



# STATE OF OUR ESTUARY

Reporting on the Health of the San Francisco Estuary

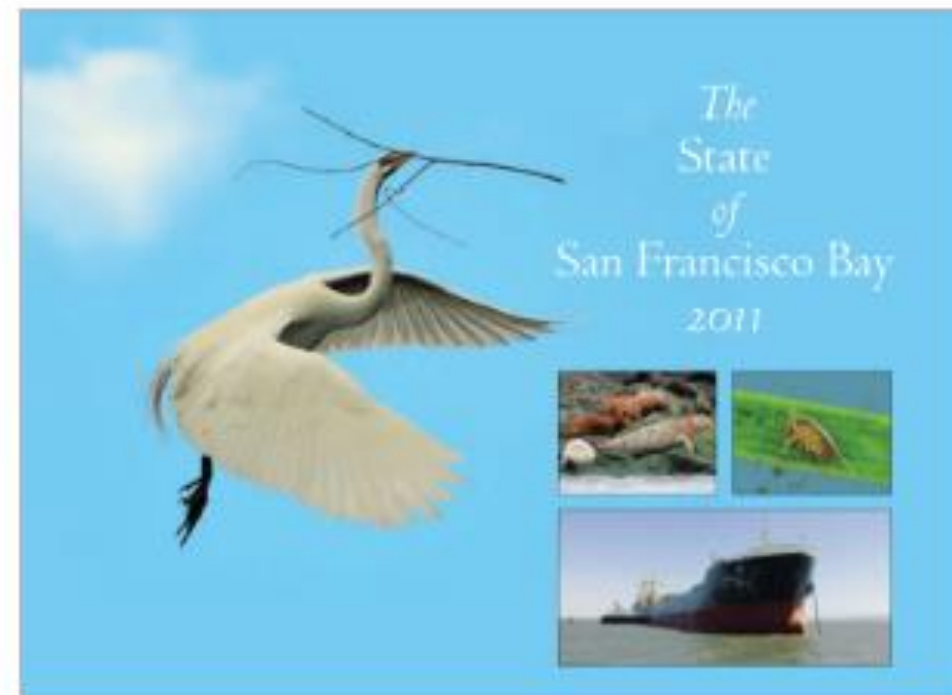
San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority Governing Board  
March 6, 2026

Natasha Daniels, San Francisco Estuary Partnership  
Laura Feinstein, San Francisco Estuary Institute

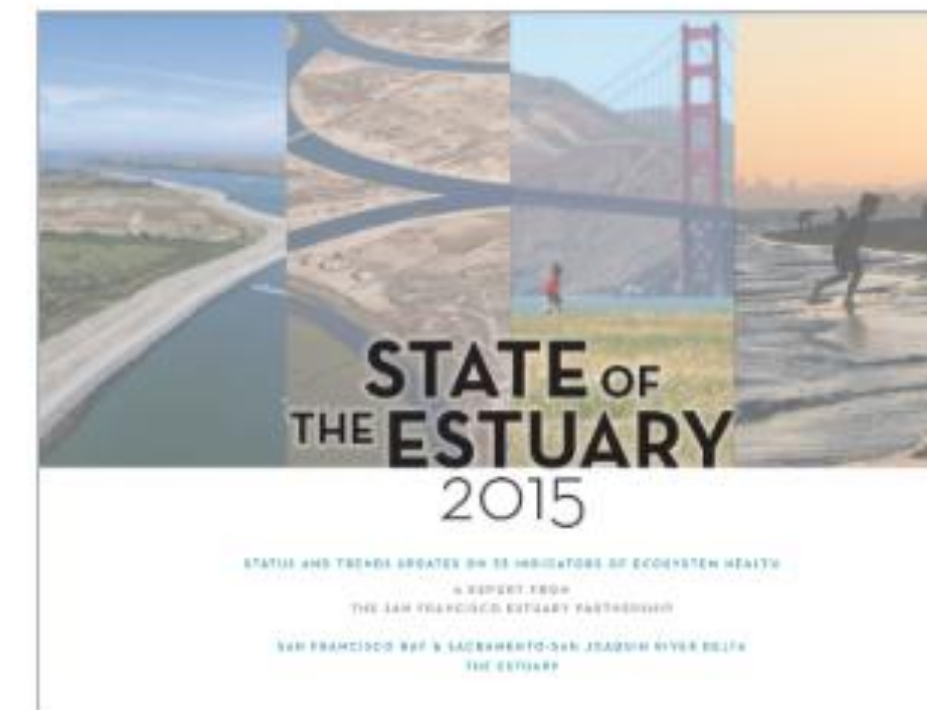
# Introduction to OurEstuary.org



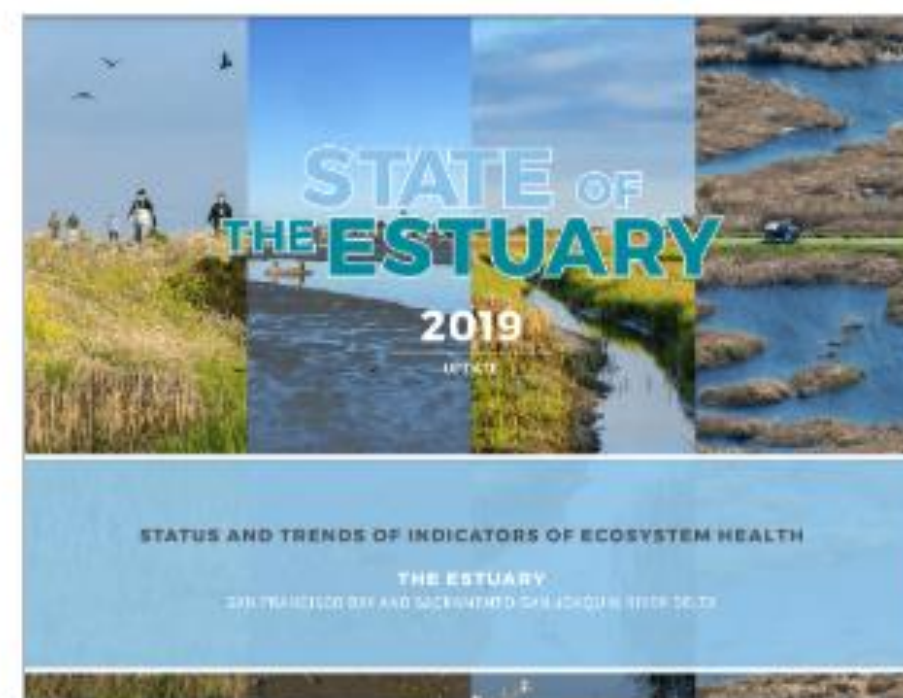
# Tracking the Estuary's Health



2011 Report



2015 Report



2019 Update



State of Our Estuary website  
(OurEstuary.org)



