

COMING SOON TO THE BAY-DELTA: TBI'S ECOLOGICAL SCORECARD

A prototype of TBI's pioneering Ecological Scorecard made its debut in October at this year's Fall Event at the Corinthian Yacht Club in Tiburon. Reaction to the draft for the San Francisco Bay region was enthusiastic.

Unlike the Chesapeake Bay, the Everglades and other national treasures, there is no complete set of measures today to track the evolving health of the Bay-Delta's unique ecosystem. TBI's new Scorecard will fill that gap with a set of critical biological, ecological and management indexes for the estuary's Bay,

Delta, Sacramento and San Joaquin regions. These indexes of fish, birds, invertebrates, flow, habitat, water quality, stewardship and public health will help guide decision-making on long-term restoration and resource management policy. The Scorecard will be designed to be accessible to the general public and affected communities, as well as useful to policymakers and scientists.

A team of TBI scientists and consultants is preparing the Scorecard, with input from a broader

SCORECARD CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

THE BAY INSTITUTE'S

WINTER 2002-03

bayletter



HEADWATERS 2 OCEAN

ENVIRONMENTAL WATER—AN ENDANGERED SPECIES?

Unless the Environmental Water Account (EWA) is reworked, one of the state's most important water use tools could be as endangered as some of the fish it is supposed to protect. On top of this, increased pumping at the giant South Delta pumps could further weaken the EWA's protections.

This according to the 2nd Annual State of the Environmental Water Account Report issued by TBI in October. TBI Senior Scientist Dr. Christina Swanson compiled the 25-page document.

EWA water is a publicly subsidized supply used to ensure that fish protection measures requiring changes in state and federal Delta export operations will under no circumstances reduce water deliveries to San Joaquin Valley growers and cities in Southern California.

Among major EWA problems are chronically insufficient water supplies, a lack of storage capacity for its publicly acquired water, and potentially having to make up for several hundred thousand acre-feet from water originally earmarked for Delta fish protection and endangered species recovery but blocked by a

Fresno federal court ruling (under appeal by TBI and other environmental groups).

Last year, a shortchanged EWA and a denial of access to needed pumping modifications were implicated in the deaths of nearly 20,000 endangered winter-run Chinook salmon.

This year conditions for endangered fish were better. However, as a result of the unwillingness of south-of-Delta water users to provide temporary EWA water storage, \$7million worth of unused EWA water—20 percent of the total—was lost.

"If the system isn't fixed," Swanson added, "the EWA could be easily overwhelmed in any year endangered fish do require more protection."

Clearly, the EWA doesn't have the water and funding necessary to offset current export impacts on fish – yet the state plans to rely on it to mitigate for its proposed South Delta Improvements Project, which would increase pumping capacity by 25%. Preliminary studies predict higher endangered species take levels than ever before.

EWA CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

RIVER TALES

Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Christopher Beaver tells the story of “the hardest working river in America” in the upcoming, half-hour documentary, *Tales of the San Joaquin*.

The documentary uses local oral histories plus modern footage to relate the San Joaquin’s tragic past as well as its hopeful future with the growth of community involvement. It was the 1944 construction of Friant Dam that in diverting ninety-four percent of the river—primarily for agriculture—doomed the river’s rich spring-run salmon and steel-head runs and in many places dewatered the San Joaquin itself.

Premieres, co-sponsored by TBI and the San Joaquin River Parkway Conservation and Trust, are scheduled for Fresno, Oakland and San Rafael this summer.

Funding for the film comes from CALFED and The National Park Service.

TBI AT WORLD OCEANS CONFERENCE

Bay Restoration Program manager Marc Holmes took TBI’s wetland restoration message to Santa Barbara in October at the California and the World Oceans ‘02 Conference.

Holmes presented a slide show detailing wetlands restoration initiatives in San Francisco Bay, including the massive project to restore wetlands on 25,000 acres of salt ponds. More than 1,000 people took part in the four-day conference, kicked off October 27 by California Secretary of Resources Mary Nichols.

“Wetlands restoration in the Bay is by far the largest such undertaking

in the state,” said Holmes. “Numerous other stories were told of stream and wetland restorations underway by grassroots activists throughout the state. If there was any theme to the event, it was that watershed management is the key to maintaining and restoring a healthy ocean ecosystem,” he said.

Holmes said one of the more unexpected presentations blamed flushable cat litter for the introduction of a pathogen that attacks the brains of sea otters, killing them. The pathogen finds its way to the ocean through municipal sewage discharges. Prior to flushable litter, these harmful agents were isolated in landfills.



2

AUER HONORED AT FALL EVENT

A packed house of TBI funders, supporters, board members, staff and guests lit up the room at this year’s Fall Celebration October 10 at the Corinthian Yacht Club in Tiburon, with TBI Board Member John Racanelli acting as master of ceremonies.

Jean Auer, lifelong California water activist, was honored with TBI’s **Carla Bard Bay Education Award**. Roberta Boronova, who served with Auer on the Environmental Water Caucus, presented the award.

