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## **The Way It Was: Mythology, Memory, and Maps of the Early San Francisco Bay Area.**

**Robin M. Grossinger, San Francisco Estuary Institute**

This paper presents the experience of a multi-year project to recover information about historical conditions in the San Francisco Bay. The Historical Ecology Project was initiated to inform a simultaneous multi-agency regional environmental planning effort, the Bay Area Wetlands Ecosystem Goals Project. Less than 10% of the nearly three hundred square miles of tidal marshland present in the Bay circa 1850 remain, replaced mostly by non-tidal habitats managed for agriculture, salt production, or waterfowl hunting. These large-scale landscape changes dramatically altered many ecological functions of the region in ways that have not been well-understood. Now several generations old, such changes have inevitably resulted in substantial loss of understanding of natural estuarine functions, which hinders current efforts towards ecosystem restoration and management. To inform these efforts, we coordinated an extensive search to collect and integrate historical materials which document early conditions in the region. This broadly-based research effort resulted in the discovery of many unknown aspects of the landscape, which were compiled in GIS maps and associated databases called the EcoAtlas. Recommendations of the Goals Project (report available at [www.sfei.org](http://www.sfei.org)) demonstrate the ability of a community of scientists and managers to guide, interpret, and apply historical research to environmental management.