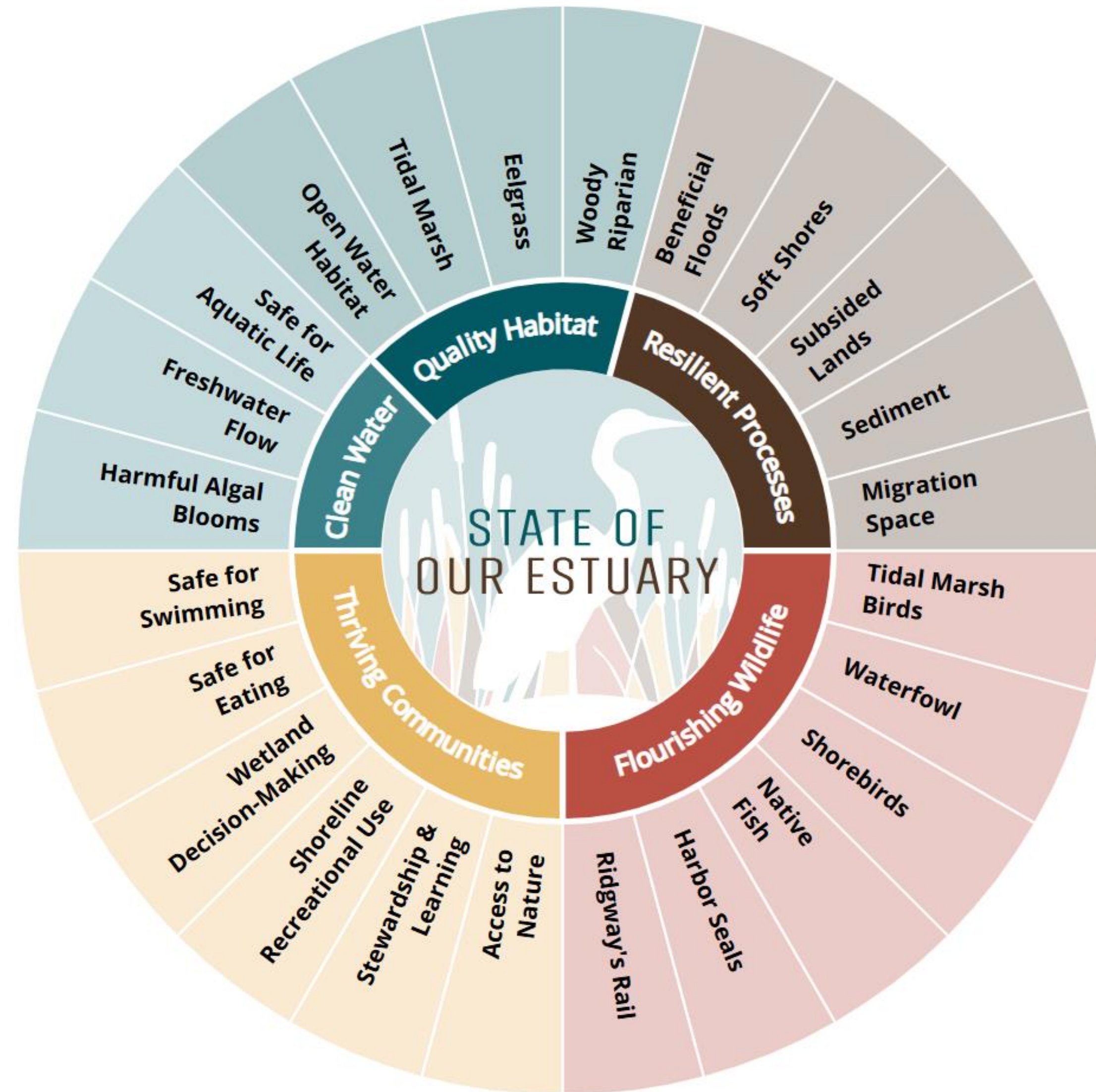
# About the State of Our Estuary

*State of Our Estuary* uses the best available scientific information on clean water, healthy ecosystems, and thriving communities to assess the health of the San Francisco Bay and Delta

[LEARN MORE](#)



# How Do We Measure Estuary Health?



**24 Indicators**



## How Healthy is the San Francisco Estuary?

A healthy Estuary supports thriving habitats, wildlife, and communities. It sustains natural processes like floods and sediment transport, ensures clean water, and provides recreational opportunities.

The San Francisco Estuary is where the waters of the Pacific Ocean meet the waters of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. Over the past century, the Estuary has experienced a decline. With natural resources diminished, the Estuary has marked a turning point, beginning a recovery. Initiatives such as the Clean Water Act and the National Estuary Program have helped restore the Estuary.

Where the approaches to restoration are visible. Restoration of marsh-dependent birds, such as the California Gull, is a key indicator of a healthy Estuary.

However, some projects have had social and economic impacts, but long-lived benefits. On top of that, climate change makes it all the more difficult to restore the Estuary.

A high-level overview of the Estuary's health is provided in the following table.

Above: The waters of the San Francisco Estuary, courtesy of SFEI.



STATUS



Good



Fair



Poor

TREND



Improving



No Change



Declining

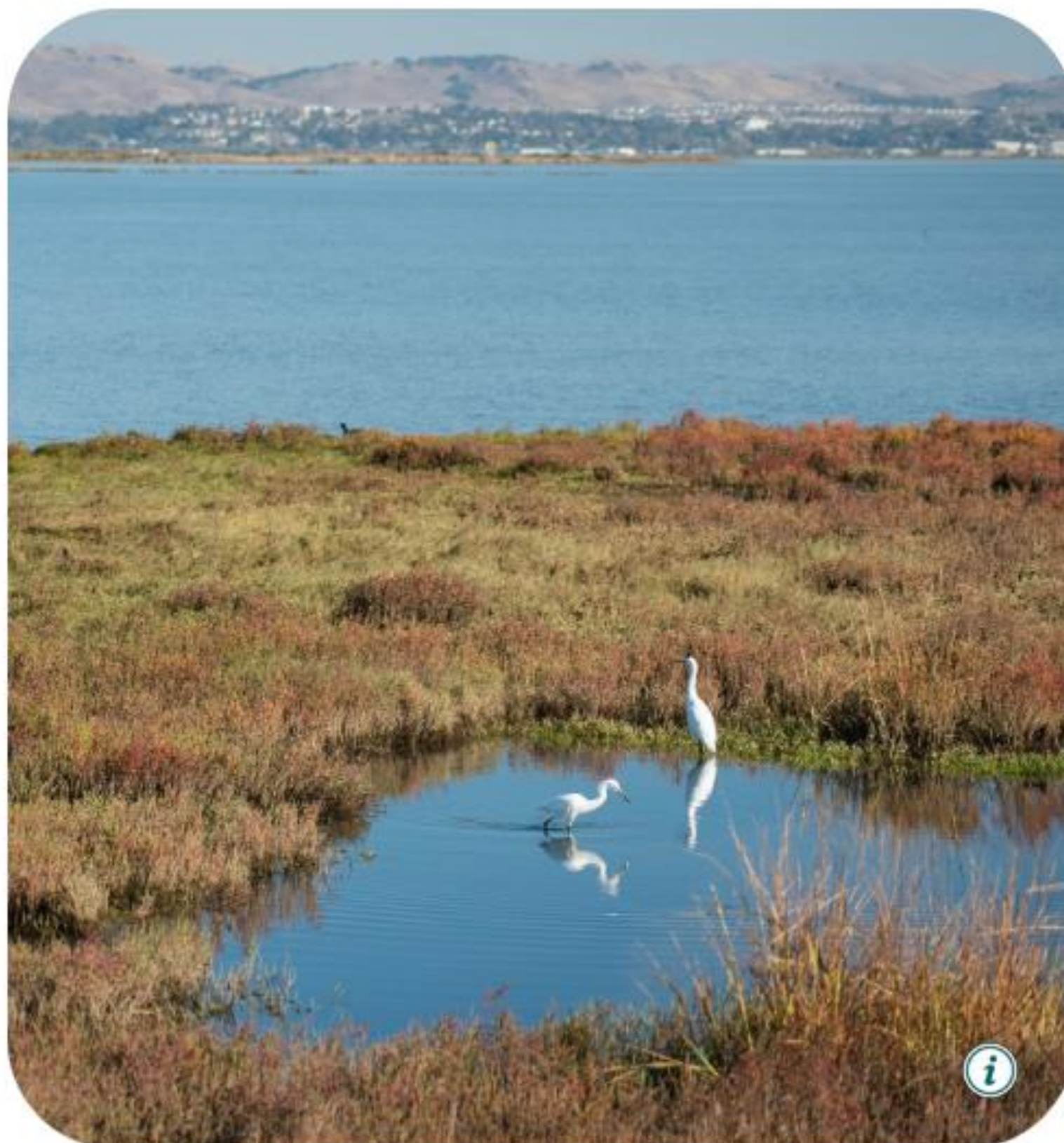


Mixed



Not Available

Indicator	Definition	Status & Trend	Indicator Highlight	Last Update
<b>Clean Water</b>				
<b>Freshwater Flow</b>	Amounts, timing, and variability of fresh water flowing into the Estuary compared to the flows that would have occurred without dams and water diversions	<b>ESTUARY</b> 	Freshwater flow to the Estuary has been reduced by nearly half.	2025
<b>Safe for Aquatic Life</b>	Concentrations of toxic pollutants in water and fish from the Bay	<b>BAY</b> 	Over a hundred pollutants are routinely monitored and some are found to exceed regulatory thresholds in fish, endangering the health of the food chain.	2025
<b>Flourishing Wildlife</b>				
<b>Native Fish</b>	Abundance, species diversity, species composition, and distribution of native fishes in the San Francisco Estuary	<b>BAY</b> <b>DELTA</b> 	Declines in native fish abundance and diversity are influenced by drought, reduced outflow, and poor recruitment for key species.	2025



