaluma Wetlands Park is a priority. Most of the wetlands to be restored around the San Francisco Bay are not located in such an easily accessible area. The hope is that when people visit the wetlands park where they can get close to a tidal wetland and see its importance and beauty, they will support the larger restoration projects around the bay, thus achieving the Ecosystem Goals.**

**\* \* \* \* \***

## **PRESENTING THE PROJECT TO THE JOINT VENTURES COMMITTEE by Gerald Moore**

**On June 26th Janice Cader-Thompson and I went to the Joint Ventures meeting in Oakland, CA to present the Wildlife Sanctuary & Park portion of the waste water treatment project. Doug Wing of Carollo Engineering met us there. Joint Ventures is an umbrella agency which coordinates funding from environmental agencies which fund wetlands projects, These include Open Space, Coastal Conservancy, Audubon, Ducks Unlimited, Fish & Game, etc.**

**We were the first agenda item. Doug talked, with slides, about the WWTP plan, water recycling, and the concept plan for Parcels A&B. I showed slides of the site and talked about the Shollenberger connection, the new trail through Alman Marsh and the community involvement including the expanded school docent program, earth day at Shollenberger, and usage by birders and the public, etc. Janice talked about funding issues, timing, etc.**

**We were well received by the committee and their enthusiastic support for the project was evident when our 20 minute time slot stretched to an hour. They agreed to write a letter of support to the city at this time for purchase of parcels A&B. Because the park and wildlife features of the site were still in a conceptual phase, they were not willing to endorse them without more details, but appointed a sub-committee to work with Carollo engineering on the final design plans for the sanctuary/park components so that final plan would be one they could support. The JV group will meet with the Carollo design team in late July when Carollo will be working on the detailed park component design. Patricia Johanson and PWPA representatives will also be present.**

**We feel that this was a very positive conclusion from the meeting that shows good support for the project, and should help insure its successful completion.**



## **THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN - (the importance of access to nature) - by David Yearsley, Chairman PWWA**

**Access to wild places is important to humans as well as animals, but access is becoming increasingly difficult . As we develop our environment for human convenience via buildings, streets, and private lands, we insulate ourselves from the world of nature---the world from which life springs. Through industry we insulate and elevate ourselves from the earth with layers of concrete, steel, and other manufactured materials. It is becoming harder and harder to access the natural world due to these man-made barriers. Can this be healthy for us as individuals or as a species? I think not. Not only do our spirits suffer through lack of grounding, but we are losing sight of how important the natural world is to our future.**

**Gone are the days of daily contact with the earth that was enjoyed by our agrarian ancestors. It is increasingly difficult in our modern world to access nature, especially the untamed areas. Often our parks are created for use as athletic fields, golf courses, and playgrounds. Our rivers are dammed and channeled to provide reservoirs and flood control. Finding places to experience the wild side of nature has become the realm of the adventurous and the hardy: hunters, fishermen, hikers and campers. This lack of experiencing the wild side of nature has created a niche for companies expounding adventure travel. What is the result of reducing our access to natural areas? We are losing touch with the beauty, wonder, and importance of nature, resulting in the danger of losing our desire to appreciate and preserve those wild areas.**

**Fortunately, those folks who have experienced the wild have led efforts to protect it. Hunters helped to form groups like Ducks Unlimited which, since 1937, has worked to purchase and protect over 10-million acres of wetlands. Fishermen founded organizations such as Trout Unlimited and United Anglers to protect marine environments and restore the rivers. The**

**Sierra Club and Audubon Society, inspired by visionary hikers, explorers and naturalists, have helped to preserve large portions of our finest wilderness and countless local, natural treasures. What is the one thing these groups have in common? They were all formed and supported by people who made the effort to get intimately acquainted with the natural world. They sought out wilderness and wildlife, and through their experiences appreciated the uniqueness and importance of nourishing the spirit by connecting with nature.**

**I feel it is imperative that those of us who have had the good fortune to experience the blessings of the natural world must work to pass this knowledge to others, especially to the young. Without this passing of the flame, how will we kindle the fires for the future? If future generations ignore our conservation and preservation efforts, all that we have achieved will be in vain.**

**We are in a wonderful position to foster the love of nature in a grand way with the creation of a public access wetlands park, a wildlife sanctuary, and an environmental education center. It will not only be a gift to the community, but an investment in the future. By creating a accessible way for people to experience a “wild” area which is easily accessible, we have the opportunity to expose and educate people to the wetlands’ beauty and value. Exposure to beauty often generates awe and reverence, and those feelings combined with education will instill an attitude to protect the animals and pristine habitat. The more we learn about something, the more we come to understand and appreciate it. A damp, slimy, inhospitable marsh becomes a beautiful and abundant wetlands to someone who has the access and takes time to understand it. Just as most people find the thought of harming a child repugnant, so too should be the thought of damaging a natural setting once the understanding of innocence, beauty, and value is established. The founders of PWPA share my core beliefs.**

