

MINUTES
Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA)
held on

Monday, September 29, 2025 @ 12:30 p.m.

at

CCLB Headquarters
340 Nieto Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90814

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

Chair Duggan called the meeting to order at approximately 12:36 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Voting Members Present

Kristina Duggan, Councilmember/Long Beach, Chair

Joe Kalmick, City of Seal Beach, Vice Chair

Roberto Uranga, Councilmember/City of Long Beach

Megan Cooper, Designee, State Coastal Conservancy

Staff Present

Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

John Natalizio, Deputy Attorney General

Eric Zahn, Principal Restoration Ecologist/Tidal Influence

Christian Garcia, Restoration Programs Manager/Tidal Influence

Megan Wolff, Associate Restoration Ecologist/Tidal Influence

Neysa Frechette, Associate Restoration Ecologist/Tidal Influence

Chad Oberly, Staff Services Manager I

Salian Garcia, Budgets and Administration Officer

Amanda Chan, Staff Services Analyst I

Maria Medrano, Secretary

Voting Member Absent

Amy Hutzal, State Coastal Conservancy

3. Public Comment

Chair Duggan explained there would be public comment open for the public for this public comment period as well as for each agenda item under the regular calendar. Public comment for individuals representing themselves would be two minutes and

three minutes if they represent an agency. John Natalizio, Deputy Attorney General, further clarified that for this public comment period, it would only be on items that were not on the agenda. For each item on the regular calendar, there would be a separate public comment period.

Elizabeth Lambe, Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust, raised concerns about a proposed solar array project, arguing it would harm wetlands and urging the LCWA to require a full environmental impact report. The placement of these solar panels and tables on the Los Cerritos Wetlands is what really matters. Lambe stated the loss that might result due to this infrastructure placement can be significant to the loss of wetlands and the many different species of the area. Lambe stated they do support alternative energy, and the ask is that this project be slowed down by the City of Seal Beach so that this environmental impact report can fully assess the impact of the project.

Michael Rivard, Radflight Inc, stated he was currently writing a textbook for high school STEM and career technology education titled "Drone Dynamics." He proposed including LCWA as a case study in the environmental chapter of the textbook, highlighting drone applications in wetlands monitoring and management. Rivard presented the Board with a [list](#) of the top drone applications that are currently being used for wetlands.

4. Chair's Report

There was no Chair report.

5. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from May 8, 2025 and June 18, 2025, were approved.

Board member Kalmick moved to approve. Board member Uranga seconded. Approved. Roll call vote: 4 Ayes. 0 Nays. 0 Abstentions.

Regular Calendar

6. Status Report on Work Plan Implementation **a. Land Management Update**

Christian Garcia provided the land management update covering May to August, highlighting various activities at Hellman, State Lands Parcel, Bryant Lease West, Zedler Marsh, and Upper Los Cerritos Wetlands properties.

Garcia stated staff cleared a 100-foot buffer of non-native vegetation at the Hellman property. Meeting the fire department's protocols as well as making sure the neighboring property at the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands are kept

safe from fire hazards. Frequently used trails and those used for tours, were also cleared of this non-native vegetation at the State Lands Parcels as well.

Garcia stated repairing of fence breaches occurred at the Bryant Lease West site. Staff also removed several bike ramps and hoped these activities would diminish as the bike riders returned to school. Of concern, was the fence breach at the Zedler Marsh site because of the native species found there. Staff were able to repair the fences quickly due to the assistance of the biologist team and interns who reported the breach as well as assist in keeping unauthorized people off the site.

Garcia stated with the assistance of Synergy, staff have been able to establish a buffer along the service roads to allow the nesting of the American Avocets and Killdeer birds at the Steamshovel Slough property.

Garcia concluded with how special these areas are to wildlife and their mission to assist in blending the urban and natural environments in these properties.

b. Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewardship Program Coordinator Update

Megan Wolff gave an update on the Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewardship Program, highlighting volunteer activities from May to September. The program involved 216 volunteers who contributed 432 hours of work, resulting in various environmental improvements.

