

MARE ISLAND SHORELINE HERITAGE PRESERVE



Logo/Art: Carlo Carlucci

- WALK
- PLEIN-AIR PAINT
- PHOTOGRAPH
- DISCOVER
- LEARN
- PICNIC
- VIEW SCENIC VISTAS
- CONTEMPLATE
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Newsnote and Calendar for Mare Island

July-August 2008

**“Getting to Know You” and The Mare Faire**

Songs come to Myrna Hayes’ mind as she visits The Preserve and works with people to realize the dream of a park at the “original” Mare Island. What better way to celebrate it than a Mare Faire? **Page 2**

**All About Second Saturday Access and Volunteering**  
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Photo: Gerry Cortez

**Second Nature**

Brian Collett’s observations about the tenacity of nature to return and restore after more than a century and a half of major changes to the Island by the Navy, are intriguing, remarkable and hopeful. **Page 5**

**News Briefs**

Preserve Advisory Board, Benicia Plein Air Group and a new Trail Guide **Page 6**



Photo: Brian Collett

**Mare Island Calendar**

All of Arc Ecology’s outings, programs and events at Mare Island through the Flyway Festival in February 2009. Send us your email or mailing address to receive updates and your ideas for additions. **Page 7**

**More about the Mare Faire and Directions to The Preserve**

Check out our website: [www.mareislandpreserve.org](http://www.mareislandpreserve.org) **Page 8**



# Second Saturday Access Day

**WHY ARC ECOLOGY HOSTS SECOND SATURDAY ACCESS DAYS**

The Preserve is planned as parkland for use by all Californians on property granted for public trust purposes to the City of Vallejo by the California Legislature through the California State Lands Commission. In response to requests for regular public access to the site and due to our commitment to the property being developed as a public trust park for the benefit of all Californians, we host escorted public access to The Preserve once a month until The Preserve is fully developed.



Photo: John Klycinski

**The existing paved roads make great hiking and biking trails for exploring. A recent visitor noted, “The Preserve is a Bay Area place that is hidden in plain sight.”**

Through an arrangement with the City of Vallejo and the U.S. Navy, guided outings to the former Naval Ammunition Depot have been an integral part of the **San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival—a project of Arc Ecology** for the past 12 years.

We have hosted outings at The Preserve on a monthly basis beginning with the **Mare Island Naval Ammunition Depot 150<sup>th</sup>**

**Anniversary Commemorative Celebration in August 2007.**

During the two days an estimated 1100-1400 people visited the proposed park through a cooperative arrangement between the U.S. Navy, the City of Vallejo and Arc Ecology. We were assisted in a huge way by employees of Weston Solutions, Inc., our major sponsor. They were joined in sponsor and in-kind support by ECC, Lennar Mare Island, CS Marine Constructors, Hertz Equipment Rental–Benicia, Vallejo Garbage Service, Greater Vallejo Recreation District, and Sue Lemmon. These good folks and our tremendous team of volunteers who did everything from cutting the cake and serving champagne to guiding outings and being park rangers provided a rich experience of this stunning part of the Bay we are so privileged to have amidst us.

## “GETTING TO KNOW YOU...

*...Getting to know all about you.” I find myself singing a few bars of Oscar Hammerstein’s tune sometimes when I am at Mare Island and especially the Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve. The **Star-Spangled Banner**, our national anthem composed by Francis Scott Key is linked to us by his family ties to Anna Key Turner, his daughter, and her husband Daniel Turner and their family, buried in our cemetery. This year is the 150th year since the founding of the Mare Island Naval Cemetery. A bugler will play **Taps** during our August 9th ceremony to honor those buried here. They died in service of our country and even other nations. Some are buried with family members—wives, husbands and children.*

*Lori Palmer Seward lived here during WWII. She tells that Frank Loesser’s “**Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition**” was popular at the Naval Ammunition Depot then. It reached number 1 on the Billboard chart in 1943. Do you know its roots?*