**I think it is important to draw people into nature and provide them with the proper tools for understanding and appreciating it. Our wetlands park will**

**be a wonderful setting for this experience with trails that gently lead to and through its special places. It will help to generate an awareness and appreciation of nature's special gifts, which I hope will foster a desire to care for and protect them. The access, understanding, and appreciation cycle is a crucial link in creating conservationists for the future.**

**\* \* \* \* \***

## **UPDATE ON PUBLIC OUTREACH ACTIVITIES by Gerald Moore**

**In the last three months PWPA has moved forward on three fronts with our outreach efforts to the public. On April 27th we got our name and main message out to the public by having a float in the Butter&Eggs Day parade. We used the River Keeper boat decorated with banners and had walkers handing out flyers about PWPA. Everyone had a good time and thousands of Petalumans saw our name and mission slogan. PCA, the public access television station in Petaluma, video-taped my slide show on “Wetlands and Wastewater Treatment” which was subsequently shown several times on channel 26. It can be requested by the public for re-showing by calling the station. On June 9th we had a booth at the Petaluma Art & Garden Festival which was also a huge success, allowing us to present the wetlands project to hundreds of people. I have also given a series of slide shows on the wetlands park project to various public groups. On June 12th the PWPA and the Argus Courier hosted a wetlands forum at city hall.**

**A second effort was focused at the education community. In early June Bob Dyer and I put together a flyer for the Petaluma public schools in which we formally announced the availability of docent tours for the schools’ science classes. These were circulated to the teachers via the superintendents of Petaluma and Adobe schools. We anticipate that this will lead to an increase in the number of requests for school tours next year, thus we are looking for additional docents to help. Anyone interested in participating should call Bob (763-2934) or me (763-3577) for information. We anticipate having a**

**short training course early this autumn to orientate new docents.**

**Our third outreach effort involved setting up a table at Shollenberger Park for two weeks followed by another week in downtown Petaluma. We used this venue to educate people on the new wetlands park and to gather more signatures of support. We successfully contacted thousands of people thanks to the hard work of Mary Edith Moore who coordinated the project plus many helpers including PWPA founders Gerald Moore, Bob Dyer, Stan Gold, Patrick Glenn, plus new PWPA members Ron Storey, Mady Patterson, Connie Peabody, Christina Cohen, Marian Parker, Elizabeth Cheatham, and two to several days being purified by specific wetland plants, as well as the bacteria, micro-organisms, invertebrates, etc. that live in the marsh. The input water is either primary or secondary and the corresponding output water is either secondary or “tertiary” depending on how the system is designed. In our case the input will be secondary and the output the equivalent of tertiary. By current law tertiary water is 10mg/L or less in organics and suspended solids as measured after treatment in a mechanical process. Since wetlands are not mechanical, they do not meet the legal definition of tertiary, although they are of the same or higher quality, since wetlands also remove nitrogen, phosphate and if desired, metals.**

**\* \* \* \* \***

**Jane Merryman. Education works both ways: we informed people about the new wildlife sanctuary/park and we learned from the public how the park was being used and what people’s expectation were. I feel we have gotten the pulse of the community on this issue.**

**\* \* \* \* \***

## **SOME WETLANDS DEFINITIONS by Gerald Moore**

**Wetlands are areas between uplands and large, permanent bodies of water**

like rivers, lakes or oceans, where water stands for extended periods of time during a typical year. Some wetlands never go dry. The soils in wetlands are saturated with water and as such support a unique group of water-loving plants, the most familiar to people being cattails and bullrush. There are several types of wetlands including swamps, bogs, and marshes. The type we are dealing with in our project are marshes, where the dominant plants are grass or sedge-like and grow from the bottom of the marsh. Marshes are usually less than five feet deep and the flow through them is usually so slow that it is undetectable to the untrained eye.

Polishing Wetlands, also known as Constructed Wetlands, are man-made marshes, usually one to two feet deep which are designed specifically for the purification of wastewater. Water is pumped slowly into a polishing wetland where it spends from two to several days being purified by specific wetland plants, as well as the bacteria, micro-organisms, invertebrates, etc. that live in the marsh. The input water is either primary or secondary and the corresponding output water is either secondary or “tertiary” depending on how the system is designed. In our case the input will be secondary and the output the equivalent of tertiary. By current law tertiary water is 10mg/L or less in organics and suspended solids as measured after treatment in a mechanical process. Since wetlands are not mechanical, they do not meet the legal definition of tertiary, although they are of the same or higher quality, since wetlands also remove nitrogen, phosphate and if desired, metals.

\* \* \* \* \*

**PWPA**  
**521 Walnut St.**  
**Petaluma, CA 94952**

<a href="#"><u>Activities</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Alerts</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Calendar</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Contact Us</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Design</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Dredging</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Help</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Home</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Links</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Mission</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Park Update</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Photo Album</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Shollenberger</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Wetlands Defined</u></a>