



Napa-Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Area History by Unit

Huichica Creek

The railroad tracks to the north of the unit forms the historic northern end of the marshland. "Buchli Station" refers to a former train station near CDFW parking lot where market hunters loaded their game to be delivered to consumers along the line.

Also visible nearby is the old Press Wirecast building which was once used as a private communications center. Please avoid entering this building as it is an unsafe structure. Visitors to the area will notice two large ponds (over 300 acres each) well south of the railroad tracks. The northern-most of these ponds is identified by a row of dead Eucalyptus trees in the water along the eastern pond edge. Once used as salt evaporative ponds, these ponds fluctuate with seasonal rainfall and CDFW water management between ocean-level and hyper-saline salinity levels.

This area was once tidal marsh which was diked for agricultural uses in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Hay and grain production as well as small dairy ranches once operated in the area. In the early 1950's Leslie Salt started purchasing land in the area and developing it for salt production. In the 1970's CDFW started purchasing the first land parcels that would later become a wildlife area.

Napa River

This site marks the south-east corner of the main bay water intake pond. To the east of this levee access road is the former Cullinan Ranch which is slated for restoration by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. This area is part of the former salt pond system. Historically, all of these areas were tidal marsh. The land to the north of Hwy. 37 was diked originally for hay and grain production. These diked "islands" were flooded by the Leslie Salt Company to a shallow depth for salt production in the early 1950's. Even as salt ponds these areas had value as wildlife habitat. As the restoration of these areas moves forward, it is anticipated that the habitat values will continue to improve not only for bird species but for fish, mammals and crustaceans as well.

Wingo

Geologically, Sonoma Creek is second only in importance to the Napa River in forming the present day marshlands. This area was once open to tidal action before it was diked to create agricultural lands.

American Canyon

Within the last several years natural breaches have opened up the levee which separates this unit from the tidal section of the Napa River. These breaches have enriched plant and wildlife use within the unit and improved habitat, especially for puddle ducks.