## TIDAL MARSH

## Status & Trend

Latest Update: October 2025



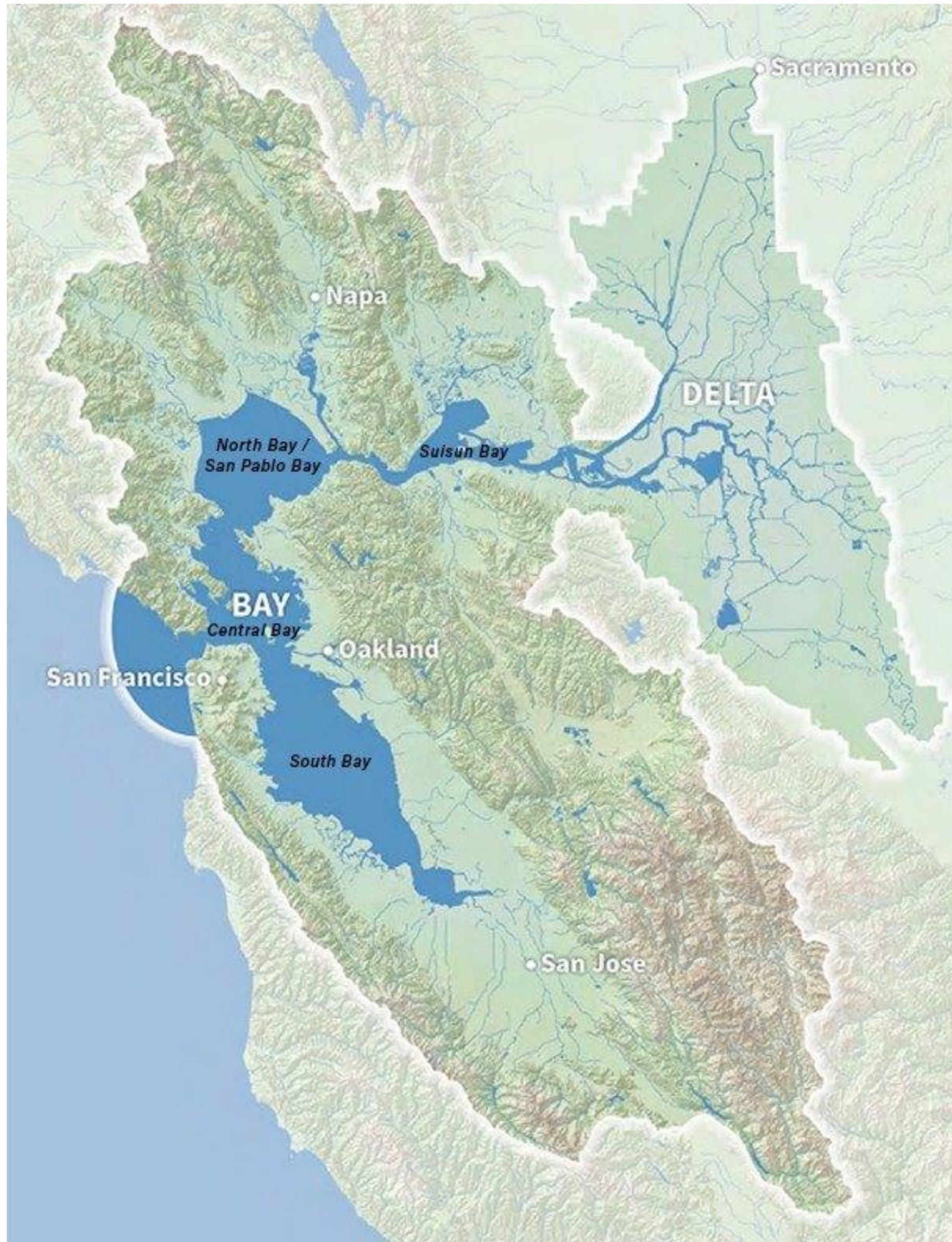
The acreage of tidal marsh in both the Bay and Delta is increasing, leading to Improving scores for both regions. The Bay is in Fair condition in terms of total acres, while there is still far too little marsh in the Delta, which warrants a Poor status. Tidal marsh extent in the Bay, including places that have been restored, has increased from about 52,800 acres in 2019 (see [State of the Estuary 2019](#)) to nearly 57,800 acres in 2024 (a 9.5% increase).

While there is far less tidal marsh in the Delta today, there has been a large increase in tidal marsh restoration in the last 5 years. The extent of tidal marsh in the Delta, including restoration projects, has increased from around 8,300 acres

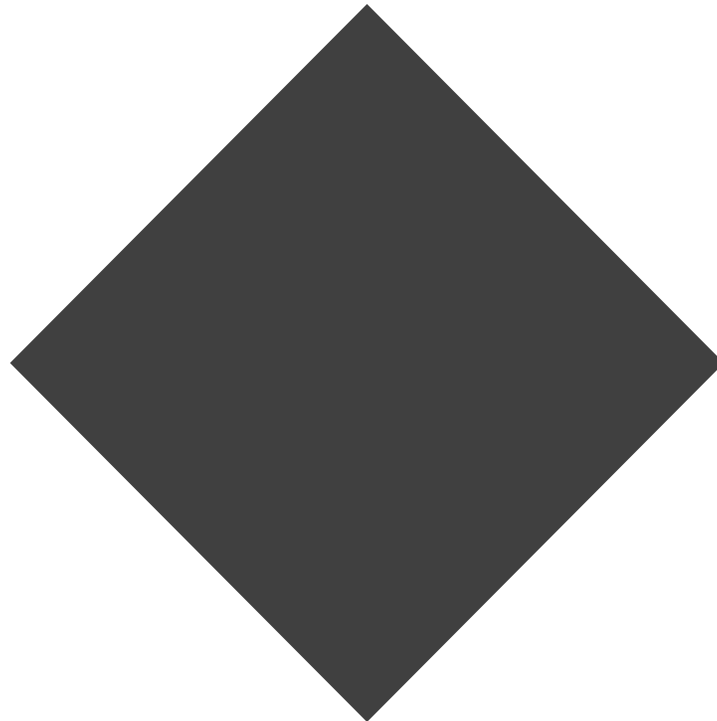
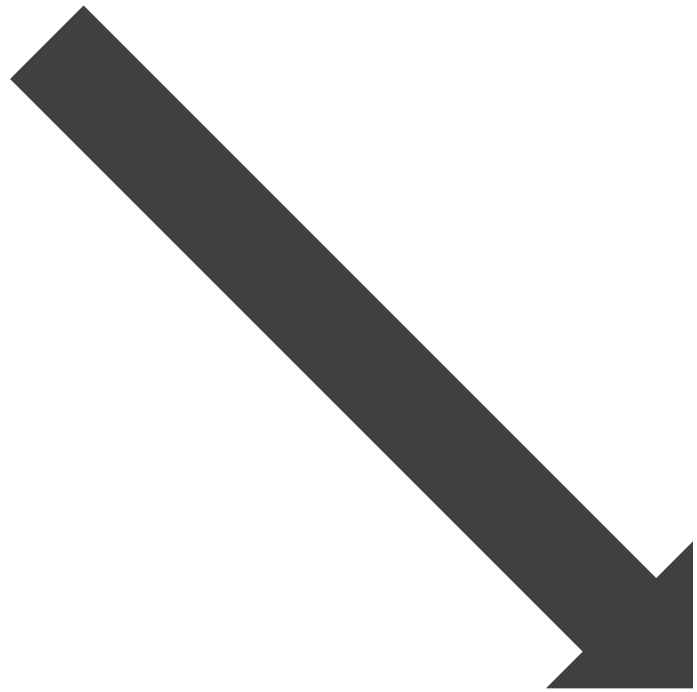
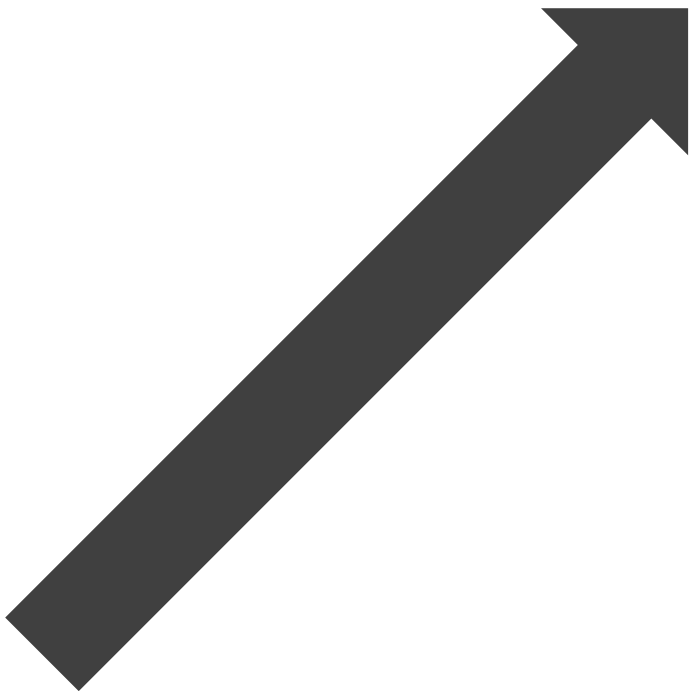
# The Estuary Scorecard



# The Estuary and its Watershed



# Reading the Scorecard



**Improving**

**No Change**

**Declining**

**Mixed**

**Not Available**

# Key Takeaway

**Where the approaches to restore ecosystem health are well-understood and managers have taken action on the ground, results are visible.**



# Tidal Marsh and Marsh Birds



# Key Takeaway

**Other problems persist because they're physically difficult to address, or their solutions come with social and economic trade-offs.**

**Freshwater Flow**



**Open Water Habitat**



**Beneficial Floods**



**Safe for Swimming**



**Safe for Aquatic Life**

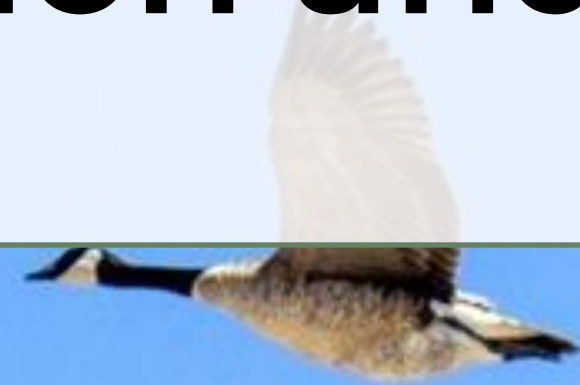


**Fish Safe for Eating**



# Key Takeaway

**Most Bay indicators are in Fair condition and stable, while most Delta indicators are in Poor condition and declining.**



