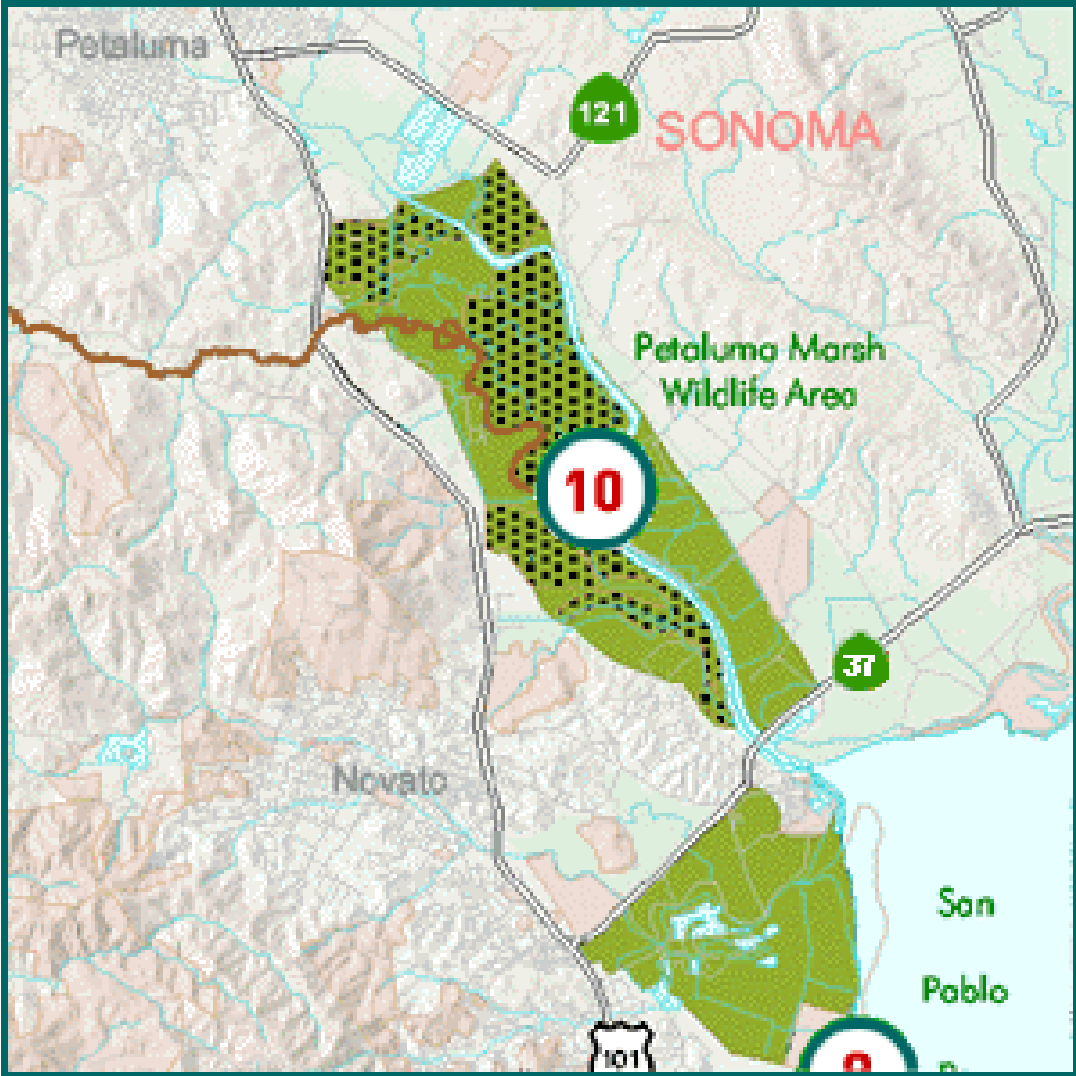


[Wetlands Campaign \(entire map\)](#)

Policy: The Wetlands Campaign: Sonoma County



10. Petaluma Marsh/River

Summary: Petaluma Marsh/River is the largest remaining intact tidal marsh within the San Francisco Bay Estuary. It contains many of the natural features that were characteristic of the estuary's historic marshes. The potential exists to restore over 1,000 acres of marsh, grassland, oak woodland, and riparian habitat to complement the intact marsh. The Petaluma Marsh represents the best opportunity in the San Francisco Bay Estuary to restore extensive marsh and natural marsh/upland transitions. Restoration of these natural features will improve nursery habitat for young salmon, trout, and other fish and aquatic species native to the Bay.

Background: Located in Southern Sonoma County and northeastern Marin County, the Petaluma Marsh and River encompass a 5,000 acre vibrant wetlands ecosystem. The lower 12 miles of the Petaluma River flow through the Marsh before emptying into northwestern San Pablo Bay. The Marsh constitutes the largest intact tidal wetland within the San Francisco Bay estuary. Petaluma Marsh exhibits many of the natural features that were characteristic of the Estuary's historic marshes, but no longer exist today - saline pans, a system of extensive channels, and natural transitions to adjacent uplands.

The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) owns and manages the 1,950 acre Petaluma Marsh Wildlife Area which forms the core of the Marsh. Several other local, state, and federal public resource management agencies, including the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, the California State Coastal Conservancy, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, own and manage wetlands within the Petaluma Marsh.

The Marsh is a haven for wildlife native to the wetlands. Thousands of shorebirds and ducks settle into the area each year during annual migrations. Egrets and herons still fish undisturbed deep within the Marsh. Eight kinds of bats feast on the Marsh's abundant insect life and 25 different species of Bay fish spend time in the Marsh complex. Marsh bird species include the rare burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk, San Pablo song sparrow, and saltmarsh common yellowthroat.

Restoring the Petaluma Marsh would significantly benefit marsh dependent wildlife, like the California clapper rail, black rail, and salt marsh harvest mouse. Tidal marsh restoration also would improve nursery habitat for salmon, steelhead trout, starry flounder, Dungeness crab, and other aquatic species.

One restoration project is already underway. The Marin Chapter of Audubon will soon complete a 100 acre tidal marsh restoration along San Antonio Creek, north of the Redwood landfill. In addition, Audubon Bay Restoration Program and our public and private conservation partners are pursuing an opportunity to purchase almost 600 acres of restorable wetlands along the Petaluma River and along the northwest shore of San Pablo Bay. Restoration of these wetlands would be the first step in restoring the mouth of the Petaluma River to its historic ecological functions.

Public Access: Petaluma Marsh is an intact marsh in the truest sense - no roads or walking trails enter the marsh. Consequently, access to this site is limited. The easiest way to see the Marsh is to visit one of the City of Petaluma's Park units adjacent to the site. You may contact the City of Petaluma's Water Resources and Conservation Department at (707) 778-4584. Ask for directions to one of the following locations: Petaluma River Marina, the Alman Marsh, the marsh and ponds near Schollenberger Park, and the City's 300 acre Petaluma River Marsh site.

Restoration of additional wetlands at the Petaluma Marsh/River site, particularly near Highway 101 and Highway 37, will increase opportunities for public access to the Bay Area's largest tidal marsh.

