

EDITOR'S PICK

The Climate Connection

The Napa Valley Climate Connection: The Napa Sierra Club takes action on sea level rise

Scott Thomason Jul 9, 2026 1

2026 has already seen flooding on the Embarcadero in San Francisco, on the streets of San Rafael and in Marin City – not from seasonal rainstorms, but from King Tides pushing the ocean and the Bay into cities and neighborhoods in northern California. Scientists now project as much as a six-to-seven-foot sea level rise along coastal California the remainder of this century. If this happens, it will impact virtually all California coastal cities and towns, including those in the Bay Area, like southern Napa County, where the Napa River empties into the Bay along the American Canyon Wetlands.

Sea level rise goes hand in hand with global warming. There are two main reasons. First, as oceans warm, the water actually expands in volume, taking up more space. Second, ice from places like Greenland and Antarctica is melting and flowing into the ocean, raising the ocean levels.

California legislators recently passed a law that requires **every** city and town that borders any part of the ocean or bay to prepare a plan addressing the threat of sea level rise and how each municipality intends to deal with it. Many cities have already begun to prepare for the projected sea level rise.

San Francisco Bay Alive Campaign

Here in the Bay Area, the Sierra Club is providing critical support and information on sea level rise through a generous bequest provided by the Rohloff Family. Funds are earmarked specifically for the environmental protection of the San Francisco Bay. With these funds, three Bay Area Sierra Club chapters – Loma Prieta, the Bay Chapter and the Redwood Chapter, which includes Napa County – are working to preserve the Bay's health in the face of sea level rise.

Together, they created the San Francisco Bay Alive Campaign. The campaign's website provides a wealth of information. Topic links include "Threats of Sea Level Rise," "What's at Risk," "Solutions," "Educational Programs," "Blogs" and "Resources." The Bay Alive Committee, which meets by Zoom every two weeks, includes members from all three

chapters who share and report on sea level rise news and events and advocate for sea level rise adaptations to protect the Bay as well as our communities.

“San Francisco Bay is not just a pretty body of water,” said Arthur Feinstein, Bay Alive committee chair and a long-time conservation and environmental activist. “It’s wetlands, mudflats, and beaches help sustain most of the sea’s critters, including fish, shellfish, mollusks, and more.”

Seventy percent of commercial fisheries depend on wetlands, he noted.

“These habitats will all drown as the Bay rises unless we act,” he continued. “We’re dedicated to helping protect these habitats – not only critical to critters, but also to protect our communities from storm surges and sea level rise.”

A recent addition to the campaign website is a two-minute Public Service Announcement video in which six Sierra Club student interns from Napa County speak about the importance of preserving and protecting the Napa wetlands from sea level rise and what the wetlands mean to them. The students represent each of the high schools in Napa County, including Napa, Justin Sienna, Vintage and American Canyon high schools. The video was funded by the Rohloff bequest and was created and written by Napa Sierra Club Group Chair Nicholas Cheranich, a retired science teacher who lives in Napa.

“Too often, decisions about the future are made without hearing from the people who will live with the consequences the longest,” noted Cheranich. “This video gives local students an opportunity to share why wetlands matter to them and why protecting these remarkable ecosystems is so important. I hope that people will listen.”

Action Items

1. Visit the Campaign website at <https://www.sierraclub.org/sf-bay-alive>. New members are welcome to keep communities and the Bay alive and healthy.
2. Watch this video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dv62n-Gmlms>, to learn more about the importance of our wetlands.

Scott Thomason lives in American Canyon and serves as the Treasurer for the Napa Group of the Sierra Club.

Photo credit: Napa Sierra Club

Photo caption: Sierra Club interns Kate Bit, Arya Adhye, Maia Medalle, Gemma Roberts, Helena Falk at the American Canyon wetlands



Photo credit: Napa Sierra Club

Photo caption: Napa Sierra Club intern Gemma Roberts in the video “Our Bay and Its Wetlands: Our Future”