Wolff stated that the number of hours worked by these volunteers contributed \$15,029 of in-kind services, propagated over 1,006 plants, removed 390 pounds of weeds, spread 400 pounds of mulch, and removed 169 pounds of trash.

Wolff further mentioned the program's success in hosting field trips and land tours, serving 3,680 students and 21 participants since 2023. The Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewardship Program (LCWSP), in partnership with the Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust and Applied Energy Services (AES), hosted 23 field trips for students.

Chair Duggan asked how much AES has contributed to the projects. Dan Knapp replied AES contributed \$165,000 in funding for field trips over a three-and half-year period.

Vice Chair Kalmick thanked the Conservation Corps for supporting these projects, their continued work in the wetlands, and their assistance at Seal Beach.

c. Homeless Relocation Program Update

Lenny Arkinstall, CEO of Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewards, provided an update on the homeless indicating especially good news this past summer was the homeless activities were very low. The many years of hard work addressing the homeless and assisting them is paying off. Arkinstall stated his team has been focusing on the jetty area and the Pacific Coast Highway bridge in the wetlands, near the San Gabriel River.

Arkinstall highlighted successful partnerships with local law enforcement, veterans services, and mental health organizations, showcasing specific cases where individuals were helped off the streets and into housing or rehabilitation. Arkinstall demonstrated how consistent cleanup efforts and outreach have significantly reduced homelessness in these areas over the past few years, though some new challenges have emerged recently with a few individuals returning to the wetlands.

Arkinstall showed pictures of the jetty indicating the constant patrolling and being vigilant has kept it free of homeless individuals for the past year and a half. Once the homeless settle in anywhere, it becomes harder to remove them. Being proactive is very important and with the help of local police, they have been able to keep these areas free of homeless camps.

Chair Duggan asked when you are working with Seal Beach quality of life, do you bring in Orange County services? Arkinstall replied that it depended on which side they are at. Arkinstall stated Orange County has a lot more facilities available as Long Beach's have become full.

Vice Chair Kalmick stated that Seal Beach has partnered with the Yale Navigation Center in Santa Ana which houses 400 people and offers complete services. The struggles that are encountered are not having enough places for people to go to that offer these services and housing.

d. El Dorado Audubon Update

Mary Parsell, President of the El Dorado Audubon, stated they enjoy their walks. Parsell stated they continue to conduct bird walks at the wetlands indicating there are a lot of birds out there.

Parsell stated their Saturday walks will be at Gum Grove Park as they cannot go through Hellman. Parsell also had concerns about dog owners not adhering to leash laws at Gum Grove which poses a safety risk to both dogs and people, especially given the presence of coyotes. This makes it difficult to bird watch as they have to constantly be looking out for people and their dogs off leash.

Parsell highlighted the importance of birdwatching and the need for better protection for birds, such as barriers on the Synergy property.

Chair Duggan stated there are more hummingbirds around this year than ever before. Parsell stated that was correct and that is why the need to protect them, their nesting areas as well as the many other species found in the wetlands is of great importance.

e. Expenditures Report

Amanda Chan stated she would be reporting on the Expenditure Report. Chan stated Exhibit A reflects balances as of August 31, 2025.

The Authority is approximately 90% through the current fiscal year and is on track of contributions with overall revenue and expense categories. All JPA contributions have been collected for this fiscal year. Chan stated there has been minimal administrative activities but expenditures such as product services should be spent by the end of the fiscal year.

Security expense item indicates 50% expenditures and the Authority expects to receive rent invoices by end of the year. Overall Capital Outlay Expenses in relation to grant funding sources are in line with projections.

Staff are awaiting reimbursements from several grants and contracts. The revenue will be reflected when submitted costs expended under the grants have been approved for reimbursement and the reimbursement is received.

Board Member Cooper asked we are in fiscal year 2025/2026? Stanley replied, we are at the end of FY25 and beginning of FY26.

f. Status report for the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Project

Eric Zahn, Principal Restoration Ecologist/Tidal Influence, highlighted the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Project. Zahn commented on the project's history beginning with the overall Authority's planning in 2011 and the Board's approval in 2015 of the conceptual restoration plan. In 2017 funding was acquired and the EIR (Environmental Impact Report) program was certified by the Authority in 2021. Zahn stated a restoration plan was then developed and approved later that year in June 2021. In August 2023, the LCWA certified a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Project which was based on 65% construction design plans.

