Office of Congresswoman Jackie Speier

SAN FRANCISCO BAY IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2010

FACT SHEET

For More Information Contact:
Peter Viola, Office of Congresswoman Jackie Speier
Peter.Viola@mail.house.gov / 202-225-3532

What the bill does:

- Authorizes $100 million annually for ten years to the U.S. EPA to fund projects, programs, and studies that implement priority objectives of the San Francisco Estuary Partnership's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP)

- Establishes a San Francisco Bay Program Office within Region 9 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and authorizes the EPA Administrator to appoint a Director of that Program Office to oversee that funding.

- Establishes a San Francisco Bay Program Advisory Committee to provide advice to the Administrator on implementing the identified goals and objectives of the CCMP, with representation from appropriate Federal and State departments and agencies, and the Director of the SFEP

- Provides that the President's annual budget submission to Congress shall provide information on federal agency expenditures for the protection and restoration of San Francisco Bay.

Why the bill is needed:

1. The San Francisco Bay estuary and its watersheds are a national treasure and a resource of worldwide significance that contributes to federal, state and local public health and economic vitality. As the largest estuary on the West Coast of the United States, the San Francisco Bay is home to more than 100 endangered species. The San Francisco Bay and its tidal and seasonal wetlands and other natural shoreline habitats are a significant part of the Pacific coastal resources of the United States, and a healthy bay is necessary to support human and wildlife populations.

2. A healthy San Francisco Bay is essential to a healthy ocean ecosystem, as forty percent of the land in the State of California drains to the San Francisco Bay. The San Francisco Bay estuary is a critical nursery for many ocean species, and the bay's wetlands and fertile mixing zone of fresh and salt water support the base of the ocean's food chain.

3. Over many years, the water quality and health of the San Francisco Bay estuary have been diminished by pollution, invasive species, loss of wetland habitat and other factors. Pollution from cars, homes, and communities drains into creeks, streams, and rivers that flow to the bay and the Pacific Ocean. Much of the bay and its tributaries are designated as impaired water bodies, contaminated by trash; heavy metals, including mercury, copper and selenium; PCBs; pesticides including diazinon, chlordane and dieldrin; bacteria, including fecal coliform; and other pollutants of concern. Contaminant sources in the bay include sediment from historic mining and industrial activity, stormwater discharge, agricultural runoff, air deposition, sewage treatment, and other regulated discharging facilities. Regulations relating to total maximum daily loads have been mandated for numerous contaminants.

4. More than 90 percent of the shoreline wetlands of the San Francisco Bay have been destroyed by diking, filling, and development. The restoration, preservation, and maintenance of vital wetlands and San Francisco Bay habitat, are immediate federal, state and regional priorities that are necessary to address continuing serious threats posed by pollution and sprawl. The importance of protecting and restoring the tidal wetlands and other natural habitats of San Francisco Bay is well documented in regional plans and reports, including the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan of the San Francisco Estuary Partnership; the San Francisco Bay Plan of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission; the Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Report of the San Francisco Bay Area Wetlands Ecosystem Goals Project; the "Restoring the Estuary" implementation strategy of the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture; the "California's Ocean Economy" report of the California Resources Agency; and the "Greening the Bay" report of Save The Bay. More than 36,000 acres of San Francisco Bay shoreline is publicly owned and planned for restoration to tidal marsh at an estimated cost of $1,430,000,000 over the next 50 years.

5. Wetland restoration in the San Francisco Bay is necessary to address the growing danger that climate change and rises in sea level pose to the economic well-being, public health, natural resources, and environment of the State of California. Tidal wetlands can assist with tidal and fluvial flood management and adapt to rises in sea level by accreting sediment and rising in elevation. Leading scientists from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the federal government have found that the restoration of lost wetlands represents and immediate and substantial opportunity for enhancing terrestrial carbon sequestration. The 2009 California Climate Adaptation Strategy identifies restoration of San Francisco Bay tidal wetlands as a priority opportunity for the state.

6. The federal government, acting through the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, in collaboration with other agencies of the federal government, the State of

California, local governments, non-governmental agencies and other stakeholders, have committed to a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan, to achieve improved water quality and improvements in the health of the living resources of the San Francisco Bay including the protection of public water supplies, the protection and propagation of a balanced, indigenous population of shellfish, fish, and wildlife, and the maintenance of recreational activities in and on water, which require improved control of point and nonpoint sources of pollution to supplement existing pollution controls.

7. The San Francisco Estuary Partnership (SFEP) is the National Estuary Program for San Francisco Bay, established in 1987 under section 320 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act. The SFEP is a Federal, State and local effort working to improve the health of the San Francisco Bay through its strategic plan for accelerated implementation of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). The Plan, produced in 1993 and revised in 2007 with the collaboration of many partners, is a roadmap for restoring physical, chemical and biological health to the San Francisco Bay through more than 200 implementation actions in the areas of aquatic resources; wildlife; wetlands management; water use; pollution prevention and reduction; dredging and waterway modification; land use management; public involvement and education; and research and monitoring. The Plan includes a conservative total cost estimate of $4.5 billion for implementation of its priority recommendations. The Partnership was selected in 2008 by the Ocean and Coastal Protection Division of the Office of Water of the EPA as a lead participant in the climate ready estuary pilot program to assess the vulnerability of San Francisco Bay to a range of climate effects and to create and implement an adaptation plan.

8. Funds provided for CCMP implementation will advance the goals of the Clean Water Act – to protect and restore water quality and ecological health of the San Francisco Bay watershed and its habitats through partnerships, interagency coordination, and project grants. Federal investments have and can continue to leverage significant State and local government funding, as well as private and in-kind contributions. Demand for grants to address the identified ecological needs of the San Francisco Bay is significantly greater than available resources, particularly to achieve identified improvement goals for:

    - Invasive species prevention and management
    - Reduction of trash and other pollution in waterways
    - Wetlands protection and restoration
    - Stormwater management, including urban stream restoration, low impact development, and green infrastructure promotion
    - Water quality through implementation of total maximum daily loads, national pollutant discharge elimination system permits, watershed plans, and upgrading aging infrastructure
    - Predicting, mitigating and adapting to climate change impacts on water quality.

    There is an urgent need to expand Federal funding support for these purposes.