

# **Bay Area Wetlands Ecosystem Goals Project**

## **Starting Considerations**

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**Joshua N. Collins, Ph.D.**  
**Project Proponent**

1. A project is needed to provide a vision of ecological health that can be shared throughout society as a context for natural resource protection in the Bay Area. This need is clearly stated in the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan of the Estuary Project, in accordance with Section 320 of the U.S. Clean Water Act.
2. Local agencies will be essential to achieve the vision in the local setting, but they lack the regional purview and authority of the federal and state agencies. The governing partners for the project will therefore be state and federal agencies
3. The project should be governed by an inter-agency team of senior staff who represent the federal and state agencies that will be most affected by a successful project. These people should be the best that each agency has to offer for the integration of environmental science, policy, and actual land management. Any regional planning document or process, no matter how correct in its intent, will eventually succeed or fail in the hands of these people, and they will be less likely to accept and use a project that they do not produce.
4. The project should be phased between the Bay Area, the Delta, and the attending Bay Area watersheds. The phased approach is needed to prevent the over-extension of human and financial resources, and to provide lead time to prepare the basic environmental understanding of local watersheds that is required to support the setting of quantitative goals for watersheds.
5. The project should begin with the baylands of the Bay Area. They present themselves as a starting place for interagency planning because they are better understood and support more protected species than any other major kind of wetlands in the region including the Delta; they involve the tides and numerous migratory species of fish and wildlife as integrating elements; they provide the most obvious opportunities for large-scale land acquisition; they are largely publicly owned; and they are subject to clearly conflicting regulations and policies.

6. There should be an ongoing process for active advice and support from the regional community of wetlands scientists. The project is too large and complex to be conducted without abundant input from many technical perspectives. Wetlands in the region are particularly variable in time and space, such that many scientists from throughout the community are needed for a commanding knowledge of local conditions.
7. Furthermore, the project is likely to be severely tested by public and private interests who feel threatened by governmental land planning. To pass these tests, the project will need to be scientifically valid. This means that the project should be based upon an orderly and documented method of investigation that identifies the important questions, assembles a body of knowledge based upon observation and/or experimentation that addresses those questions, draws conclusions based upon the knowledge, and assesses the uncertainty of the conclusions. It further means that the majority of scientific opinion in the region should favor the project results. This can only be assured if the scientific community takes part in the development and progress of the project.
8. The project will not be completely funded from its onset. The principal partners will therefore have to continue to use in-kind services and existing programs and grants to advance the project. Volunteerism will be essential for project success.
9. SFEI is uniquely qualified as a science organization to coordinate scientific support for the project because SFEI does not have private or political interests in the results, and because SFEI was established through the Estuary Project for the purpose of such coordination.