

Abstract

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Title: Restoration of the San Francisco Region: the Role of NGOs

The San Francisco Bay Area has a rich history of environmental activism at local, regional, national, and international fronts. Within the region, this activism has coevolved with environmental science and public policy to create a dynamic community for natural resource conservation with three major aspects: advocacy, science and engineering, and governmental control. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play vital roles for all three aspects. There are strong NGO's that advocate conservation through curricula for public schools, legislation, and law suits that force governmental address of central issues. Other NGO's serve as stand-alone science institutions that focus on empirical measures of environmental conditions with amble review to translate data into effective information. While no NGO's exercise governmental control over natural resources, there are NGO's that purchase and manage lands within the context of land use regulations.

Setting priorities and optimizing conservation per unit effort and dollar requires coordination of various policies, programs, and projects. To achieve this coordination, the regional community is creating separate consortia for advocacy, science, and management that articulate with each other. The Bay Area Joint Venture is the consortium for advocacy. The Bay Area Recovery Program is the consortium for governance. Coordinated science and engineering are presently represented by a set of monitoring programs for bays, wetlands, and watersheds that are distributed among governmental agencies and academic institutions. The San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI) has been created as a stand-alone NGO to coordinate publicly funded environmental science outside the policy filters of any governmental agency, including state colleges and land-grant universities. Whether SFEI can hold the center of regional science remains to be seen.

The community has recently made major accomplishments. For example, through the neutrality of SFEI, the community was able to recommend how much of what kinds of wetlands need to be restored where, and why. These regional habitat goals were adopted by the Joint Venture and are being implemented by the Recovery Program. The community is now expanding its focus to include local watersheds. The lessons are many. The largest lesson is that advocates, scientists, engineers, and government agencies can work together through NGOs to successfully undertake bold regional initiatives for ecological conservation.