# Key Takeaway

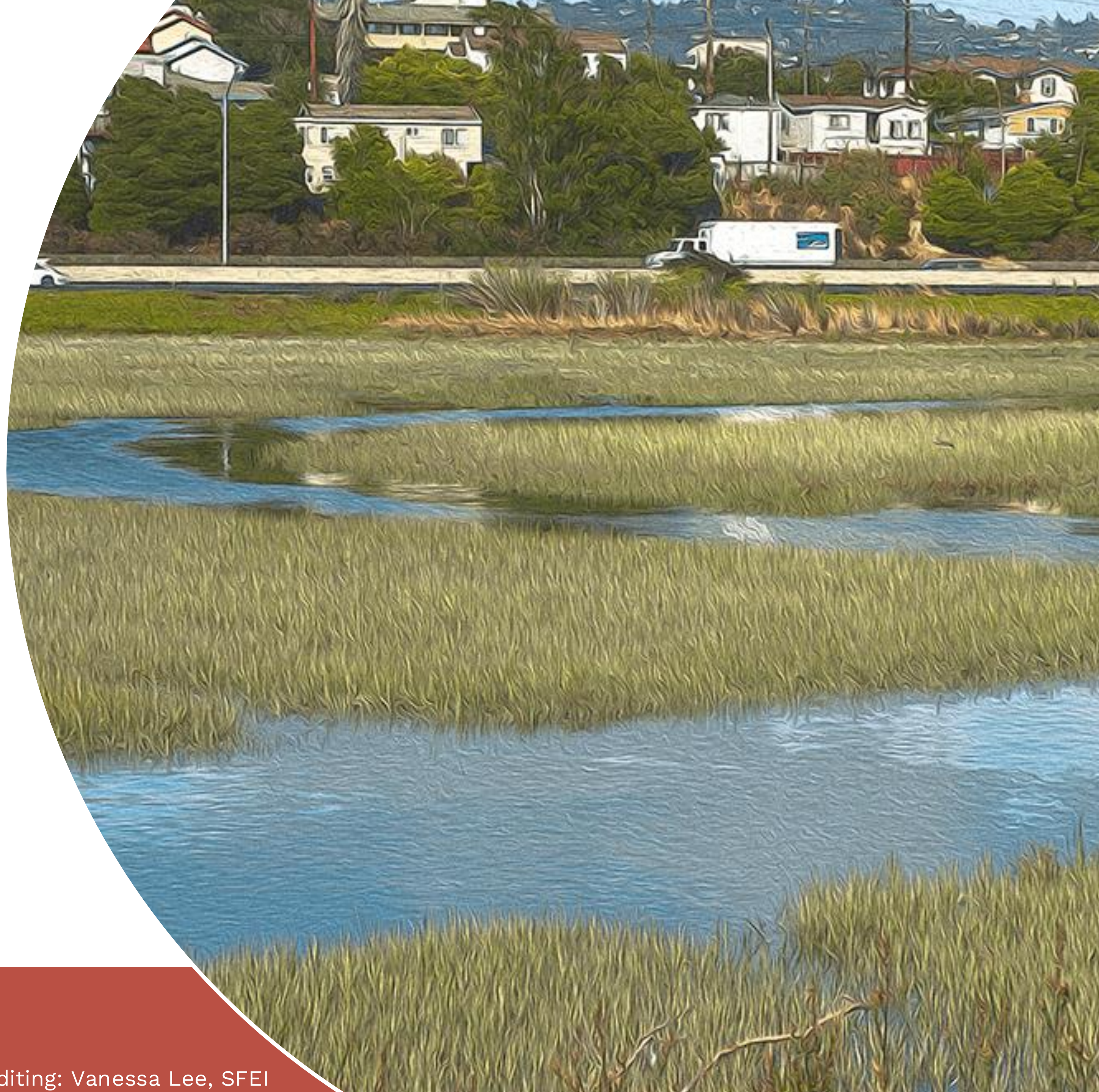
**Better (and worse) trends become apparent when looking at finer-scale data. These trends provide insight into what the ecosystem needs.**



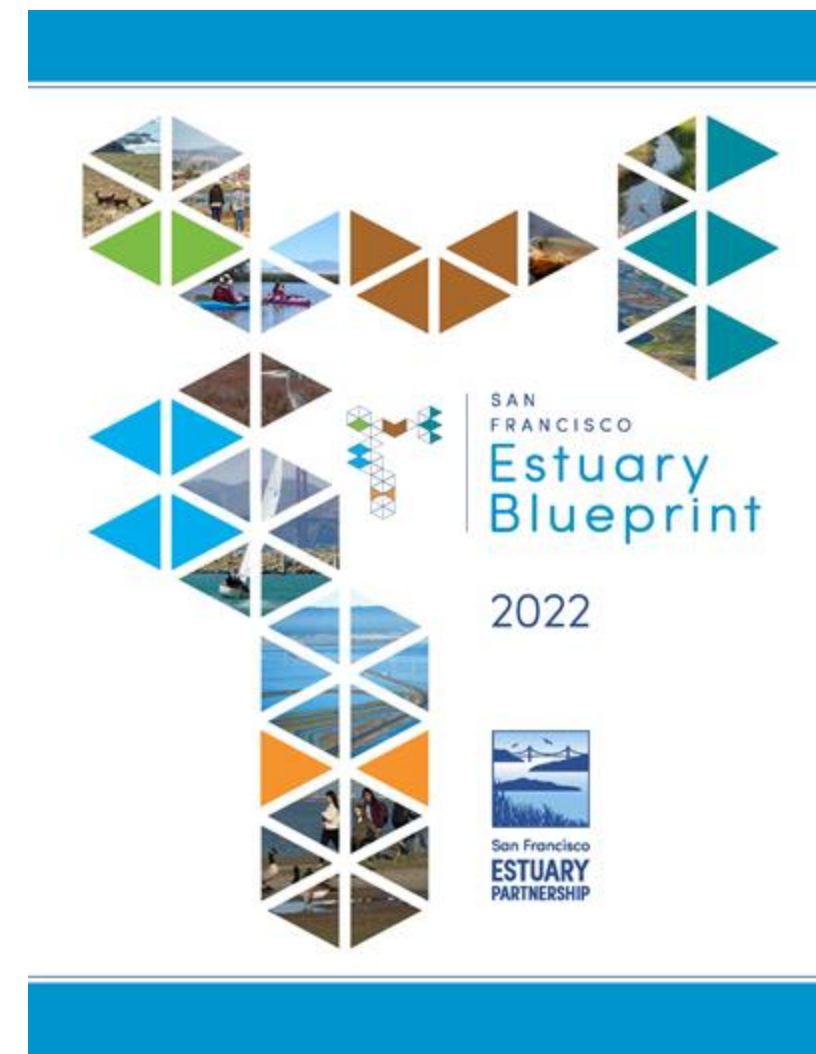
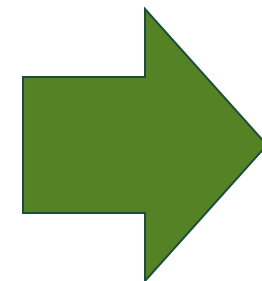
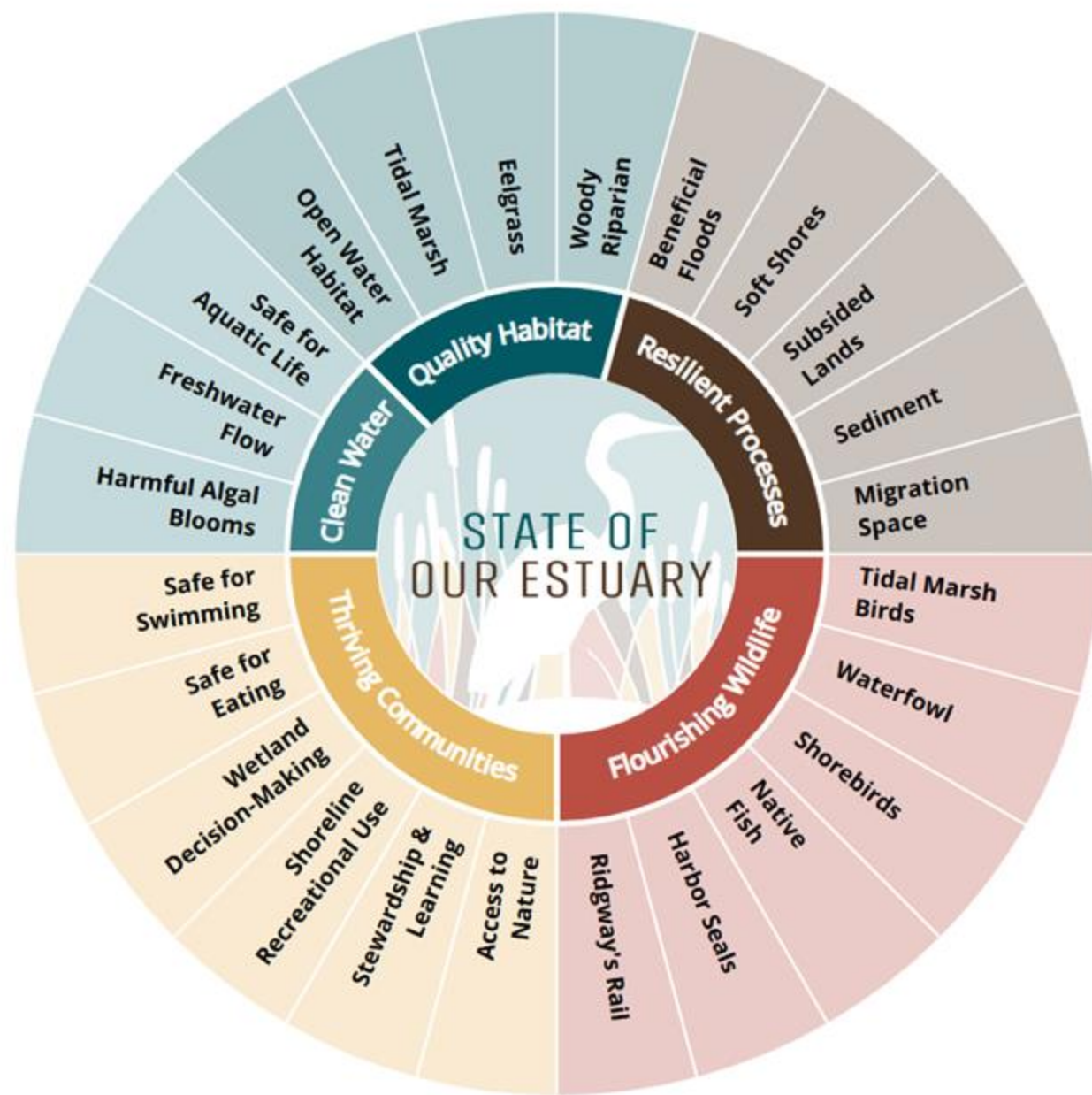
# Waterfowl



