

**Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority  
Interim Stewardship and Management Program  
2007**

**Belding's Savannah Sparrow**



## **Preface**

The Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority's Interim Stewardship and Management Program is designed to promote community involvement with environmental education, maintenance, restoration, and monitoring of the wetland areas owned by the Authority. This program puts forth guidelines to ensure that volunteers use the land appropriately and perform safe and lawful services.

**Figure 1. LCWA territory**



## **I. Introduction**

### ***Background***

The wetlands in the Los Cerritos Complex have been sought by public agencies and environmentalists for habitat protection and restoration for over twenty years. The Board of Governors of the Southern California Wetland Recovery Project has identified acquisition of these properties as a top priority. This site is one of the few remaining opportunities in southern California for restoration of estuarine habitat.

Although the Los Cerritos Wetlands are surrounded by urban development, and have been dramatically altered, they provide valuable habitat to a number of wetland obligate organisms and species of special concern.

### ***The Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority***

In February of 2006, a joint powers agreement was adopted among the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, State Coastal Conservancy, City of Long Beach, and City of Seal Beach. The agreement established the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA). The purpose of the LCWA is to provide for a comprehensive program of acquisition, protection, conservation, restoration, maintenance, and environmental enhancement of the Los Cerritos Wetlands area consistent with the goals of flood protection, habitat preservation and restoration, improved water supply, water quality, groundwater recharge, and water conservation. The LCWA has the ability to acquire and own real property, although it does not have the power of eminent domain. A second major purpose of the LCWA is to conduct restoration planning and implement that restoration. In order to accomplish this mission, the involvement of the surrounding community will be integral.

Therefore, an Interim Stewardship and Access Management Plan has been developed by the LCWA to offer guidelines to ensure the consistent use of the best management techniques by concerned citizens and interest groups.

### ***Vision for Community Stewardship***

In June 2006 the LCWA acquired 66 acres of land within the Los Cerritos Wetlands Complex, which marked the first purchase of land within the complex for the purpose of wetlands restoration. The interim Stewardship and Management Plan is the initial viable step in a series of planning efforts for this recently acquired land, as well as future acquisitions. This plan is intended to serve as a guide to manage short-term access, education, maintenance, and restoration opportunities, until a comprehensive Wetlands Restoration and Enhancement Plan is developed for Los Cerritos.

Broad community support and participation is necessary in order for this future Wetlands Restoration and Enhancement Plan to be compatible with public interest. Starting presently with a strong community involvement will uphold future wetland improvements in perpetuity.

## II. Program Objectives and Eligibility

### *Program Goals*

- Provide public access and educational opportunities compatible with wetlands habitat conservation
- Encourage public appreciation of the Los Cerritos Wetlands by fueling a growing awareness of their importance and providing opportunities for community members to help steward these resources
- Encourage research projects designed to help us learn more about this precious wetlands resource, without impacting existing habitats
- Develop an ecological monitoring program
- Develop a program to manage exotic weeds, trash and debris
- Compliment, advance, and focus existing stewardship activities being undertaken in and around the Los Cerritos Wetlands area.
- Redirect non-beneficial uses and activities related to the health of the wetlands by establishing of a sense of ownership amongst local citizens
- Implement informative signage to reduce unpermitted access and increase public awareness
- Allow for networking opportunities between public interest groups, educational institutions, wetland scientists, and project managers

### *Eligible Participants*

- Educational Institutions: K-12 school groups, religious groups, university groups, home-school groups, public education groups, etc.
- 501(c)3 Non-Profit Organizations
- Research Groups or Individuals: private or university based researchers
- Naturalists: birders, botanists, marine biologists, environmental scientists, geographers, trackers, etc.



### III. Site Overview

The 66 acres currently owned by the LCWA straddles the San Gabriel River and is at the heart of the approximately 500 acre wetlands complex. The property, formerly owned by the Bryant Family, is broken into two parcels (East and West).

