

NATIVE PLANTS ARE REAL SURVIVORS AT POINT MOLATE

Native plants have survived and flourished in undisturbed areas of Point Molate Naval Fuel Depot (NFD) despite ---

- building and operating a naval fuel depot for 55 years,
- planting eucalyptus forests, and
- introducing invasive alien plants such as french broom and pampas grass.

At the urging of the Restoration Advisory Board, the City of Richmond and the Sierra Club, the Navy commissioned a thorough survey of plants located onshore at Point Molate NFD. The October 1997 report "Special-Status Plant Survey and Habitat Assessment" for Point Molate NFD by Michael Wood and Tetra Tech, Inc. concludes that "... numerous plant taxa of botanical significance do occur on site". This survey located 314 species of plants! Three of these species are found nowhere else in the East Bay. An additional seven species have been recorded in five or fewer locations in the East Bay. These special plants represent an important part of the East Bay's botanic heritage.

The Point Molate plant survey report also emphasizes the importance of two rare plant communities:

1. coastal terrace prairie found on the hillsides containing native perennial grasslands, and
2. northern coastal bluff scrub habitat found on bluffs near the Bay.

The report states that both of these habitats "are exceedingly rare in the East Bay and represent diminishing habitats throughout their range". In particular:

The "... native perennial grasses .. exhibit very high levels of density and diversity. Native grasslands of comparable quality are extremely uncommon in the East Bay, as well as in more coastal areas in Marin County. The diversity of wildflowers in the grasslands is also unusual in the region."

In addition, the Refuge Manager of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge surveyed the Point Molate intertidal zone and reported: "I was very surprised to find eelgrass in the southern portion of this area - growing in at least a 50-60 acre area. Widgeon and coots were busily feeding upon it. As far as I know this is the only area within the Bay where this important plant still occurs. In addition to the widgeon, there were about 4000 scaup and canvasbacks using these waters. The exposed tidelands receive high use by shorebirds."

Protection, restoration and enhancement of these important plants and plant communities should be factored into the Reuse Plan for Point Molate NFD and the site cleanup program. The two rare plant communities provide important habitat for wildlife and offer unequalled educational opportunities.

BB, June 27, 1998