*The days of bomb-making are past. The lighthouse is gone. There are no new graves in the cemetery. This is a new day; a time for new people, stories and songs. Yet, part of our new traditions are remembrances of the people and stories of the past. In the words of Chaplain John Berger, in his invocation at the 150th anniversary of the Naval Ammunition Depot: “...God...Today we are made aware of the making of a new day. It would seem to me that the mission of yesterday would merge with that pastoral delight created by you—in a new day fit for your blessing and for our tomorrows. But, let us not forget to remember—to remember to remember: the lives and dreams and hopes of those who lived and labored here.”*

*In your visits you will learn of the original Island’s past—its people and purpose during the 150 years it served the American people and before that, the Spanish and Native Americans. Experience the splendor and simply beauty of this serene place and you might also sing “**Getting to Know You**”. I hope that you will “remember—to remember to remember”, return often and find your own story and your own song here.*

— Myrna Hayes, Volunteer, Arc Ecology

## Mare Faire Celebrates the “Original” Island

August is just around the corner and that means that plans are being made right now for our 2nd annual summer gathering to celebrate and commemorate the part of Mare Island that is the original



Photo: Brian Collett

island – before the Navy added nearly 5,000 acres to the Island by filling the bay and river, creating a peninsula. What is so special about the original Island? First, it’s old. Old enough that maybe as early as 2,000 years ago, Native Americans were visiting, fishing, hunting, gathering food and likely living here.

## The Mares of Mare Island

This is the part of Mare Island where the Island got its name. Whether you’ve heard the story of how General Vallejo’s favorite white mare was stranded here after a storm capsized the barge she was on and she swam to shore leading him to name the Island in her honor – Isla de la Yegua; or you like the story of the wily wild mare who led a herd of elk about the grassy hills, evading sailors attempting to get close enough for a shot at them, until eventually “they faded from sight in the morass inaccessible to human footsteps”; or maybe the vision of Spanish mares and their foals feeding on the abundant food available here for them and their young, rings true for you...this is the where the Mares of Mare Island live still – if only in our imaginations.



## The Island Now

The island that was, is now a very different place. It has been sculpted and carved by the U.S. Navy for its purposes as the first naval arsenal in the Pacific, with magazines and bunkers for the storage of

munitions and piers and docks from which to load those munitions onto ships for transport and use throughout the Pacific. A handful of residences provided housing for its essential personnel in that operation. Homes were built here for the people who kept the light at the lighthouse, planted and mowed the hay for the horses that did the work and the cattle which provided food. Even the postman for Mare Island lived here! Sometime along the way, a little more than 150 years ago, actually, the Navy started burying its dead here, too.

## Let’s Celebrate and Commemorate

Even without all these stories, the original island of Mare Island has some of the most breathtaking views and scenery in California and an amazing assortment of natural treasures. What’s not to celebrate? So, come August 8 and 9, that’s just what we plan to do. We hope you will join us for guided outings led by naturalists, archeologists, historians and even some who have called this island home. We especially hope that you will plan to bring family and friends and commemorate with us the 150th anniversary of the U.S. Navy’s first cemetery in the Pacific and the 64th anniversary of an important part of our



Photo: John Klycinski

nation’s military history that took place here, too—the Port Chicago Mutiny. You will learn about the search for buried munitions as part of the Navy’s environmental cleanup of the property, future plans for a regional park, the difference between a magazine and a bunker and so much more. A potluck and barbecue on Friday evening and good food for sale all day Saturday with music in the background and all free thanks to generous sponsors and individuals, will surely make for a memorable Mare Faire. See you soon! Want to volunteer or contribute, email us from our new website, [www.mareislandpreserve.org](http://www.mareislandpreserve.org) or call 707-557-9816.



Photo: Gerry Cortez

## Second Saturday Access Day Overview

Through our **SECOND SATURDAY ACCESS DAYS** you are invited to experience the magic and majesty of this remarkable part of Mare Island still largely off-limits to the public except through guided outings, tours and special events. Dates are the second Saturday of the month, except in October, when the outing will be on Sunday, October 12<sup>th</sup>. Access is



Photo: Gerry Cortez

primarily pedestrian, (although bicycles are permitted on the paved roadway only) including walks, stops at the cemetery, and at the interpretive center in its beginning stage in a former ordnance storage magazine, Building A-167.

Outings will be primarily on paved roads, but may include guest guides and a theme, such as the cemetery, native plant identification, the heron rookery and osprey nest observations, history, etc.

