

# Sutter's Landing Solar Project-Stockpile Update

12/30/12

Dale T. Steele

I took a look around the site of the proposed solar project at Sutter's landing recently. The former stockpile site is graded and leveled with no vegetation. To the west, the Dellar property has been filled and leveled with this soil and was seeded with grass which is growing in now. Several retention basins have been constructed on the property too. The property is fenced but unlocked. There are several homeless encampments on the area closest to the RR tracks.



Looking south towards former stockpile site & RR tracks



Looking towards river across Dellar property

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This map gives an idea of the scale of this work and the relationship of the area to the rest of the park



Landfill Mound

Dellar Property

Stockpile Site

A site walk is being organized with a group (Cory, Betsy, Robert, Jude, city staff, and me) to discuss the habitat concerns and the design elements of the project. The idea is to come up with ideas on the design elements that will make the project compatible with the park. The proposed date was 12/21/12 but will be rescheduled after the new year. A bigger long range view is needed at this point.

In 2011, local groups including Friends of the Riverbanks and citizens formed the Friends of Sutter's Landing Park out of concern and passion for this area. This group developed a vision for preservation & restoration of the area which was critical in securing \$ 1.5 million in Prop 84 funds to improve the park. The group applied this information when city operations at the park destroyed valuable riparian habitat through a constructive committee effort. Unfortunately, planning for the current grading/fill and efforts to develop solar facilities within the park did not follow this process. Not yet anyway.



I came across this old photo looking towards the park from the site of the original landing by Sutter. It's pretty amazing to look back in time like this! With enough vision & follow through the future for Sutter's Landing Park will look good too



Having arrived in Mexican California, Sutter obtained permission from local governing officials to establish a colony in the interior. He soon chartered the schooner *Isabella* and two other boats, each loaded with provisions, tools, seeds, and guns, to journey up the Sacramento River. Leaving in early August 1839, the small fleet turned east at the mouth of the American River and landed near today's Twenty-eighth and C Streets on August 12. (Courtesy Eleanor McClatchy Collection.)

**A trail to the river & the past**

## The North Forty at Sutter's Landing Park!

When we moved to Sacramento in 2006, it didn't take me long to enjoy how close we were to the rivers running through it. I had been looking forward to that after commuting to and from Sacramento for years and growing up and later living in areas that had similar river areas to get away to.

Soon afterwards I discovered the area directly north of our part of midtown, and saw that it was disturbed from years of dumping and then neglect. In spite of that or perhaps because of it, wildlife continued to make good use of what became the "north forty".

This large open area connects to the river to the north, better protected habitat to the west and to the east with existing Sutter's Landing Park. The railroad and neighborhood to the form a boundary to the south. As I and others have come to learn, the connections this area makes with these other areas is a big part of its overall importance as habitat and open space here.

I first followed the activities of the many ground squirrels and jack rabbits that very seen from all angles around the area. Up closer, the ground is more uneven and provides refuge and lookouts mixed in with the large open areas where there were flocks of meadowlarks, pigeons, and mixed flocks of blackbirds and sparrows foraging across the weedy grasslands and wet areas. Among all of this activity were the the hunters like me. Above I saw white-tailed kites, red-tailed hawks, northern harriers, kestrels, Swainson's hawks, a solitary burrowing owl, barn owls, great horned owls and more. Many of these raptors nested nearby in our neighborhood trees or the riparian canopy beyond. The fact that they continue to do points to the ongoing value of this area and the role it plays in the overall uniqueness of Sutter's Landing.

About this time I met Robert Swell who like me had been drawn from his home nearby to join the outdoor fun and adventure found here. We compared notes and I filled him in on my observations as he was absorbing them and getting out the camera he'd made a career with before and putting it to new uses, documenting what this forgotten area held as we promoted it as part of our very rich neighborhood to others there.

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More recently, FORB and others have focused on the river area and former landfill mound which are more accessible and provide easier viewing of the wildlife and habitat in the area. Meanwhile the "north forty" has continued to function to provide foraging for these same wildlife which continue to nest mostly in adjacent areas. Disturbances ranging from a very large homeless encampment one year and ongoing smaller ones, fires, dumping have also continued.

Along with FORB and others, Friends of Sutter's Landing Park came together with the goal to create a long term vision for the entire area. One that insures that these now too scarce wildlife and nature values continue to be available in our city, community and beyond for future generations. Much thought and energy went into starting this process which has been shared with many others and used very effectively to secure a grant to restore and enhance an area of the park now getting underway. This same information and vision was used to constructively deal with some unnecessary loss of scarce riparian habitat in the park by city staff.

Unfortunately, the same level of communication, coordination, and problem solving have not been applied lately in respect to filling in areas of the Dellar property aka "north forty" and the former stockpile area that still connects the open space and habitat to the west with the park. It's not too late to have a larger long range vision for this entire area which remains a unique and valuable natural resource for Sacramento

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DL 7. Steele 12-28-12 (Prepared on an iPad mini.)

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My comments to city staff about the proposed solar project & stockpile site. My review of the latest Bio survey have also been sent to the city & others and is available.