**Figure 3. Ownership boundaries within the LCWA territory**



### ***LCWA East Parcel***

The East Parcel is located just east of the River and west of the Haynes Cooling Channel on a narrow piece of land often referred to as “The Isthmus”. Though this parcel is east of the San Gabriel, it is still within the Long Beach City limits. This property is a total of 26 acres, of which several acres receive limited tidal influence from the San Gabriel River. The LCWA owns 15 acres on the East Parcel. The LCWA property includes a small tidal marsh area and a larger area composed of degraded former wetland habitat that is either unvegetated or colonized by native upland plants and non-native weeds. The San Gabriel River bike trail provides access adjacent to the LCWA property and offers views of the functioning salt marsh ecosystem that exists here. An easement, via 2nd Street, provides road access to the LCWA property through retained Bryant land.

A small tidally influenced area in the east parcel, named Zedler Marsh, is located on the LCWA property and offers the best opportunity for habitat stewardship, education, and nature appreciation. The Marsh attracts and supports a variety of wildlife. It provides critical breeding habitat for the endangered Belding’s savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*) and foraging habitat for the endangered California least tern (*Sterna antillarum browni*) amongst other species of special concern. Appendix A offers a current listing of the organisms found on this parcel.



A 2 foot wide culvert connects Zedler Marsh to the apex of the San Gabriel River less than one mile before it empties into the Pacific Ocean. The San Gabriel River watershed covers approximately 640 square miles of land spanning over 37 cities. About 26% of this watershed’s total area is urbanized. As a result, Zedler Marsh is exposed to the literally tons of trash that wash down the River each year. Furthermore, just upstream both the AES and Haynes power plants discharge their cooling water directly into the river. It is permissible for the temperature of this discharged water to be as high as 105 °F.

The southern portion of the LCWA property is used by Signal Hill Petroleum for oil operations. There are five oil wells in use on the East Parcel and several other oil related buildings and equipment. The south end of the property is not open to the public.

### ***LCWA West Parcel***

The West Parcel is a triangle of land located just west of the River, south of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, and east of Bixby Ranch Company owned land. There currently is no tidal influence on the west parcel, and the LCWA has no official easement into this property. The Bryants still privately own the land bordering 2<sup>nd</sup> street. Therefore the west parcel is presently inaccessible to the public, so all stewardship activities must take place on the east parcel until easements are obtained or other arrangements procured.



**Figure 5. Seasonal brackish marsh on LCWA West Parcel**

Though there are no tidally influenced areas on this part of the property, there are areas that collect water and act as seasonal freshwater or brackish ponds. The salt marsh plant community is noticeably less diverse than what is found in Zelder Marsh, however, the Belding's savannah sparrow still utilizes the degraded habitat. The topography is relatively homogenous throughout the 40 acres of land, leading to an overlap between degraded salt marsh, brackish marsh, upland, and non-native plant communities. Appendix A offers a current listing of the organisms found on this parcel.

Several roadways crisscross through this property so that Signal Hill Petroleum can access their seven oil wells. Signal Hill Petroleum has an agreement with the Bixby Ranch Land Company to access the parcel via their property. Consequently, the parcel is off-limits to the public unless prior permission has been granted by the Bixbys.

## **IV. Stewardship and Management Activities**

As outlined in our objectives, the purpose of this program is to promote a variety of avenues for the public involvement. Each of these endeavors are important, however, some will require the participation of trained individuals, while other activities will be available to the general public.

### **1. Environmental Education and Public Awareness Programming**

These activities will connect local citizens and interest groups with the Los Cerritos Wetlands and will create a venue for the public to become directly engaged with this natural resource. The LCWA reserves the right to terminate site access permission due to unsafe, unpermitted, or disruptive land uses. A public event application is included in Appendix B of this document.

Following is a list of the available educational opportunities:

- ❖ Self-guided tours along the San Gabriel River Bike trail allows for a view of the entire Eastern Parcel, the adjacent River, and parts of the Western Parcel from a distance. (no permission required)
- ❖ School field trips, public nature tours, and other environmental education events may be organized by local schools, by community non-profits, or other interest groups. (application & orientation required)
- ❖ Regular nature tours and clean-ups organized by LCWA staff will allow for the public to access the land in a managed manner and will provide the public with a detailed background of the site's current state and future plans. (sign-up required)
- ❖ Wetland clean-up or enhancement events organized by local schools or by community non-profits are encouraged because they promote education, while supporting site maintenance programs. For any public clean-up events, it is required that a detailed list of activities and tools being used are provided to the LCWA (application and orientation required)