# Fueling Regional Action

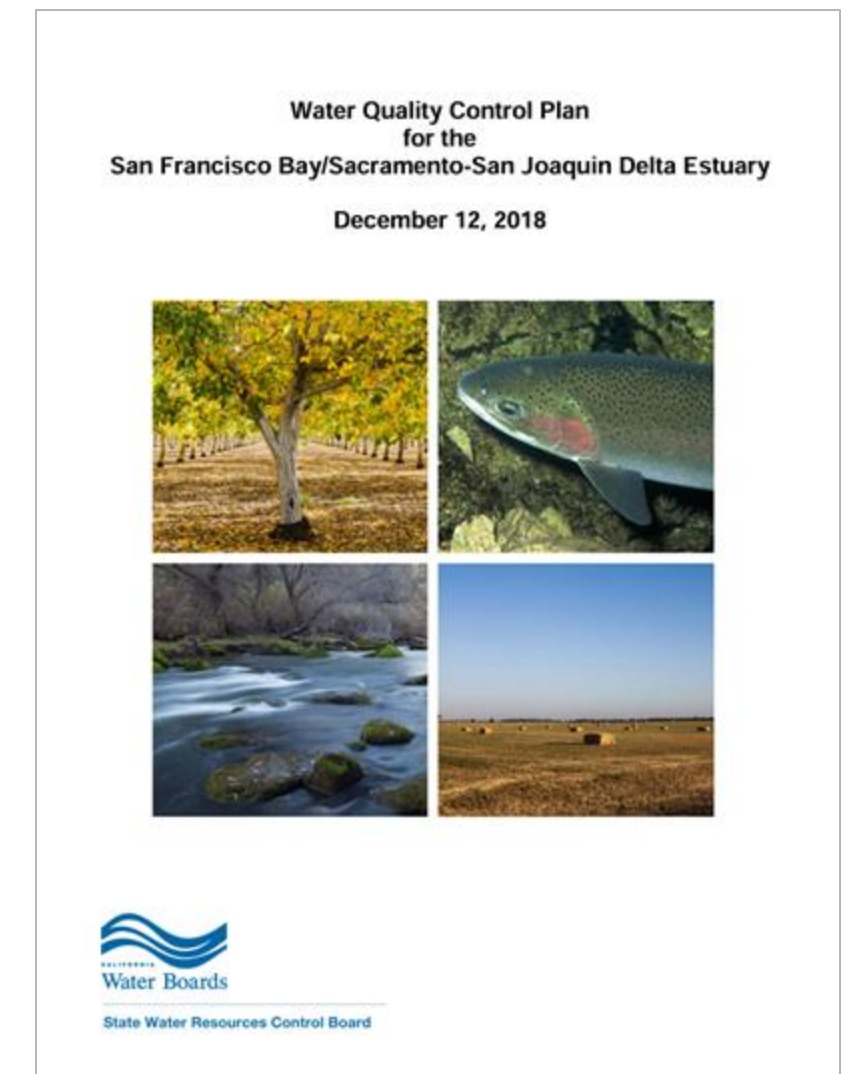
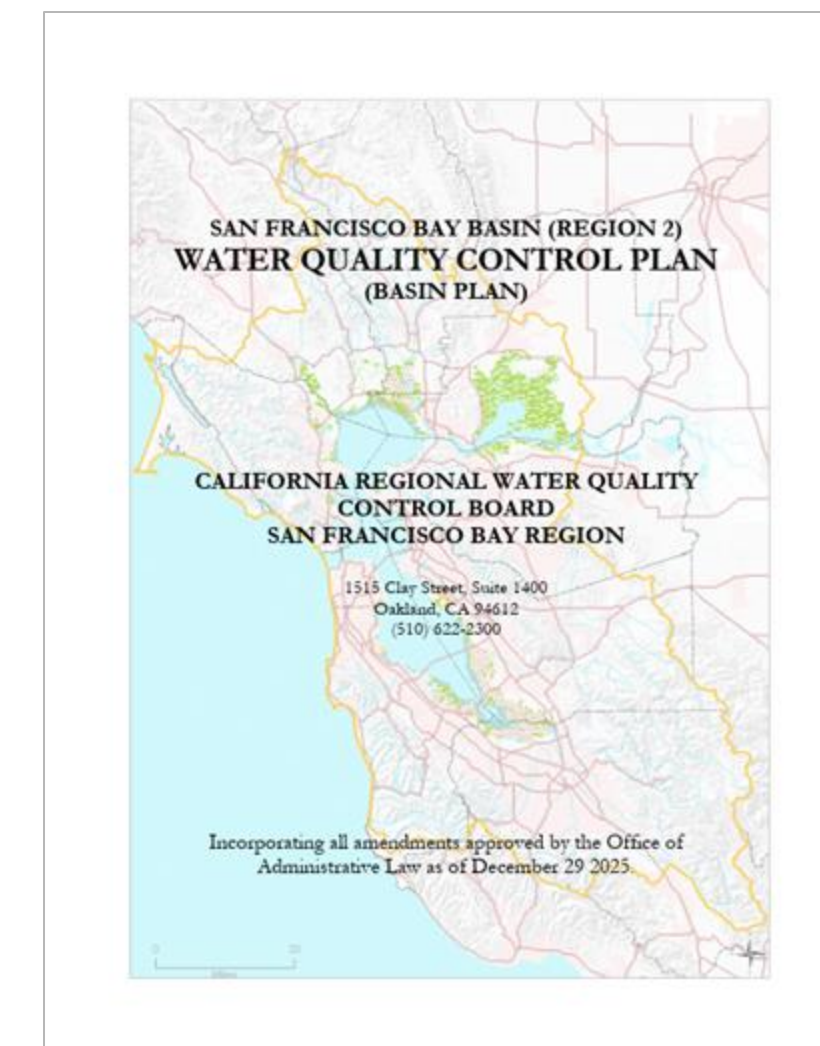
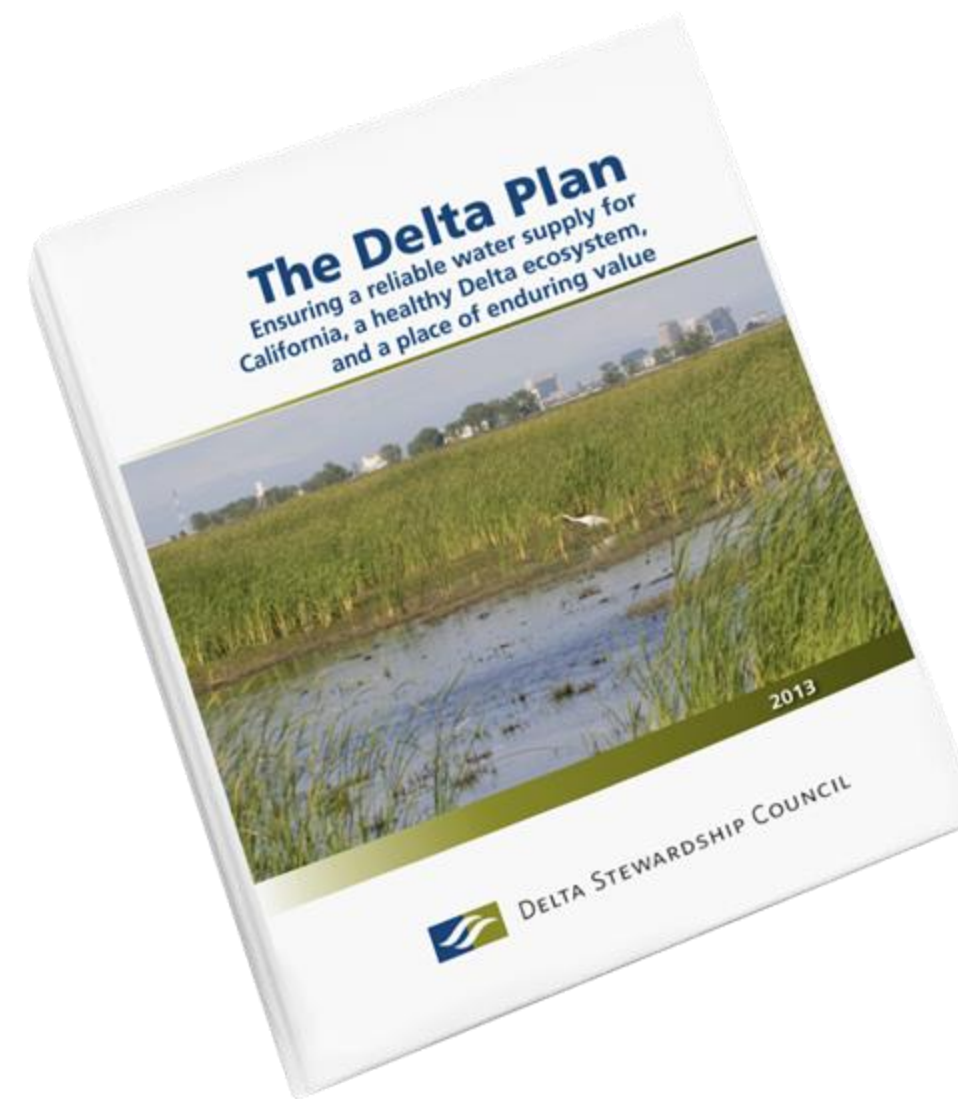
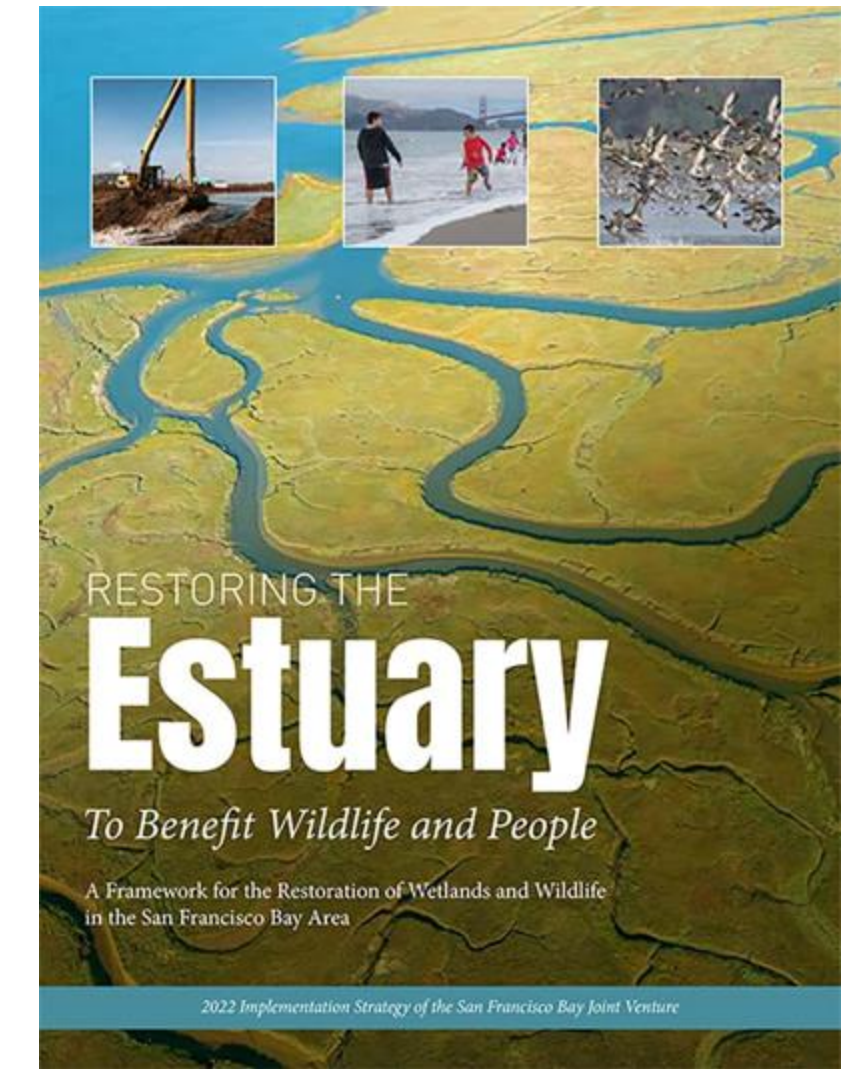


