Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project –
Lesson learned from a true community-based, mountains to the sea, watershed restoration effort

Jeff McCreary – Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
Donna Chambers – Humboldt County RCD
Michael Bowen – California Coastal Conservancy
Former ocean floor...

...now headed back to sea
Reduced tidal prism from diking and gating
About 3 miles upstream at Port Kenyon

Then...

ca 1900 and 200-feet across!

...and now.

~4-feet across

ca 1990

The Leader in Wetlands Conservation
Steelhead

Chinook Salmon

Coho Salmon

Coastal Cutthroat

The Leader in Wetlands Conservation
Salt River Restoration Project
Riverside Ranch Phase 1
MAY–DECEMBER 2013
END OF COUNTY ROAD 1 MILE AHEAD. NO TURN-AROUND
NARROW ROAD AHEAD. EXPECT OVERRSIZE TRUCK TRAFFIC
The Leader in Wetlands Conservation
In 2012...

...in 2013

~4 feet

~50 feet
The Salt River’s fish, ducks, wetlands are all good…. 

But so what?

- Much of the U.S. coastline and former estuarine wetlands are privately owned.
- Sea level is on the rise.
- Private lands based projects are VERY different than public lands based projects; costly and lengthy
- Can the lessons learned in the Salt River watershed apply elsewhere?
- Who will exercise leadership?
WHAT WAS LEARNED OVER 20 YEARS

1. Timing is key

2.

3.

4.
Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project

- Channel Excavation, Floodplain Re-contouring and Riparian Enhancement
- Estuary Restoration and Expansion with retained shortgrass habitat for Aleutian Geese
- Upslope Erosion Prevention (tree planting, fencing, road upgrades, stream-crossing upgrades)
WHAT WE LEARNED OVER 20 YEARS

1. Timing is key

2. Politics
   • Community to federal
   • Regulatory

3.

4.
All politics are local……..

Active and open community engagement - REQUIRED!

• Maintain clear, consistent messaging of PURPOSE

• Political champions @ county, state, federal levels

• Watershed council = Community leadership

• Public meetings for clear, consistent communication

• Designated outreach staff

• Recognition
Political champions Rep Mike Thompson and Sup. Jimmy Smith
Yet, more political champions!

CA As. Mem. Wesley Chesbro
Community member Scott Downie
Donna

The Leader in Wetlands Conservation
### The politics of regulations.....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Permit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humboldt County</td>
<td>Conditional Use Permit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Coastal Commission</td>
<td>Coastal Development Permit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Water Quality Board</td>
<td>CWA 401 permit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Fish and Game Dept.</td>
<td>Streambed alteration permit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Water Quality Board</td>
<td>Storm water Pollution Prevent Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Marine Fisheries Service</td>
<td>Salmon (Chinook and Coho) Biological Opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Fish and Wildlife Service</td>
<td>Tidewater Goby Biological Opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army Corps of Engineers</td>
<td>CWA 404 permit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEPA</td>
<td>Environmental Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humboldt County</td>
<td>Grading Permit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California State Lands Commission</td>
<td>State lands use lease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Historic Preservation Act</td>
<td>Section 106 Clearance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Leader in Wetlands Conservation
The politics of regulations.....

Upfront engagement of regulators
  • Shared project ownership
  • Fully aware of project
    • regular update mtgs
    • site visits
  • Realistic monitoring
    • Constant negotiations
WHAT WE LEARNED OVER 20 YEARS

1. Timing is key

2. Politics
   • Community to federal
   • Regulatory

3. Teamwork
   • Funding
   • Planning and implementation

4.
Diverse and leveraged funding

- Project development and planning
- Construction
- Monitoring
- Selling the multiple benefits to match funding source

Overall project has 13 different funding sources totaling over $14 million. From fish, ducks, water quality, open space, roadways, farming and more!
The essentials of a good team

Expertise with:

- Natural systems
- Human dimensions
- Regulatory processes
- Design processes
- Construction processes
WHAT WE LEARNED OVER 20 YEARS

1. Timing is key

2. Politics
   - Community to federal
   - Regulatory

3. Teamwork
   - Funding
   - Planning and implementation

4. Paradigm shift
Today is a new day...

There is a new paradigm for the community’s interaction, and how they identify, with the Salt River watershed.
Today is a new day…

There is a new paradigm for the community’s interaction, and how they identify, with the Salt River watershed

This kind of project and process takes a **LONG** time

Political champions are essential

It’s all about leadership and teamwork in the end
Thank You!

QUESTIONS?