

## **BAY-DELTA ESTUARY**

### **Peat fire burning on Bethel Island**

#### **Contra Costa Times - 6/7/04**

BETHEL ISLAND - A fire official said this morning that a fire was burning in underground peat and could burn for some time.

The fire on Bethel Island was under "shaky containment," said Tonya Hoover, fire marshal with Moraga-Orinda Fire district, one of several Contra Costa departments brought to assist in fighting the fire. Four California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection hand crews also were on hand.

The fire broke out just before 3 p.m. Sunday behind the Willows Mobile Home Park and had spread to 85 acres by this morning, Hoover said.

"We have no idea when we'll have contained this fire," Hoover said.

Peat fires burn sub-level vegetation and the hand crews have to dig up the ground cover so trucks can dump water on the peat, Hoover said. Peat is decaying plant matter that is sometimes used as fuel.

"(Peat fires) can burn for a very long time," Hoover said, adding crews may have to work days or even weeks to extinguish the fire.

Residents of the mobile home park were asked to stay inside Sunday night, but fire officials did not call for an evacuation. Firefighters are keeping a close watch on the homes. -- Nathaniel Hoffman #