Zahn stated as of September 2025 final designs and specifications have been completed, all regulatory permits were issued, and a general contractor was selected after a competitive bidding process. The project team, including Tidal Influence, Moffatt and Nichol, and Altman Environmental Consulting, has been preparing for construction, including environmental compliance measures and community engagement.

Zahn stated construction management team, Syrusa, approved by the Board in May 2025 assisted with the RFP process seeking a qualified general contractor to implement construction of Phase 1 of the project. Staff has done a lot of preparation for environmental compliance including developing worker environmental awareness programs. These included the creation of modules for biological, cultural and archaeological monitoring. Zahn stated meetings continue to occur with the Tribal Advisory Group who have been tremendous partners through the design process.

Zahn stated a public meeting is scheduled for September 30 where the final designs will be revealed and a groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for October 24th.

Prop 4 Update/Opportunities

Salian Garcia stated Proposition 4 (Prop 4) was approved by voters last year and an early action plan for wildfire only funds of just over \$30 million which was available last fiscal year. Senate Bill 105 was recently chaptered and the remaining appropriations of Prop 4 have just been released.

Garcia stated \$2 million is available for region-wide projects and just over just over \$500,000 for Lower LA River projects. Applications are always being accepted. Garcia stated the process consists of a two steps beginning with the submission of the concept proposal and if the submission passes this first screen, the applicant is asked to submit a full application for Prop 4.

Mark Stanley stated under the California Natural Resources Agency there are other Prop 4 opportunities such as the Coastal Conservancy partner and many other funding sources and opportunities for the LCWA.

7. Consideration of a resolution authorizing staff to adopt the LCWA Budget for Fiscal Year 2025/2026.

Amanda Chan stated she would be presenting the LCWA fiscal year 2025/20265 budget detailed in Exhibit A for the Board's approval. Exhibit A is separated by revenue and expenditure components: administration, operation and capital outlay.

Chan stated the budgeted revenue is around \$13.9 million and is balanced at \$13.9 million by the expense with expected reimbursements from the grantees of \$13.8 million. Chan stated that expenses and revenues have exponentially increased at 422%.

Chan stated revenue will increase as staff will be asking for advance requests from AES (Applied Energy Services), SCC (State Coastal Conservancy) and OPC (Ocean Protection Council) to fund construction invoices for the Southern area projects.

Chan stated of the \$26 million from the SCC, \$587,000 was budgeted of expenditure for this fiscal year for planning and preparation for construction. For the upcoming fiscal year, 2025/2026, \$8 million was budgeted, a 1,206% increase. Chan stated similarly, of the \$6 million from OPC, \$700,000 was budgeted for this fiscal year and \$5.1 million for fiscal year 25/26, a 376% increase.

Chan stated under expense, legal services show a decrease of 50%, as staff does not expect many activities after the land swap. The website line shows a decrease of about 97% because staff incurred a one-time website redesign fee for the current fiscal year.

Chan stated under administration expenses, increases of 131% is expected in insurance (general liability/umbrella) as staff need to make sure there is enough budgeted to cover the various ongoing projects and a 25% increase in security.

Chan stated under operational expenses, there is a decrease of 86% in consultant services and an increase of 19.6% in the stewardship program.

Board Member Cooper asked to verify if the date of Exhibit A was indeed Fiscal Year 2024/2025. Stanley replied it should be 2025/2026.

Chair Duggan asked if there was any public comment for Item 7. No comment from the public.

Board member Cooper moved to approve. Board member Uranga seconded. Approved. Roll call vote: 4 Ayes. 0 Nays. 0 Abstentions.

8. Consideration of a resolution authorizing the Executive Officer to approve expenditures for construction of the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration.