# Fueling Regional Action



**San Francisco Bay Plan**

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission



# Our (Amazing) Team

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- Nadav Nur, Point Blue
- Matthew Reiter, Point Blue
- Julian Wood, Point Blue
- Nathan Van Schmidt, SFBBO
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- Laurie Hall, Western Ecol. Research Ctr.
- Tanya Graham, Western Ecol. Research Ctr.
- Jessie Kong, Stanford University Bill Lane Center

# Thank You!



**Delta  
Stewardship  
Council**

A CALIFORNIA STATE AGENCY

Funding for this project has been provided in full or in part through an agreement with the State Water Resources Control Board. California's Clean Water State Revolving Fund is capitalized through a variety of funding sources, including grants from the United States Environmental Protection Agency and state bond proceeds. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the foregoing, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.

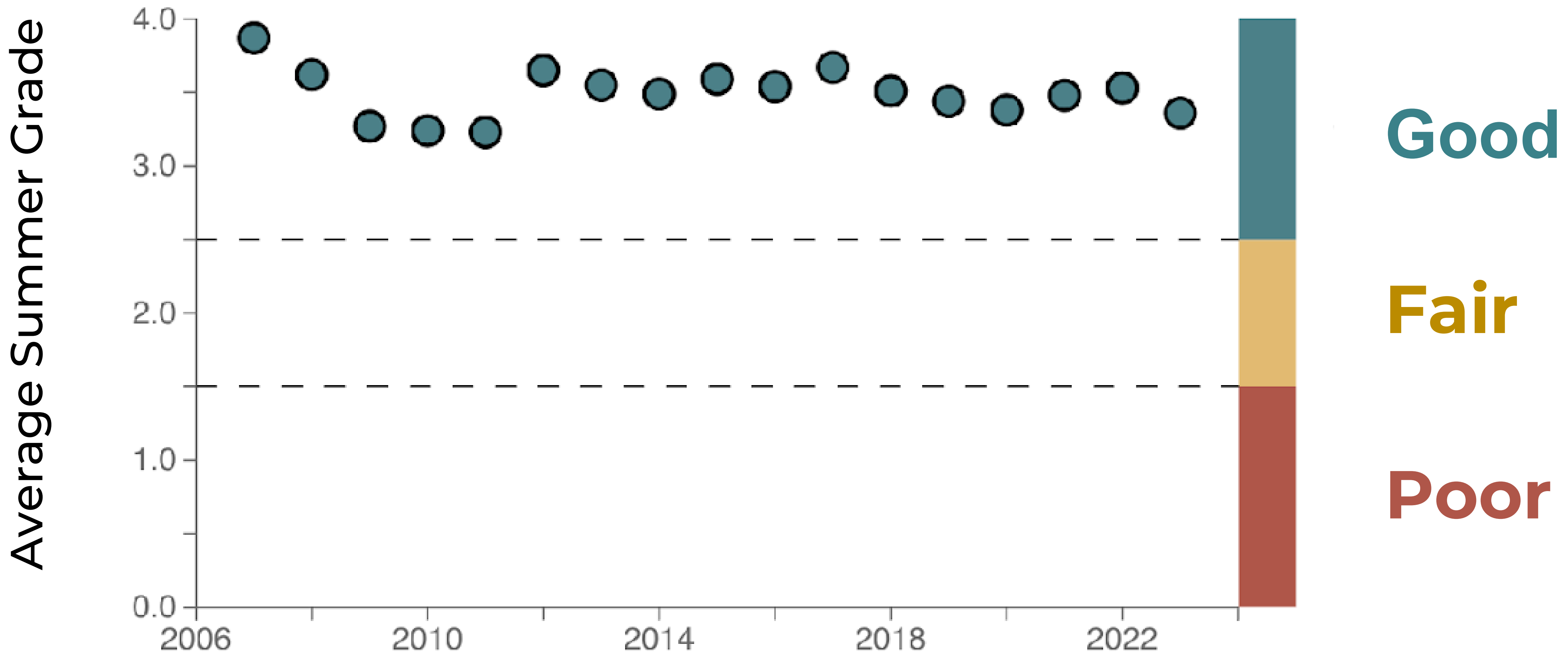
This material is based upon work supported by the Delta Stewardship Council's Delta Science Program, under Contract No. DSC23010.