Audrey Cooper of the *San Joaquin Record* received TBI’s **Harold Gilliam Award for Excellence**

in **Environmental Reporting...from the Sierra to the Sea**, from Harold Gilliam who called her “courageous” for reporting the complex water issues of the Central Valley.

Earlier, Auer was toasted by well-wishers including TBI board member Hap Dunning, Environmental Defense Senior Attorney Tom Graff, former San Francisco Foundation Environmental Program Director Jane Rogers and Special Guest Belva Davis, host of KQED’s *This Week in Northern California*.

FALL EVENT CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Board of Directors Robert J. Erickson, Chair; Ozell Austin; Bruce Bochte; Arthur Brunwasser; Harrison C. Dunning; Carol Lind; Karen E. Losee; Sidney S. Pucek; John C. Racanelli; C. John Suen; Nancy Swadesh.

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FALL EVENT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Davis honored Auer as an astute water policy activist and as a woman “of strong opinion...who to me has the strength of the mountains of California we admire so much... I think it is so smart of The Bay Institute to choose such a wonderful, valuable, intelligent, knowledgeable and persuasive woman to be honored this evening.”

Rogers praised Auer in part by recounting the story of how the honoree and her 91-year-old mother twice delivered emergency chicken soup to her during an illness.

“I just think that’s another example of how on a personal level you are just one hell of a human being,” said Rogers to appreciative laughter.

State Senators Tom Torlakson and Jackie Speier and State Assemblymember Carole Midgen also teamed up to present Cooper with resolutions of commendation. Gina Simi represented Senator Speier’s office and Clayton Harrell represented Assemblymember Midgen’s office at the celebration.

TBI wishes to thank Event Chair Carol Lind, Host Committee Co-Chairs Nancy Swadesh and Anthony Sandberg and Auction Committee Chair Pat Gray, for a highly successful event. 🐟



Photo Jim Tyler CFI

Jean Auer, second from right, is toasted by, from left, Tom Graff, Jane Rogers, Harrison Dunning and Belva Davis at the Corinthian Yacht Club during TBI’s Fall Celebration.

CONSIDER DONATING TO TBI

The Bay Institute (TBI) is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization which welcomes contributions from individuals, foundations, agencies and corporations. Donations support our work in the protection and restoration of the Bay-Delta and its tributaries and are tax deductible. Donors receive TBI’s Bayletter. Contributions of \$50 or more are recognized in TBI’s annual report.

SCORECARD CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

group of reviewers, including an Expert Panel of nationally recognized scientists. During the coming year the TBI Scorecard team will be refining indexes for the four regions, presenting preliminary information at CALFED’s Science Conference in January and other venues, and issuing the first Scorecard in October 2003. Stay tuned to this Bayletter station... 🐟

EWA CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

What you can do: Write Thomas Hannigan, Director, Department of Water Resources, 1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento, CA 95814, to insist that the EWA’s problems be fixed and to oppose increased Delta export pumping.

Copies of the EWA report and our South Delta Improvements Project comments are available from TBI by contacting bayinfo@bay.org. 🐟

TBI MEMBER DISCOUNT

This Holiday Season make a gift of Bay Nature magazine, a full-color quarterly publication exploring the natural world of the San Francisco Bay Area. For only \$16 (\$3 off the regular price), friends and family receive a present filled with images, articles and information about the Bay Area environment.

Go to www.baynature.com or call (925) 372-6002. Bay Nature will send gift cards to your loved ones and send the bill to you (or your credit card).

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Leave a Legacy

Please consider TBI in your will. Consult with your financial planner, attorney, or accountant to determine tax advantages your beneficiaries may enjoy as a result of a charitable bequest.



STRAW TAKES OFF AGAIN

A pair of golden eagles, great weather and enthusiastic youngsters got the first STRAW (Students and Teachers Restoring A Watershed) restoration of the season off in a big way November 15 at the Poncia family ranches in West Marin County.

“We saw the eagles just before we started planting,” said TBI Watershed Education Director Laurette Rogers. “It made the rest of the day just beautiful.”

More than 50 students from Fort Ross School on the Sonoma Coast and Wade Thomas School in San Anselmo took part in the work. They planted juncos and willows and created five willow walls—long willow branches woven between large stakes—described by TBI Watershed Education Coordinator John Parodi as “living erosion control structures.”

“It’s exciting to me to see the kids working on such a complex project,” said rancher Al Poncia. “They help make new pasture for the cattle as well as new environment for wildlife.”

More than 20 restorations are planned this season in Marin and Sonoma counties. A special planting is also scheduled for Camp Pashayan on the San Joaquin River in Fresno County. STRAW is co-sponsored by TBI and the Center for Ecoliteracy.



Photo: John Parodi

Students from San Anselmo’s Wade Thomas School help TBI Watershed Education Coordinator Chris Choo build a willow wall on Stemple Creek on the Poncia Ranch near Tomales in West Marin County.



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