Chad Oberly stated this item pertains to the construction budget for the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration project. A conservative estimate for the

construction budget totals \$21 million allocated across eight sub-tasks. These tasks are: site preparation and demolition; earthwork - clean soils; earthwork - contaminated soils; utilities and easement improvements; public access improvements; revegetation; revegetation establishment; and construction contingency.

Oberly stated construction of a large-scale wetland restoration project is inherently complex and subject to unforeseen conditions and evolving needs during implementation. While the overall construction budget of \$21,555,000 is a conservative estimate, flexibility within the amount is needed to distribute funds across the subtasks as work progresses. For example, unforeseen site conditions may require additional funding for earthwork, while efficiencies in utilities or demolition may reduce costs in other areas.

Oberly stated the proposed resolution would authorize the Executive Officer to approve expenditures within the total construction allocation allowing staff to shift funds among subtasks as necessary to respond to changing field conditions, contractor needs, or adaptive management considerations. This authority will ensure timely progress while maintaining strict adherence to the overall construction budget.

Oberly stated all funds authorized today will remain restricted to construction-related expenditures under Tasks 4.1 through 4.8. No expenditures beyond this construction allocation would be authorized under this action without LCWA Governing Board approval.

Oberly stated that included in the budget estimate is a range for costs associated with underground and utilities. Southern California Edison (SCE) is currently developing plans to underground the existing utility poles installed parallel to 1st Street. Crown Castle Communications, a telecommunications company that also operates infrastructure on these poles, will need to develop similar plans for undergrounding once Edison's preliminary designs are received. Oberly stated it is anticipated designs will be received by Spring from Edison. Total costs for development and implementing these plans have not been provided by either Edison or Crown. Oberly stated costs are expected to range between \$2 to \$5 million. The LCWA will be responsible for covering the costs incurred by the utility owners to move their infrastructure.

Oberly stated an RFP was released in July by the Authority for general contractor services. Bid item found (4) of the RFP's price proposal represented an allowance for unforeseen conditions that proposers were instructed not to bid on. Oberly stated the allowance was included to allow fair and competitive bidding as the Authority worked to determine the likely and ultimate cost of utility undergrounding. The action considered today would allow the Executive Officer to apply the

allowance to the General Contractor's base bid total once these figures have been resolved, in addition to a set aside contingency.

Oberly stated the LCWA intends to enter into an agreement with a separate landscape contractor who make public access features, planning, and irrigation work. Staff and consultants are actively value engineering these features to ensure the work can be accomplished within the LCWA's construction budget as recommended.

Oberly stated it is staff's recommendation that the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA) authorizes the Executive Officer to approve expenditures for construction for the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration for an amount not to exceed \$21,555,000.

Chair Duggan stated she was concerned about the underground date waiting until Spring, the very low estimate of \$2-\$5 million range, and how much is set aside for contingency and unforeseen costs. Oberly stated staff has a range amount around \$3.1 million. Duggan stated wanting a contingency number for SCE as dealing with this type of work can be very expensive. Chair Duggan stated hopefully LCWA gets a number before spring from SCE. Oberly stated they have spoken with contractors, engineers, third parties regarding these estimate costs, the project team has worked on different scenarios and feel confident with these numbers.

Board Member Cooper wanted to clarify that the costs associated with revegetation, revegetation maintenance and public access, were all included in the \$21 million budget. Oberly stated, that was correct, those are related to task 4.1 through 4.8 in the construction task.

Chair Duggan asked if there was any public comment for Item 8. No comment from the public.

Board member Kalmick moved to approve. Board member Cooper seconded. Approved. Roll call vote: 4 Ayes. 0 Nays. 0 Abstentions.

9. Consideration of a resolution awarding a contract to Philbin Construction Company to provide General Contractor Services for the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Project.

Chad Oberly stated the LCWA released a Request for Proposal (RFP) for General Contractor Services for Phase 1 of the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration project in July 2025.

Oberly stated the services requested included but not limited to preparation and approval of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP); demolition of

existing infrastructure; clearing and grubbing; earthwork to create natural habitat features like tidal channels; construction of berms; hydrological improvements including culvert extensions; dewatering; utility trenching and conduit installation; water line rerouting; contaminated soil testing and remediation; topsoil harvesting, stockpiling, placement and testing; and all other related administration of a construction project.