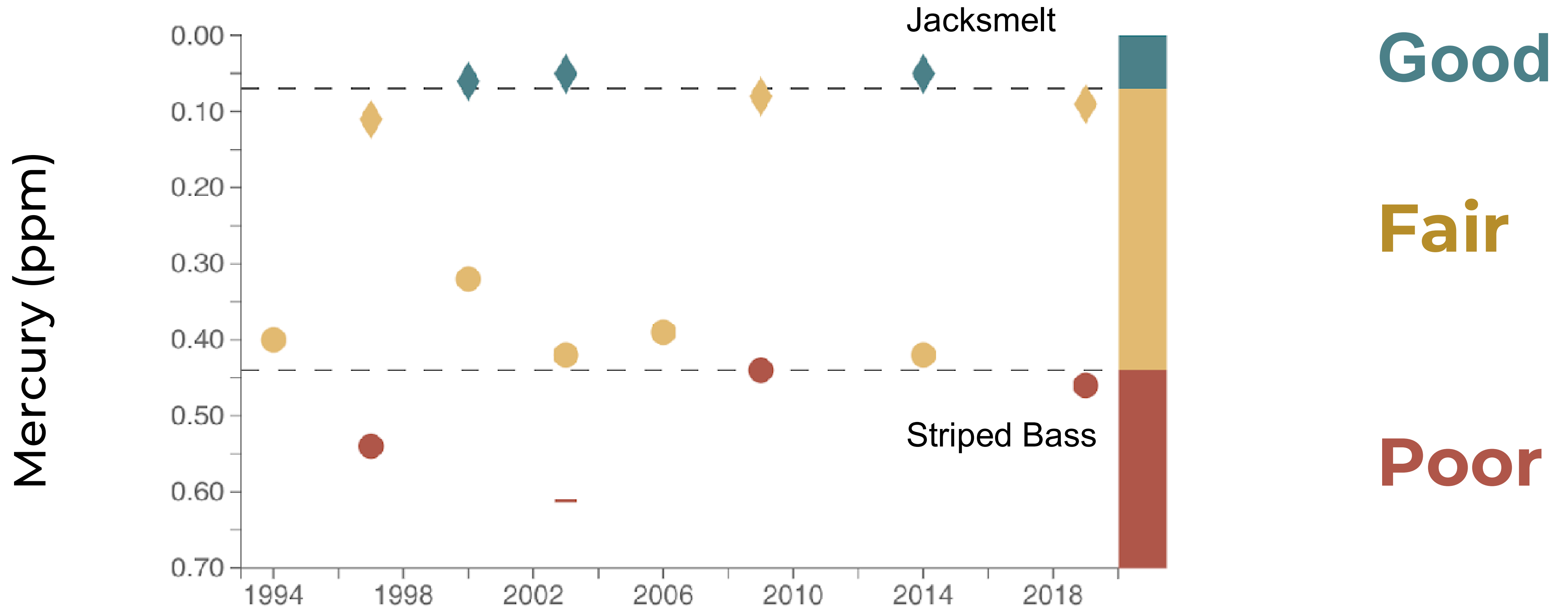
# Additional Slides

# Safe for Swimming: Beach Bacteria

Bay

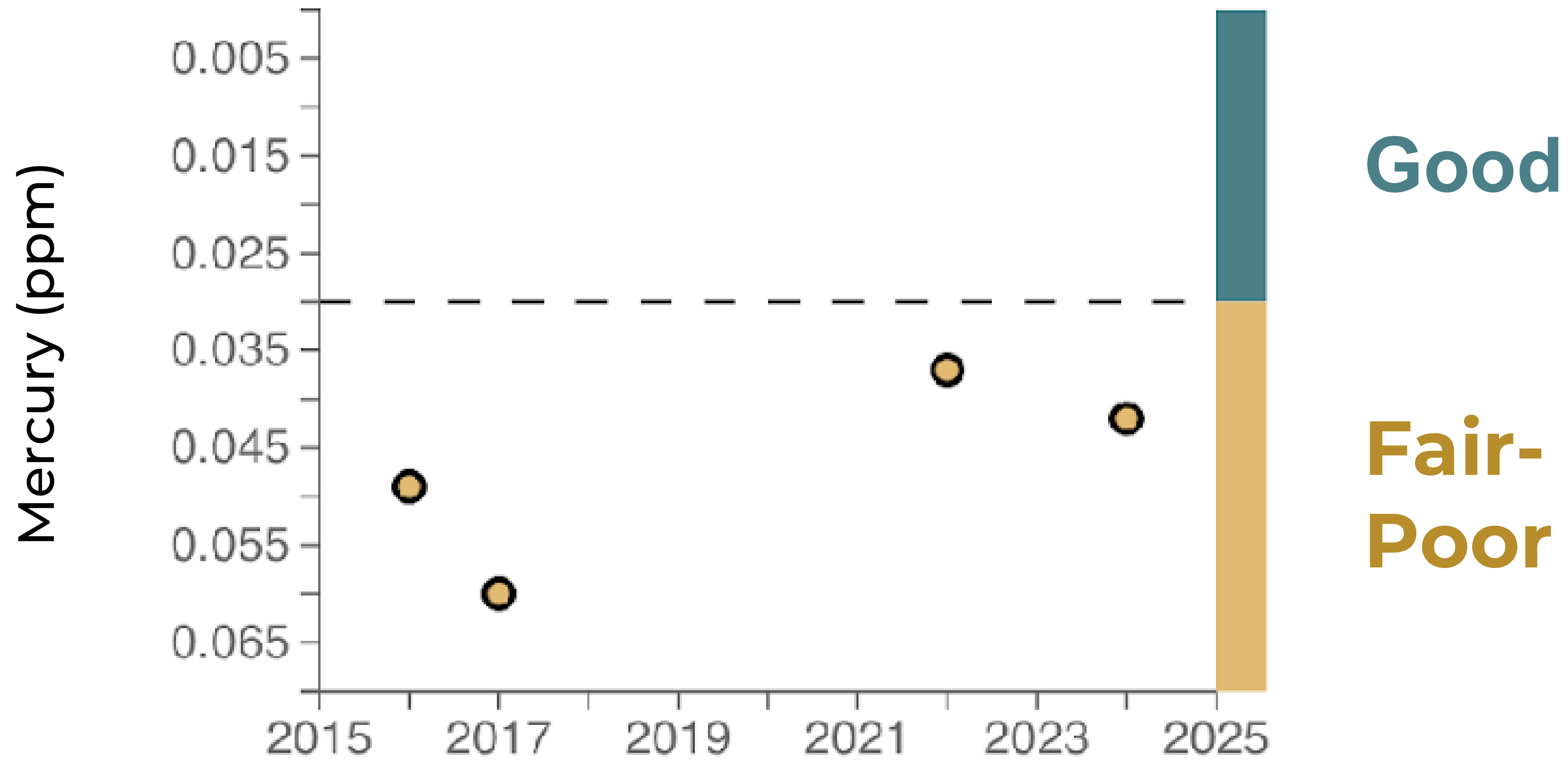


# Safe for Eating: Mercury in Sport Fish

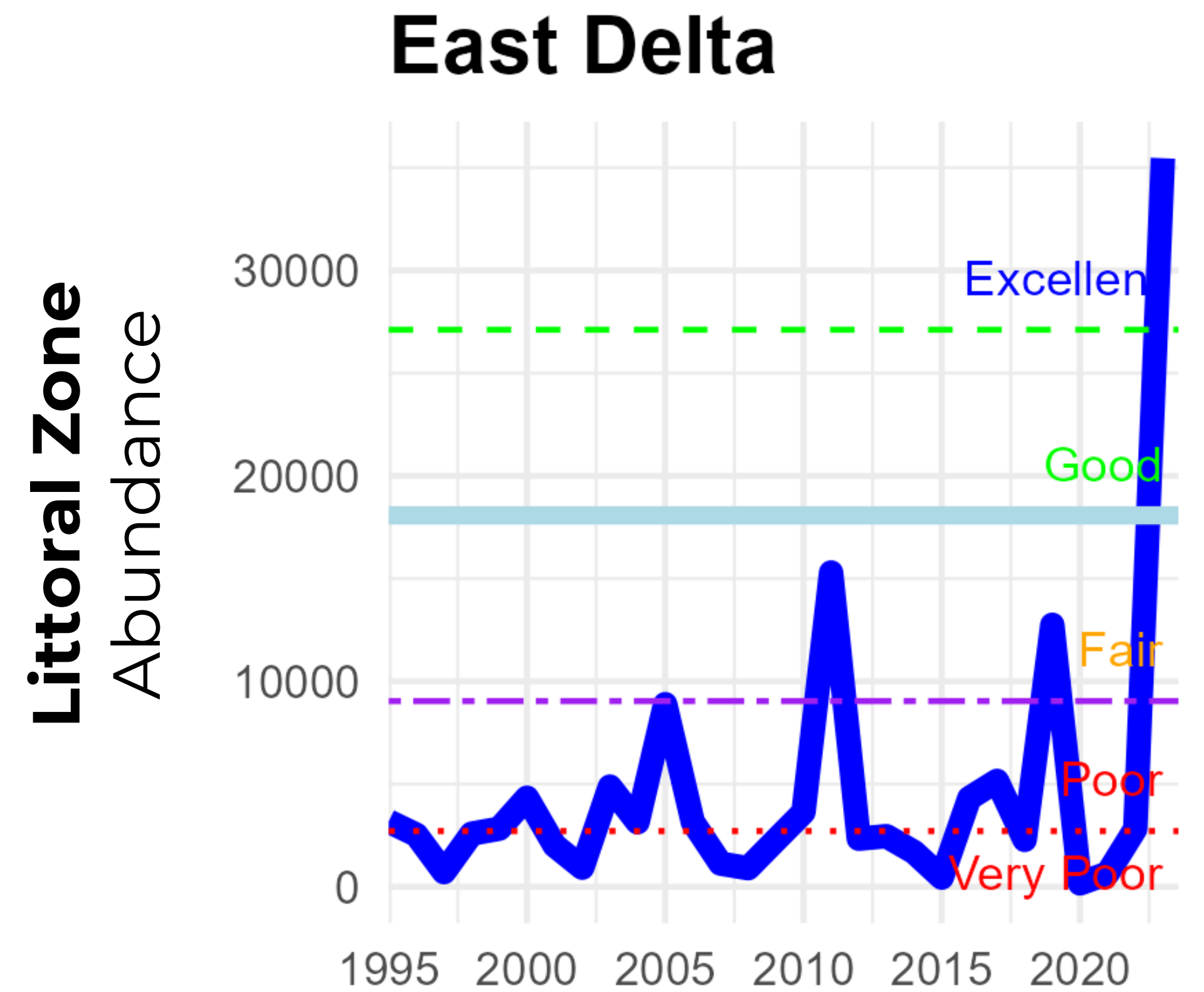


