

San Francisco Bay recognised as ?Wetland of International Importance?

Title

Confirming its vital role in the natural health of the hemisphere, San Francisco Bay/Estuary in California, USA has been **designated a “Wetland of International Importance” under the Convention on Wetlands, also known as the Ramsar Convention**. San Francisco Bay is home to more than 1,000 species of mammals, birds, invertebrates and more than 130 species of fish .

“We’ve long known that the Bay is of hemispheric importance to migratory shorebirds and waterfowl, and this recognition just solidifies that stature among the international community”, said Andrea Jones, coastal stewardship program director with Audubon California (BirdLife Partner in the USA). “We hope that this will bolster efforts to restore and protect these critically important habitats.”

While this designation will not result in new legally-binding protections for wildlife and habitat in the Bay, it does focus international pressure on agencies to step up conservation efforts and may lead to additional funding for wetland restoration.

“This designation should be a point of pride for anyone living in the larger San Francisco Bay Area”, said Beth Huning, Coordinator of the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture. “Despite intense urban pressures, San Francisco Bay nonetheless endures as one of our country’s great natural treasures.”

The designation is the result of nearly four years of work on the part of member organisations of the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, which coordinates a number of public and non-profit agencies, landowners, and the business community to protect and restore wetlands for migratory birds and other wildlife. Audubon California played an important role drafting the application in conjunction with other partners.

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance is an intergovernmental treaty adopted in 1971 that provides a voluntary framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Ramsar Convention is the only global environmental treaty that deals with a particular ecosystem, and

promotes the “wise use of all wetlands.” The United States signed the treaty in 1987.

This special designation is awarded based on science. Decades of research from conservation organisations such as PRBO Conservation Science, Audubon California, San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, and the US Geological Service, among others, summarised results on common and endangered wildlife to make a compelling case for this award.

The designated site includes wetlands and waters of the nearly 400,000 acres in and around the Bay, and encompasses a variety of landowners – both public and private – dedicated to protecting habitat for birds and other wildlife.