## What to Bring Along for Your Visit

We recommend that you bring binoculars, a viewing scope and camera if you have them, and if you have camera gear or picnic supplies bring a backpack or hand-cart (or borrow ours—donations of wagons and carts, welcome); wear a hat, sunscreen and walking shoes; remember snacks, water and to dress in layers as the weather can turn from cool to hot and then to windy or foggy all in the same day!



## Bringing Your Dog

For the time being, it's OK to bring your dog(s). Just plan to keep them on a leash and stay on the roadway. Remember to bring water for you and them, and watch out



for those rattlesnakes and ticks!

## Want to Volunteer?

After visiting The Preserve for the past year, some folks are starting to ask about volunteering. First, please don't feel obligated to volunteer. Enjoy The Preserve and let it inspire and restore you. Then, when, and only when, you think there is something you WANT to help out with, let us know.

It's easy to volunteer. Click on [Volunteer](#) at [www.mareislandpreserve.org](http://www.mareislandpreserve.org)



Let's plan on a workday once a week and one Saturday to prepare for the August 8 and 9 Mare

Faire. **WORKDAY DATES:** Fridays, July 11, 18 and 25, Saturday, July 26 and every day August 1 thru 10.

**TIME:** Anytime between 10am and 3pm. Can't make those dates or times, but still want to help? Call or email Myrna, 707-557-9816 or [myrnaahay@pacbell.net](mailto:myrnaahay@pacbell.net)



Photo: Gerry Cortez

## Report on June Second Saturday Access Day

During our June 14<sup>th</sup> Second Saturday Access Day we celebrated National Flag Day with the playing of our National Anthem, The Star-Spangled Banner. It seemed especially appropriate given that the daughter of Francis Scott Key, Anna Key Turner, is buried in the graveyard with her husband and children.

We also held a ceremony to honor the 15 members of the crew of the USS Boston buried 116 years ago on June 14, 1892 in the Mare Island Naval Cemetery. Peggy O'Drain gave a history about the explosion at the Naval Ammunition Depot that killed the crew members, followed by our informal tribute in which 15 individuals from the gathering each selected a card with the name and rank of one of the crew. After



locating the crew member's grave whose card they held, they stood before the grave. Then the name and rank of the man buried there was read aloud. Following the playing of taps, Brian Collett of Sacramento, led the group of about 35 people in the singing of the Navy Hymn.

About 60 people visited The Preserve throughout the day including former Mare Island Shipyard workers and their families. Benicia Plein Air Group members came out for a day of painting. Many individuals who just wanted to walk, explore and learn more about The Preserve, got to use a new TRAIL GUIDE written and designed by Sue Wilson.



Photo: Brian Collett



Photo: John Klycinski

## Take the Road *Most* Traveled

While The Preserve is planned for a park, it isn't one yet. We can't urge you enough to stay on the paved road. Here are a few important reminders:

- Do not attempt to go through any locked gates or beyond areas that are barricaded. Stay on the uphill side of fences and barricades because **THE NAVY AND ITS CONTRACTORS HAVE NOT FULLY CLEARED THE SHORELINE AREAS OF MUNITIONS**. Play it safe and steer clear of the shoreline at all times without an escort. Learn more about the challenge of clearing buried munitions to make the shore safe at the Park Headquarters and Visitor Center.
- During the spring and summer, **TICKS** and **RATTLESNAKES** are prevalent. Stay on the roadway to reduce your risk of coming in contact with them! Even on the roadway, keep alert for rattlesnakes. There is a reason why a nearby part of the Island was once dubbed "Rattlesnake Ranch".
- The **STEEP BLUFFS** of unstable and crumbly sandstone **DROP OFF PRECIPITOUSLY** AND ARE COVERED WITH **SLIPPERY LEAVES**. Stay back a distance and watch your step!

## More Reasons to Take the Road *Most* Traveled

- Another resident of The Preserve is **POISON OAK**, yet another reason to stay on the roadway!
- The Mare Island Golf Course is The Preserve's neighbor to the north. For your safety and as a good neighbor, stay a safe distance uphill from the golf course boundary...you might be amazed where golf balls can fly!
- Staying on the roadway is also a good idea because there are many fragile native habitats and



Photo: Brian Collett



Photo: Brian Collett

historical and cultural landscapes that we are just now getting to know. Until surveys are completed and protective trail routes are added, please enjoy the areas that are accessible, but treat The Preserve as the undiscovered treasure that it truly is.

