



Don't Pave My Bay: **Myths vs. Facts**

Myth: The salt ponds are an industrial site, not part of the Bay.

Fact: Federal agencies have acknowledged that the salt ponds are part of San Francisco Bay.

The Redwood City salt ponds are part of San Francisco Bay. While Cargill/DMB spend millions of dollars trying to persuade Bay Area residents that the site is “industrial” and a “refinery,” the Environmental Protection Agency has called these salt ponds a “critically important aquatic resource,” the SF Bay Water Board says they are “an important biological resource,” and the Army Corps of Engineers has found that Cargill’s entire Redwood City property is protected “waters of the US” under the Clean Water Act.

These statements by key federal permitting agencies underscore and support Save The Bay’s position that this parcel is not a place for development and should be restored to Bay wetlands. State law and Redwood City’s own land use laws also underscore that these ponds are part of San Francisco Bay:

- Salt ponds are part of San Francisco Bay under state law, and are regulated by the San Francisco Bay Plan through the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission.
- Cargill's salt ponds are zoned "Tidal Plain," allowing salt production and public recreation but not housing. Redwood City's General Plan declares that most of the city's undeveloped area “cannot be developed because it is San Francisco Bay, its tributaries, salt ponds and wetlands.... Due to the sensitive nature of these open space areas, it should be assumed that they will remain as open space forever.”

Myth: This is a smart-growth, transit-oriented development.

Fact: There is nothing “smart” about paving over restorable open space salt ponds with sprawl development. This is freeway-oriented development, far from transit and on the wrong side of Highway 101.

Preservation of open space is a core smart growth principle. Smart growth and transit-oriented development takes place in already urbanized areas, next to rail and bus services and existing infrastructure. A project on undeveloped Bayfront property cannot be considered “infill” or smart growth. There is literally no infrastructure on these open space salt ponds: no streets; no water, sewer or electric lines; no roads or mass transit. The site is right next to already-congested Highway 101 but over 1.5 miles from the Caltrain station in downtown Redwood City. The proposed development also is inconsistent with the existing heavy industrial use at Redwood City’s port, which is an important part of the city’s and the region’s diverse economy.

Myth: Cargill/DMB is planning to restore half of the salt ponds to wetlands

Fact: The entire 1,436 property is restorable, Cargill/DMB's promise to restore less than a third of the site is a typical false choice from a developer.

Cargill/DMB is proposing up to 12,000 housing units and commercial development on more than two thirds of the 1,436 acre salt pond site, while claiming they will eventually restore a portion of the remainder. It is not necessary to pave one part of the Bay to restore another part. The same false choice was suggested by SFO for its runway proposal in 2000, but 15,000 acres of ponds were acquired by the public and are now being restored, while the runway proposal died.

This massive project would permanently destroy needed habitat for endangered Bay wildlife. Urban sprawl, massive fill and diking have already reduced the size of San Francisco Bay by one-third, which



has harmed the Bay's health. More than half as many acres of the Cargill site would be devoted just to pavement for new streets as they claim they will restore. Restoring these salt ponds is necessary to provide critical habitat for endangered species, improve water quality and flood protection, combat global warming and enhance recreation and open space.

Myth: The proposed development will reduce traffic and fix the city's commute patterns.

Fact: Cargill's proposed development will significantly increase traffic and foul commutes.

30,000 new residents are projected to generate as many as 80,000 new daily car trips on Highway 101 and adjacent roads, such as Marsh and Woodside, including 8,000 new car trips an hour on already-choked roads during the morning commute. San Mateo County transit experts have pointed out the obvious fact that a new and concentrated surge of traffic pouring out onto Highway 101 is going to create commute problems, not solve them.

Myth: Redwood City and the Bay Area need to develop the Cargill salt ponds to provide more housing.

Fact: Our housing needs can be met without paving former Baylands.

The Bay Area needs smart and affordable housing with access to transit. But former Bay wetlands are the last place we should look for the solution. Building on these sea level salt ponds is going to require extensive fill and massive levees to hold back the rising Bay waters. Redwood City is already planning for more housing than its mandated regional share, housing that is close to existing transit and services. According to the City's General Plan, "Redwood City has identified more than adequate sites in order to identify housing opportunities in the most appropriate locations in the City, consistent with land use policy in the New General Plan." Regional planning groups have identified "smart sites" for the Bay Area's future growth, and they do not include sprawling out into the Bay.

Myth: The developer will bring all the water needed to supply this development.

Fact: Neither Redwood City nor Cargill has the water to support this development.

Redwood City does not have water needed to support Cargill's proposed new city of 30,000 people in these salt ponds. Cargill/DMB proposes a controversial, complex, unprecedented, and legally questionable transfer of southern California agricultural water to support the development. A state water expert calls their plan irresponsible and unrealistic.

Myth: The developer will fix Redwood City's flooding problems and address sea level rise.

Fact: Redwood City's long-term flood control is not dependent on the approval of a massive private development scheme that destroys open space lands.

Restoring salt ponds to wetlands that provide natural flood control is smarter planning and lower cost than paying to protect new development on flood-prone lowlands. Restoring these salt ponds can improve water quality and flood protection, as tidal wetlands buffer shorelines against floods and high tides.

California's new Climate Adaptation Strategy aims to guide state efforts in adapting to climate change impacts. The Strategy summarizes the best-known science on climate change impacts and provides recommendations on how to manage against sea level rise and other threats. The Strategy recommends prohibiting development where the shoreline is vulnerable to sea level rise, particularly in "undeveloped, areas already containing critical habitat, and those containing opportunities for tidal wetland restoration, habitat migration, or buffer zones."