

# Where Have All The Wetlands Gone?

One special type of wetland habitat is the **salt marsh**. You can find salt marshes along the shoreline of the San Francisco Bay.

At **high tide**, salt marshes are covered in water and you can see many birds swimming and foraging in the water. At **low tide**, salt marshes are muddy and you can see many animals finding their food in the mud.

Over the last 100 years, most of the salt marshes around the bay were drained, filled in, and built over to make space for more farms, roads, and buildings. Runoff from farms and cities carried chemicals and sewage downstream into the bay, which polluted the salt marsh.

Now, only about 10% of the salt marshes in the bay are left. As climate change causes sea level rise, the few remaining salt marshes may disappear under water. When wetlands disappear, the animals that depend on that habitat for survival also disappear.

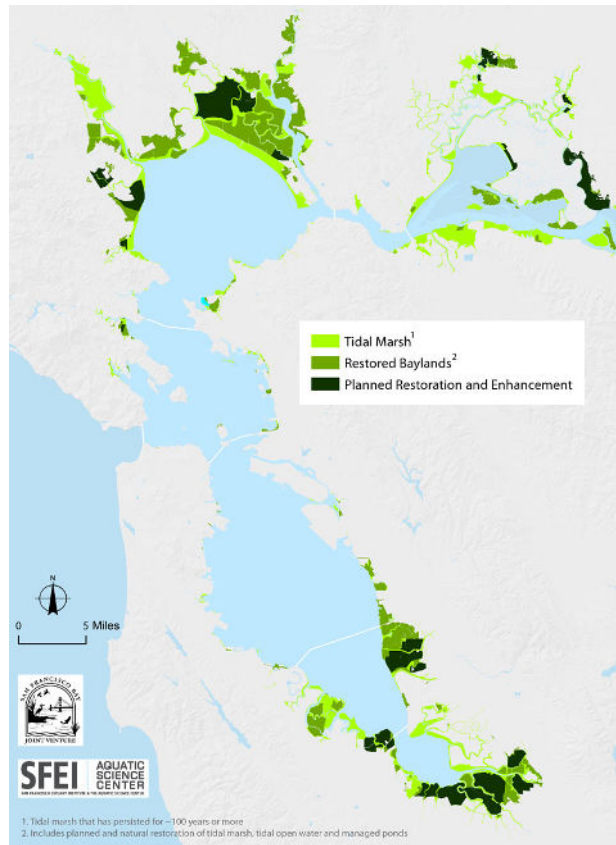
**We can work together to help the salt marsh!** Governments have passed laws to protect the environment, volunteers have cleaned up and restored wetland habitats, and kids have learned about their local ecosystems to find out ways they can help.

**Read the problems on the next page and think of a solution to help each one.**

Location of salt marshes about 200 years ago



Location of salt marshes in the present day



**Read the following problems and think of a solution to help each one.**

Wind can blow trash into streets, and water can carry trash downstream where it ends up in the salt marsh. Wildlife can accidentally eat trash that looks like food, and they can get tangled up in it too.



**I can make sure trash doesn't harm wildlife by...**

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Fertilizers and pesticides are chemicals used in gardens and farms. When it rains, these chemicals wash down storm drains and rivers, and they end up in the salt marsh and harm the plants and animals that live there. Organic gardens and farms do not use these toxic chemicals.

**I can make sure toxic chemicals do not pollute the salt marsh by...**

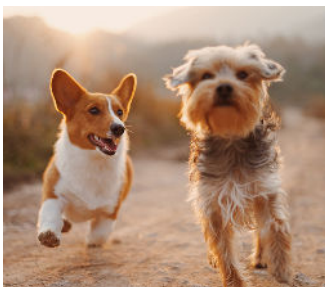
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When people step off trail they squish plants, compact the soil, and make it harder for new plants to grow. They might also accidentally step on small animals' homes.



**I can protect the plants and animals in the wetland habitat by...**

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Dogs that are off leash might chase wildlife and scare them away from their food source, their nest, or their babies. When people leave their dog's doo-doo bags on the ground, it pollutes the habitat.

**I can keep wildlife safe by...**

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When we learn about wildlife and the environment, we find more solutions to have a positive impact. Every time we make choices that have a positive impact on the earth, other people see our actions and may decide to follow our lead.

**I can be a leader and set an example for others to follow by...**

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