## Why No Cars?

What seems tempting about auto access at first glance, is that there is an existing road to the top of the hill. What road doesn't beckon cars?! Yet, the December 2007 Mare Island Regional Park Taskforce Report recommends that The Preserve be generally pedestrian and bicycle only with limited auto access for nighttime programs and disabled access.

The current park acreage is only 98 acres and a majority of it is steep (really)—slopes of up to 50% grades. Much of the rest of the land is covered with overgrown invasive plants and dense groves of oak, buckeye and other trees. When scenic vista points are reached, there is limited space for parking and no designated parking areas. With such spectacular scenery, we really don't think most people want to see a sea of cars scattered at the hilltop. Since most of the roadway is one-lane, for your safety, the route must be open for emergency access vehicles.

Remember, this isn't officially a park, yet. One day, there will be suitable parking areas, restrooms and many more trail routes. In the meantime, thanks to volunteer, Sue Wilson, who often is available to offer a shuttle service in her Prius to the top of the hill, you may start at the top and work your way down the hill. If you are disabled and must use your vehicle, we can arrange access and safe parking for you. To also help out with getting artists' painting gear or your picnic or lawn chair to your favorite spot, bring a hand-cart or wagon or borrow ours. (Donations of carts welcome)



# Second Nature

*Let us permit nature to have her way. She understands her business better than we do — Michel De Montaigne*

Photo: Gerry Cortez

Situated at the mouth of the Napa River and adjoining the Carquinez Strait and San Pablo Bay, it is conjectured that Mare Island once provided a broadly diverse habitat for wildlife and plants including Tule Elk and other large ungulates. Herds of elk were observed making the swim across the Napa River and perhaps the Island offered safety and retreat from marauding grizzlies and other large predators. The Island also was occupied by Native Americans as it provided convenient shelter and perennial water, with ample terrestrial and aquatic food sources.

The conversion to military uses had profound consequences on the island with the expansion of the island's foot print, the re-sculpting of the land forms as hills were leveled or reshaped for useable fill, the "reclamation" of tidal lands surrounding the island, the building of dykes and the near-complete stripping of native vegetation. Not only was this impact profound because of the intensity of this conversion process but also because of its duration with nearly 150 years of military activity and management there.

As an island with only a sliver of land connection with the greater San Pablo Bay wetlands area one might expect an ecological wasteland as a result of all these interventions by people over the years. But this is hardly the case! Most conspicuous are the birds that have pioneered nature's own reclamation process. Evident are the great blue herons and ospreys that actually prefer abandoned and lesser used man-made structures (such as the old light standards along the south

red tailed hawks, kestrels, turkey vultures and red shouldered hawks. The night skies are also filled with great horned and barn owls both taking advantage of abandoned structures and introduced vegetation for their nesting sites. A wide variety of migratory species also find respite here as they make their long journey along the flyway. The wetlands provide habitat for unique and threatened species such as the California clapper rail and lesser tern.

Additionally, despite the relentless management efforts of stripping and removal of native plants: especially the larger specimens such as the oaks and other native trees, they too have returned with a remarkable vitality. Live oaks once again define the southern hills with other natives including California buckeye, valley oak, toyon and elderberry. Coastal sage scrub now clad the steeper slopes with a mixture of sage, monkey flower, lupine, Indian paint brush, amole, and native grasses. Deep beneath the canopy of oaks are natural stands of coffee ferns and goldback ferns.

Of course this drama is an ongoing dynamic that will never entirely play itself out. Introduced species that escaped from the developed portions of the island now present the biggest threat to a complete recovery by nature. Scotch broom, fennel, German and English ivy and Himalayan blackberry are some of the more invasive species that impede nature's progress. But perhaps with a little positive management even this obstacle can be overcome such as with the work of the diligent Mare Island Preserve volunteers.