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From: Dale Steele <daletsteele@yahoo.com>  
Subject: Re: Conergy Solar Park biological site visit  
Date: December 9, 2012 9:52:50 PM PST  
To: Dana Allen <DAllen@cityofsacramento.org>  
Cc: JP Tindell <JPTindell@cityofsacramento.org>, Lori &  
Sean Ward <grisward@sbcglobal.net>, Robert Sewell  
<rlsewell@earthlink.net>, Frederick Weiland  
<flweiland@yahoo.com>, Corey Brown  
<coreymarcy@earthlink.net>, Stella Levy  
<stellaclevy@gmail.com>, Richard Cohen  
<rjcohen@sbcglobal.net>, Laurie Litman  
<llitman@pacbell.net>, "judelam@sbcglobal.net  
(judelam@sbcglobal.net)" <judelam@sbcglobal.net>,  
Steve Cohn <scohn@cityofsacramento.org>

Hi Dana,

I'm submitting my comments to you on the biological evaluation for the proposed solar project at Sutter's Landing Park. I'm also attaching a copy of the report with my highlights and comments included.

I was disappointed to find that this biological report did not include any mention or evaluation of the remediation work that was underway at the adjacent Dellar property. I understand that this has been treated as a separate project by the city but by using the stockpiled soil from Sutter's Landing Park the two activities are linked and should be evaluated together. I'm not aware of any separate biological evaluation that was done for the soil filling and grading

work done on the Dellar property. Neither of these activities acknowledges the [long term vision that Friends of Sutter's Landing and other local groups produced](#). Instead, the city continues to treat each project separately and without any apparent long range vision for the park. This is disappointing and unnecessary. There is considerable public interest and a number of local groups stand ready to work with city staff. Meanwhile, the lack of a long term commitment by the city is resulting in a loss of habitat and the opportunity to enhance existing wildlife values on the park.

Once again, the biological evaluation work done on a proposed solar project at Sutter's Landing Park has neglected to take into account the considerable amount of [wildlife information that has been gathered by Friends of the River Banks](#) and others as part of the ongoing activities at the park. Examples of this oversight are seen in the lack of reference for several sensitive species that are known to use Sutter's Landing Park including the proposed solar project area and the Dellar property. I've highlighted these species in the attached document. This biological evaluation was not carried out at the right time of year or in enough detail to fully consider the impacts that could result from this project. This is even more true for the fill and grading work that was carried out at the Dellar property using stockpiled soil from Sutter's Landing Park which was moved to clear space for the proposed solar project. I expect the city to redo this evaluation and expand it to iden-



tify the impacts from the use of the stockpiled soil before the solar project goes any further.

I've raised these same questions and concerns in writing previously in response to the new solar project including the need to consider the activities at the Dellar property too because these discretionary actions taken by the city included impacts to wildlife and their habitats as well as prepared the area for the future solar project.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding my comments. I would like you to acknowledge receiving my comments and let me know how they will be addressed as part of this proposed project. I'm sharing my comments with other organizations and individuals concerned about the future of Sutter's Landing Park.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the biological evaluation for the proposed solar project at Sutter's Landing Park.

Sincerely,

Dale T. Steele

On Nov 19, 2012, at 3:10 PM, Dana Allen  
<[DAllen@cityofsacramento.org](mailto:DAllen@cityofsacramento.org)> wrote:

Hi Dale

Attached is the Biological Resources Evaluation prepared by Ascent Environmental for the site. Please let me know if you have any comments.

Thank you very much, have a great holiday!

Dana

**From:** Dale Steele [<mailto:daletsteele@yahoo.com>]

**Sent:** Sunday, October 14, 2012 11:24 AM

**To:** Dana Allen

**Cc:** Tom Buford; Sue Brown; Steve Cohn; Robert Sewell; Frederick Weiland; InfoWright Litman; Sally Walters

**Subject:** Re: Conergy Solar Park biological site visit

**Importance:** High

Hi Dana,

At our Friends of the River event today we learned that a number of folks representing organizations that are keenly interested in Sutter's Landing park and the proposed solar project are unable to make this meeting next week. We request that you schedule it during the following week instead and work with us ahead of time to select a date rather than just inform us after the fact.

Thanks, Dale

On Oct 9, 2012, at 11:39 AM, Dana Allen  
<[DAllen@cityofsacramento.org](mailto:DAllen@cityofsacramento.org)> wrote:

Hello,

In June of this year, we received comments from you, or organization, concerning the proposed Conergy Solar Park Project at the Sutter's Landing Regional Park. This email is to inform you that we have a scheduled biological site visit with Linda Leeman of Ascent Environmental. Ms. Leeman, along with members of the city staff working on this project, will be meeting at the project site on October 17 from 12:00 to 1:00pm, to observe the site and discuss the biological habitat. I would like to invite you to attend, since you have expressed interest in the project during the project's environmental scoping period.

Please let me know if you can attend, or if you have any questions. Thank you.

## Dana L. Allen

Associate Planner

Environmental Planning Services

Community Development Department

300 Richards Blvd., 3rd Floor

Sacramento, CA 95811

(916) 808-2762

<Conergy Solar\_Biological Resources\_11.16.12.pdf.pdf>

*My annotated review of the recent Bio Survey for the proposed solar project is available too..*