

**CALENDAR ITEM
90**

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| A | Statewide | 6/28/10 |
| S | Statewide | M. De Bernardo |

**CONSIDER SUPPORTING THE NOMINATION OF SAN FRANCISCO BAY ESTUARY
AS A RAMSAR WETLAND OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE**

SUMMARY:

The “Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat” (Convention) is a treaty that provides a framework for voluntary international cooperation for wetland conservation. There are 160 contracting parties to the Convention and 1889 designated sites. The United States signed onto the Convention in 1987 and there are currently 26 designated sites in the country, including Tomales Bay, the Everglades, Chesapeake Bay, and Delaware Bay.

The Convention recognizes wetlands’ importance to communities, cultures, governments, and businesses and encourages wetland conservation and wise use of wetlands. The Ramsar Secretariat facilitates implementation of wetlands conservation decisions made by nations, by preparing wise use guidelines, creating training opportunities, and providing access to financial resources.

The Convention expressly does not prejudice the exclusive sovereign rights of the Contracting Party in whose territory a designated site is situated. As such, neither the California nor United State’s jurisdiction is preempted when a California site is designated under the Convention.

For a site to be designated as a Wetland of International Importance under the Convention, the site has to meet any one of nine established criteria, including (1) does the site contain a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region; (2) does the site support populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region; and (3) does the site support vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities.

In order to effectuate a United State’s site designation under the Convention, any local government, organization, or community can nominate a site. There must also be a written agreement from all landowners and a Member of Congress representing the geographic area. Lastly, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must make a final decision to designate the site under the Convention.

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San Francisco Bay, which is not a designated site under the Convention, is widely recognized as one of North America's most ecologically important estuaries. The State Lands Commission, which holds the ungranted public trust lands in San Francisco Bay in trust for the people of the State of California, must execute a written agreement supporting the designation of its land to allow the designation process to move forward.

Designating San Francisco Bay as a Wetland of International Importance under the Convention would benefit the public trust because, among other things, it would increase local awareness and pride in the Bay's natural environment, promote tourism, increase funding opportunities for San Francisco Bay wetland protection, and increased interest in scientific studies.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE COMMISSION:

Support the nomination of San Francisco Bay Estuary as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance and direct the Executive Officer of the Commission to send a letter supporting the nomination to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.