— Brian Collett



**Ancient coast live oak spreads across a ravine, ospreys nest on a crane and sandstone bluffs exposed after Navy carved away the hill for fill.**

Photos: Brian Collett

shoreline) as optimum nesting places with some of them taking the condominium approach with multiple nesting tenants per standard. A construction team temporarily abandoned a mobile crane to allow a pair of ospreys to raise their young on top this structure. Along with the ospreys and herons are a variety of raptors and large soaring birds including

But this resurgence of nature is not limited to just birds. Coyote have been observed pursuing jackrabbits on the manicured lawns of Touro University. And it can be assumed that the abundance of soaring birds is supported by a well-defined base of smaller prey and other predators. Nature has rediscovered the island!

# News Briefs from The Preserve

*From former munitions plant to park...people who "dream it" and then "do it".*

## Preserve Advisory Board



Photo: Brian Collett

The Vallejo City Council accepted the recommendations of the Mare Island Regional Park Taskforce for development of the 215 acres at the southern end of Mare Island as a regional park in December 2007.

In March 2008 the City Council appointed 18 individuals to an Advisory Board charged with making recommendations regarding a suitable organization to partner with the City to manage The Preserve. The Advisory Board is also to develop a strategy for funding the future master planning, capital improvements, operations and maintenance, and programming for The Preserve.

Our Advisory Board, Co-Chaired by Shawn McAndrew and Myrna Hayes, is expected to make recommendations to the City Council in late July.

## Benicia Plein Air Group Art Shows



Photo: Brian Collett

**Beginning in August 2007**, members of the Benicia Plein Air Group [[www.pleinairlinks.com](http://www.pleinairlinks.com)] and many other painters and photographers have captured the beauty of The Preserve on canvas and in print.

We are excited that beginning with our June 14<sup>th</sup> Second Saturday Access Day, some of their work was part of what will be a regular display at the Park Headquarters and Visitors Center, Building A-167 during our **SECOND SATURDAY ACCESS DAYS**.

Check out the modest group of paintings of The Preserve and its vistas beyond. Be sure to take in our larger art show and sale during the Mare Faire, Friday August 8 and Saturday August 9. You love The Preserve. Take it home with you!

## New Points of Interest Trail Guide and Exhibits



Thanks to the diligence and creativity of Preserve volunteer, Sue Wilson, visitors to The Preserve may now grab a copy of an easy to read and carry laminated interpretive guide as they arrive.

Visitors to the June 14<sup>th</sup> Second Saturday Access Day found THE GUIDE easy to carry and refer to with 13 points of interest, facts and photos keyed to numbered signs along the 1-mile route to the scenic vista points at the top of the hill.

THE GUIDE and the interpretive displays and art exhibit at the Park Headquarters and Visitor Center at Building A-167, will surely enhance your next visit to The Preserve. Thanks to Sue, for her comprehensive research and designing and producing the exhibits.



Photo: John Klycinski



Photo: Steve Farley

## Calendar of Events

**JULY 12 SATURDAY *Second Saturday Access Day*** Guided Outing to Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve 10am-6pm. Meet at the Park Headquarters and Visitor Center, Building A-167 through gate end of Railroad Ave. Cost: FREE

### Mare Faire – Celebrate the “Original” Island

**AUGUST 8 AND 9 FRIDAY AND SATURDAY Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve**, Friday: outings, 10am-5pm; program and potluck/barbecue, 5-8pm; stargazing guided outing, 8-9:30pm. Saturday: outings, exhibits and programs, 9am-6pm. Featuring the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mare Island Naval Cemetery, the U.S. Navy’s first cemetery in the Pacific and the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Port Chicago “Mutiny” that took place across the Mare Island Strait in Vallejo. Meet at Park Headquarters and Visitor Center, Building A-167. Enter through entrance gate at end of Railroad Ave. Cost: FREE

**SEPTEMBER 13 SATURDAY *Second Saturday Access Day*** Outing to Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve 10am-5pm. Location: Headquarters and Visitor Center, Building A-167, beyond gate at end of Railroad Ave. Cost: FREE