Oberly stated a separate landscape contractor will be hired in the Fall for landscaping, planting, irrigation and constructing public access amenities services that were not included in this RFP.

Oberly stated the RFP was advertised to over 350 small businesses or disabled veteran business enterprises (SB/DVBE) with the state's Department of General Services (DGS) and posted on the LCWA website. A mandatory pre-bid conference and site walk were held on August 7th at Seal Beach City Hall at the project site.

Oberly stated eight potential bidders attended and were given an overview of the project and its design. Potential bidders were given until August 14 to submit questions related to the RFP in writing. Questions were also posted on the LCWA website on August 22. 57 questions were received and answered. To ensure adequate time for potential bidders to prepare competitive proposals, the project team extended the bid opening date in response to questions received. Oberly stated sealed bids were due by noon on September 5th. Public bid-opening was immediately held over video conference. Three (3) bids were received and publicly unsealed.

Oberly stated the bids were tabulated by the project's construction management firm SYRUSA Engineering. The bid amounts were:

Philbin Construction: \$6,199,914
Ibarra General Engineering Inc: \$8,937,135
Stice Company Inc.: \$14,894,348

Oberly stated the RFP required LCWA select the lowest bidder to recommend to the Board for contract approval. After review by staff and the construction manager, the lowest bidder, Philbin Construction was deemed responsive to the RFP requirements.

Oberly stated Philbin Construction is a DGS certified small business and has a Small Business for the Purpose of Public Works certification. The company holds a Class A General Engineering License with Hazardous Substance Removal certification. Formed in 2017, their services include excavation, grading,

earthwork, demolition, site preparation, clearing services and possess an excellent safety record.

Oberly stated Philbin's bid price of \$6.2 million is inclusive of all work and bid items shown in the Price Proposal contained in Exhibit C, with the exception of bid item number 4 "Allowance for Unforeseen Conditions" (Exhibit B). It is anticipated that unforeseen issues will arise during the course of the project which the contractor will be authorized by the LCWA to remedy.

Oberly stated as previously mentioned, final utility pole undergrounding and electrical plans are expected from the utility providers. An allowance for these unknown costs was included in the bid item schedule. During the course of construction, any unforeseen issue mitigations or utility work will be paid from the allowance bid item. Oberly stated the allowance will only be used when the engineer and LCWA determine that the work to be performed is outside of the Contract Documents scope of work and the Contractor is authorized in writing by the Authority to perform work as an allowance.

Oberly stated it is staff's recommendation that the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA) approve a resolution awarding a contract to Philbin Construction Company for General Contractor Services for the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Project Phase 1.

Chair Duggan asked about the bid amount difference between Philbin and Stice as it was about twice as much. Oberly stated upon analysis from the project team it found that Stice included a couple of million dollars in unforeseen bids items that they were not supposed to. Staff believed that Philbin's advantage and lower cost is associated in that they do all its earthwork in-house. They are specialists in earthwork.

Board Member Cooper stated it was great that a small business be awarded the work.

Chair Duggan asked if there was any public comment for Item 9. No comment from the public.

Board member Cooper moved to approve. Board member Kalmick seconded. Approved. Roll call vote: 4 Ayes. 0 Nays. 0 Abstentions.

- 10. Consideration of a resolution authorizing the Executive Officer to negotiate and enter a contract for Land Management, Administrative Services, and Implementation of the Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewardship Program and Restoration Plans.**

Staff request that Item 10 be tabled and moved to hold it to the November meeting.

**Board member Uranga moved to approve. Board member Cooper seconded.
Approved. Roll call vote: 4 Ayes. 0 Nays. 0 Abstentions**

11. **Oral Communications**
 - a. **Statements, responses, questions or directions to staff pursuant to Section 54954.2(a) of the Government Code.**
 - b. **Future agenda items.**
12. **Announcement of next meeting date – Thursday, November 13, 2025, at 12:30 p.m.**
13. **Adjournment.**

Chair Duggan adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:55 p.m.