



June 17, 2008

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**MANAGEMENT BOARD:**

*Bay Area Audubon Council  
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**SUBJECT: Federal Wilderness Designation of Drakes Estero**

Dear Senator Feinstein:

I am writing on behalf of the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture (SFBJV) to inform you of the importance of Drakes Estero in its natural state for wildlife and its role in the SFBJV wetland habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement goals as adopted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

Drakes Estero, and all of Point Reyes National Seashore, lies within the boundaries of the federally-chartered San Francisco Bay Joint Venture. The San Francisco Bay Joint Venture is a partnership of non-governmental organizations, utilities, landowners, and non-voting agencies collaboratively working to protect, restore, increase, and enhance all types of wetlands, riparian habitats, and associated uplands to benefit birds and other wildlife. The San Francisco Bay Joint Venture is one of fourteen wetland habitat Joint Ventures implementing the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, a Congressional agreement between the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

**Ex-Officio Members:**

*Bay Conservation &  
Development Commission  
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of Fish and Game  
California Resources Agency  
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San Francisco Estuary Project  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
U.S. Environmental  
Protection Agency  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Wildlife Conservation Board*

In addition to providing wintering and migratory habitat for numerous species of waterfowl and shorebirds, Drakes Estero hosts large populations of High Priority species for the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and US Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Management Concern. These include some of the largest migratory and wintering concentrations of Pacific Brandt in the Pacific Flyway as well as significant concentration of Greater and Lesser Scaup and Northern Pintail. Drakes Estero is also important to federally and state listed endangered species such as the California Clapper Rail and Western Snowy Plover.

All of these species rely on protected and restored wetland habitats along the Pacific Flyway. Few locations remain in their natural state nor have the potential for enhancing existing habitat as does Drakes Estero. As quality habitat is being compromised in other areas, protected and relatively natural areas such as Drakes Estero are even more critical to sustaining existing populations and providing that habitat needed for the recovery of sensitive species.

It was the intention of Congress with the passage of the 1976 Point Reyes Wilderness Act to return the Estero to natural conditions and phase out human activities that compromise the quality of wildlife habitat. We understand that there may be attempts to change that law. The San Francisco Bay Joint Venture supports full implementation of the 1976 wilderness designation for Point Reyes National Seashore and wants to let you know that it is our position that the law should not be changed.

If you have any questions about the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture's concern on this issue, please feel free to contact our coordinator, Beth Huning. Thank you for your consideration of our position.

Sincerely,

Arthur Feinstein  
Chair