

# Tri-Valley Herald

## Funds will be used to examine wetlands

**More than 90 percent of California's wetlands have been developed or converted into farmland**

By STAFF REPORTS

**Thursday, April 01, 2004** - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency awarded a \$250,000 grant Tuesday to assess the health of Northern California's wetlands.

The grant, to the Association of Bay Area Governments, will bolster efforts already under way to test 60 Bay Area sites, including the Point Reyes National Seashore and the 71-acre Martin Luther King Jr. wetlands restoration in Oakland.

ABAG will match the federal grant.

"Wetlands are sensitive to land use, management sites and climate change," said Joshua Collins, director of the wetlands science program at the San Francisco Estuary Institute, which will be conducting much of the research.

"The condition of our wetlands tells us much about our overall progress toward securing safe and healthy environments."

Wetlands, once seen as useless bogs or swamps, have lately been credited with playing key roles in the natural world, filtering pollutants from water runoff, reducing flood risks, recharging water supplies and providing wildlife habitat. More than 90 percent of California's wetlands have been developed or converted into farmland. Almost one-third of the nation's threatened or endangered species need wetlands for survival, according to the EPA.

The EPA also awarded \$200,000 to the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project to assess wetlands in Southern California.