Yosemite Watershed

Natural History

The two hills that frame Yosemite Basin - Hunters Point to the north and Bayview Hill to the south - are both part of the Franciscan formation (200-80 million years old) but are comprised of quite different rock types. Hunters Point is mainly serpentine, a rare greenish rock rich in magnesium and iron, while Bayview Hill contains shale and chert, a common red-colored rock created from the settling of deep-sea shells. The intervening valley, however, rests atop fertile sedimentary soils that made the region especially conducive to farming in the 1800s. Silty sandstone from the Colma formation was deposited before the last ice age, between 80,000-120,000 years ago.

A 2004 wildlife survey of Yosemite Slough observed 118 bird species, 14 butterfly species, several reptile and mammal species, as well as harbor seals and California sea lions.

Shoreline Morphology

Pre - 1850
Yosemite Creek or Slough once ran through what are now the Portola and Bayview Districts, originating in today’s McLaren Park at Yosemite Marsh and Michal Lake. The creek entered the San Francisco Bay via today’s South Basin or Yosemite Slough.

1915
Named in 1868 allegedly after the India Rice Mill Company located there, India Basin was gradually filled as industrial, meat-packing, and dry-dock facilities developed.

1929
The Hunters Point Naval Shipyard drastically altered the shoreline in the early 1900s, dumping an estimated 1 million cubic yards of debris into the mud flats, much of which was contaminated. The Navy is in the process of remediating these soils and improving the shoreline.

2013
This is a map of the neighborhoods and shoreline today.

Current Projects

The Yosemite Slough Wetlands project will restore 12 acres of seasonal wetlands and construct a link to the Bay Trail through the project area.

Hunters Point Shipyard is being redeveloped into a mixed-use residential, commercial, and office project. The City is pushing for significant sustainable infrastructure measures in the new construction, such as green power and green infrastructure.

The SFPUC is planning a project to “daylight” the historic Yosemite Creek along the periphery of McLaren Park to help reduce stormwater entering the combined sewer system.

Bayview District, 1924
In the 1850s, the Bayview District was settled by Portuguese, Italian, and Irish vegetable farmers who, along with farmers in Visitacion Valley, provided a large portion of San Francisco’s fruits and vegetables. Many African Americans settled here to work at Hunters Point Shipyard during World War II, but were prevented from moving elsewhere by restrictive covenants.

Hunters Point Fisherman, 1927
In the mid-1800s as a result of the Gold Rush, southeastern San Francisco was settled by immigrants who established the area’s agriculture and aquaculture industries. Chinese fishermen in Hunters Point established shrimp farms, and fishing along the shoreline became popular. The development of the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard evicted much of these Chinese shrimping settlements. In 1867 it became the first West Coast dry dock for ship repair, and from 1941-1974 the shipyard was actively operated by the US Navy. In 1993 it became a redevelopment area, and the 2004 Conveyance Agreement formalized the Navy’s cleanup and transfer of the 500-acre shipyard to the City of San Francisco.

Candlestick Point, 1959
Candlestick Point is said to be named after the long-billed curlew or “candlestick bird”, a wading shorebird with a long curved beak once common to the area. This bird was hunted nearly to extinction in the 1950s and is no longer common. Constructed in 1958, notoriously windy Candlestick Park was not only a baseball and football stadium, but also hosted the last live performance of the Beatles in 1966.