# Safe for Aquatic Life: Mercury in Prey Fish

## North Bay

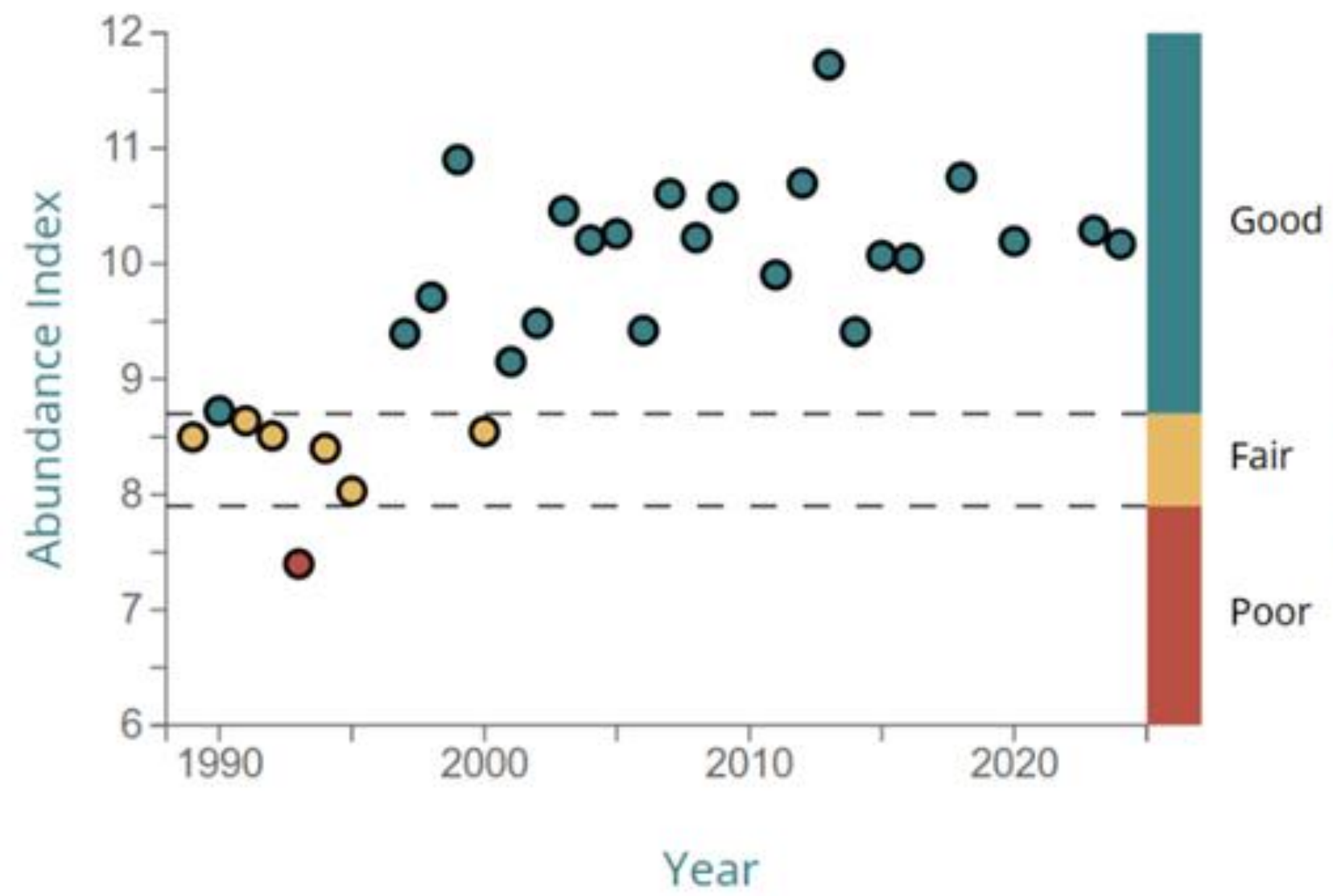


# Delta Fish Communities

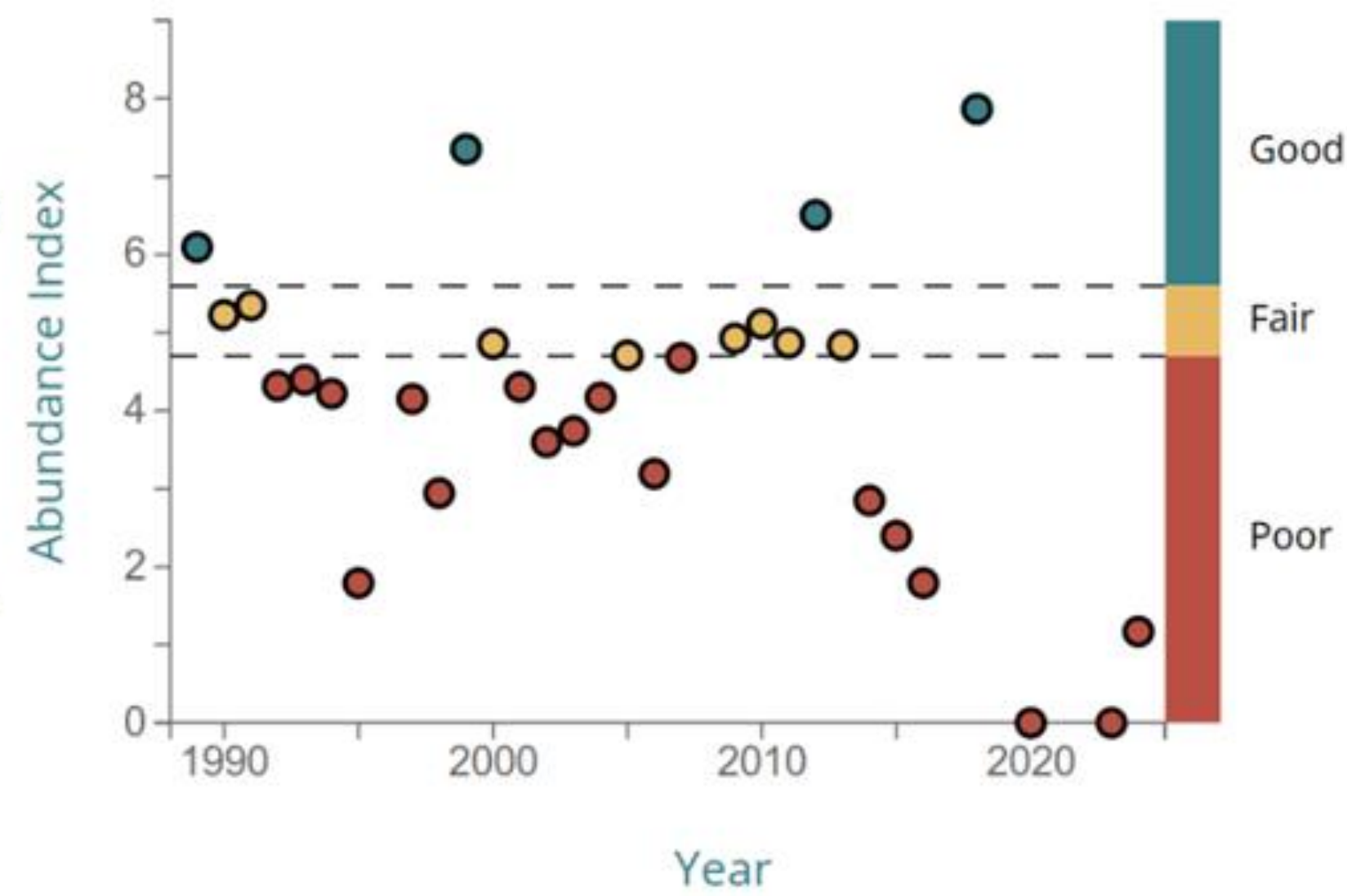


## Dabbling Ducks

### North Bay



### Central Bay



### South Bay