Photo: John Klycinski

### USS Wahoo (SS 238) Mare Island Memorial

#### 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL OCTOBER 11 SATURDAY MEMORIAL SERVICES

Commemorate the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the loss at sea of the Wahoo and crew and honor all 7 submarines lost at sea during WWII that were built at Mare Island. In addition to the Wahoo, we will honor the USS Pompano (SS 181), USS Swordfish (SS 193), USS Gudgeon (SS 211), USS Trigger (SS 237), USS Tullibee (SS 284) and the USS Tang (SS 306). Flag-raising, Morton Field, 1pm; Program of Music and History, St. Peter’s Chapel, 2-4pm; Reception, 4-5pm; Wreath-laying dockside Berth 6, 5:30-6pm. Cost: FREE [pre-registration may be necessary for Chapel program due to limited space]

**OCTOBER 12 SUNDAY *Second Saturday (note due to the Wahoo Memorial, this date is a Sunday)*** Access Day Guided Outing to Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve 10am-5pm. Location: Headquarters and Visitor Center, Building A-167 beyond gate end of Railroad Ave. Cost: FREE

**NOVEMBER 8 SATURDAY *Second Saturday Access Day*** Guided Outing to Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve 10am-3pm. Location: Headquarters and Visitor Center, Building A-167 beyond gate at end of Railroad Ave. Cost: FREE

**DECEMBER 13 SATURDAY *Second Saturday Access Day*** Guided Outing to Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve 10am-3pm. Location: Headquarters and Visitor Center, Building A-167 beyond gate end of Railroad Ave. Cost: FREE

**JANUARY 10, 2009 SATURDAY *Second Saturday Access Day*** Guided Outing to Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve 10am-3pm. Location: Headquarters and Visitor Center, Building A-167 beyond gate end of Railroad Ave. Cost: FREE

**FEBRUARY 6-8, 2009 FRIDAY-SUNDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL SAN FRANCISCO BAY FLYWAY FESTIVAL** North end of Mare Island Location: To be announced



Cost: FREE

Photo: John Klycinski

### Stay Up on Mare Island News...or Make It!

Send your email or mailing address to be sent updates about happenings on the Island through occasional e-newsletters and printed bulletins. The big news is our new website:

[www.MareIslandPreserve.org](http://www.MareIslandPreserve.org) Visit it for the latest news about The Preserve and a calendar of Mare Island events. We plan more evening star-gazing and night photography sessions [for Mare Island night photography and classes visit [TheNocturnes.com](http://TheNocturnes.com)] and even music in The Preserve and on Mare Island.

Would you like to propose an idea for an outing, tour or program on Mare Island? Have a calendar item? Have a story to tell? Looking for information and not sure where to start? Click the [Contact us](#) button at [www.MareIslandPreserve.org](http://www.MareIslandPreserve.org) or call 707-557-9816 or 707-649-9464.

# *The Mare Faire* Celebrate the “original” Mare Island!

The Mare Faire features guided outings and tours about the Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve's historic and natural features and scenic points, exhibits, a display of munitions “found” during environmental cleanup, slide presentations and an art show. Live music in the background, good food and even a Friday evening potluck and barbecue, promise to make this year’s Mare Faire an exciting opportunity to explore and restore during this rare chance to visit The Preserve until it becomes a permanent regional park at the southern end of Mare Island. To sponsor, guide a tour, volunteer, or for a detailed schedule available mid-July visit [www.MareIslandPreserve.org](http://www.MareIslandPreserve.org) and click on [contact us](#) or call 707-649-9464 or 707-557-9816.

**NOT SURE WHERE THE PRESERVE IS?** Online maps aren’t yet accurate because they haven’t found us yet. The [best directions are on our website. \[www.mareislandpreserve.org\]\(http://www.mareislandpreserve.org\)](#) If you use other web-based directions or onboard navigation systems, note, that they show Railroad Ave. as a through road. It is fenced off between Nereus and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets. You must turn left at Nereus to Nimitz Ave.; turn right and right again at 15<sup>th</sup> St. to end of Railroad Ave.; continue through the gate to **PARKING** on the left side of the road, leaving the right side open for handicapped and emergency vehicle access.

All photos this page: John Klycinski



## Arc Ecology North Bay

P O Box 2252  
Vallejo, CA 94592

# *The Mare Faire* Celebrate the “original” Mare Island!

