

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 6, 2026

The Honorable Brian Nesvik
Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Nesvik:

We are writing to inquire about the status of \$70 million in disaster funds included in the 2025 American Relief Act to address winter storm damage within the San Francisco Bay Refuge Complex, an important part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Complex (Complex) includes seven National Wildlife Refuges (NWR). The Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR, the first urban NWR in the nation, is part of this Complex. A century and a half of urban development, pollution, and habitat destruction depleted bay habitat, eliminating more than 90 percent of shoreline wetlands and 40 percent of the bay aquatic ecosystem.¹ This NWR Complex has restored over 30,000 acres of habitat, helping to protect migratory birds and recover endangered species.²

In December 2022 and January 2023, the Complex experienced severe winter storm damage. The storms were declared a major disaster and damage was assessed by FWS Engineers in 2023. The storms damaged berms and levees that are critical to FWS's ability to manage and restore habitats and protect adjacent communities from flooding. Disaster funds would help repair these berms and levees as well as Sears Point pump stations 1 and 2, which currently protect Highway 37 from flooding. These berms and levees prevent bay waters from inundating Silicon Valley.

We understand that most of these funds have not been released to the Refuge Complex. Further, we understand that the Department of the Interior is requiring any expense action over \$50,000 to be approved by various Assistant Secretaries within the Department. This bureaucratic delay is unnecessary and inefficient, especially for dollars that were appropriated by Congress for major disasters three years ago.

We urgently request that you release these funds Congress has appropriated to the Complex to address storm damage and emergency repairs, protect adjacent communities and highways from flooding, and protect important Silicon Valley communities.

¹ Refuge Relishes Progress in San Francisco Bay Recovery, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, <https://www.fws.gov/story/refuge-relishes-progress-san-francisco-bay-recovery>.

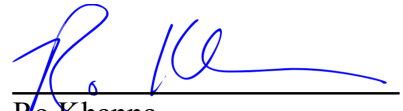
² Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/don-edwards-san-francisco-bay>

We appreciate a timely response advising us about the release of these emergency funds.

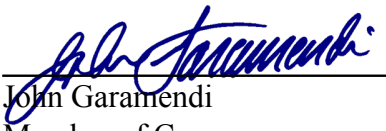
Sincerely,



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator




Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



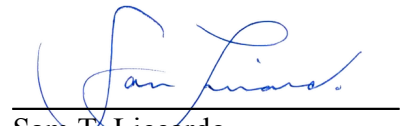
John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Sam T. Liccardo
Member of Congress