

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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REMARKS OF THE HONORABLE ROGERS C. B. MORTON, SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR, DEDICATION OF SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE, OCTOBER 26, 1972

As we accept the first acres of land for the South San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge, we mark a new era to preserve and restore the vital character of this great resource.

We are celebrating the achievement and vision of the thousands of students, businessmen, housewives, and industrial and civic leaders that fought to "Save the Bay."

All of these people had the insight that this bay is more than a commercial harbor. They understood its role as the birthplace of the unique marine life that abounds here.

They understood that this bay was an integral part of their city, their environment, and their lives.

The South San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge is the result of the selfless dedication, determination, and effort of countless people.

I would like to take this opportunity to particularly applaud the efforts of some of these individuals, a few of whom are with us today.

-- Bob Shields, a Bureau of Sports Fish and Wildlife acquisition biologist.

-- The members of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission.

-- William E. Siri, President of the Save San Francisco Bay Association.

-- Bill Anderson, a biologist, formerly with the California Fish and Game Department.

-- Senator Cranston, Congressmen Gubser, Edwards, Burton, Leggett, Mailliard, McCloskey and Moss, Waldie and Clausen, all of whom provided urgent support of key legislation to make this a reality.

I know each of you join me in applauding their great efforts.

The fate of the marshlands of South San Francisco Bay came to the forefront in 1968 with the creation of the South San Francisco Baylands Planning, Conservation, and National Wildlife Refuge Committee. It was an ad hoc committee--with wide representation from Federal, State, county, and local agencies, and Bay area conservation groups.

Their actions culminated in the legislation President Nixon signed into law this June.

It was a creative piece of legislation--marking the first time that Land and Water Conservation Funds had been used for the creation of a Wildlife Refuge of this sort.

It is difficult to find a richer natural area in America. For on almost 22,000 acres of marsh, mudflats, open water and salt pond there is a fantastic variety of fish and wildlife, including several endangered species.

Although our planning is still in progress, the outlines for the future of the Wildlife Refuge are already beginning to take form. To provide practical access without despoiling the environment there will be off-site parking areas, boat tours, and common transportation--possibly minitrains--to protect the Bay's fragile ecology.

The primary mission of the Refuge is to provide a habitat for wildlife. It will also provide an opportunity for millions of Americans to develop an understanding of man's interdependence with his environment.

We are making steady progress in the environment. As President Nixon said on the first day of this decade, "The time to start is now!" And we have.

The President's commitment to bring "Parks to the People" has reshaped the role of our parks system.

Through his Legacy of Parks Program we have transferred over 25,000 acres of surplus Federal land to local governments to use as natural, recreation and wildlife parks.

The Congress has passed legislation to create the Golden Gate National Urban Recreation Area to provide an expanded urban recreation experience for millions of Americans.

Unfortunately, there were many other vital environmental measures that were not enacted by the 92nd Congress.

We hope that the next Congress will, as President Nixon said during his visit to San Francisco a few weeks ago, cast aside partisan politics to work together to create a better environment for all Americans.

This wildlife refuge is another step in the movement to "Save the Bay." It gives us new direction and insight for future action. Now more than ever, we must plan with vision, and manage with restraint, if we are to safeguard the integrity of these lands.

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