**Figure 6. Young volunteers learning that every piece makes a difference**



## **2. Ecological/Geographic/Environmental Monitoring & Research**

All monitoring data collected on LCWA land must be provided to LCWA in a timely manner after collection and shared with other interested parties by request. Researchers interested in collecting data on LCWA land must receive permission, a research application is included in Appendix C of this document. Any research reports generated by data collected on LCWA land must also be shared in a timely manner. Failure to do so will result in the loss of site access permission. The LCWA also reserves the right to terminate site access permission due to unsafe, unpermitted, or disruptive research practices.

**Figure 7. Belding's savannah sparrow (left) and a coyote (right) on LCWA land**



Following is a list of the available monitoring or research opportunities:

- ❖ Regular wildlife community surveys (mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, marine inverts, insects, prokaryotes, fungus, etc.) are needed to compile an updated list of the faunal organisms using the site. (permission required)
- ❖ Quarterly vegetative community surveys are needed to compile and updated list of the floral organisms found on site. (permission required)
- ❖ Detailed descriptions and photos of species of special concern utilizing the site are needed to ensure that they are managed correctly (permission required)
- ❖ Native and non-native plant community and species level survey maps are needed to generate a GIS database of the pre-restoration vegetation on site and to aid in invasive plant population eradication programs. (permission required)
- ❖ Updated wetlands (salt, brackish, and freshwater marsh) and upland ecosystem delineation maps are needed to generate a GIS database of the pre-restoration habitat locations. (permission required)
- ❖ Seasonal marine sediment and terrestrial soil analysis (heavy metals, PCBs, DDTs, salinity, organics, composition, etc.) is needed to achieve a baseline of the site's benthic and edaphic environmental quality (permission and qualifications required)
- ❖ Regular water quality analysis (DO, pH, salinity, turbidity, temperature, various pollutants, etc) of the seawater and seasonal freshwater on the

property, and in the adjacent river, is needed to achieve a baseline of the sites aquatic environmental quality. (permission and qualifications required)

- ❖ Topographic and bathymetric elevation surveys of the property are needed to generate a geographic GIS database of the pre-restoration hydrology on site. (permission and qualifications required)
- ❖ General research projects that increase the scientific knowledge base or emphasize management applications for the site are supported by the LCWA. A research application is included in Appendix C of this document. (application required)

### **3. Site Maintenance and Restoration**

Much of the current LCWA land has been ignored, from a habitat maintenance perspective, for many years before being purchased. Major and minor habitat improvement projects are needed on site. Without a comprehensive Wetlands Restoration and Enhancement Plan our restoration practices are limited, but small projects can provide short term habitat improvements and may help prepare the site future large scale restoration activities.

Following is a list of the available site maintenance and restoration activities:

- ❖ Trash and debris remediation is a constant issue throughout the property. Public clean-up events can help to dramatically curtail this impact. (permission required)



**Figure 8. Vegetative debris**



**Figure 9. Trash removed from wetlands**

- ❖ Non-native, invasive plant species removal is needed throughout the property to initiate the restoration of degraded native habitats. (permission required)
- ❖ Tree and shrubs such as *Myoporum* and *Acacia* need trimming throughout the property in order to remove fire hazards and attractiveness for homeless encampments. (permission required)

#### **4. Management of Non-beneficial Uses**

Many activities occur on the LCWA property that can have negative impacts on the site's natural resources. Currently the land is not patrolled regularly; so the LCWA needs the public to report these non-beneficial uses so that the proper management decisions can be made to better protect the wetlands. Please report any such activities immediately to LCWA staff at (626)

Following is a list of non-beneficial uses that need to be reported:

- ❖ Unauthorized off-roading activities (ATVing, BMXing, mountain bike riding, etc.)
- ❖ Illegal dumping of trash, construction debris, landscaping wastes, or hazardous wastes
- ❖ Trespassing
- ❖ General wildlife endangerment
- ❖ Nesting habitat encroachment during breeding season (Feb-June)
- ❖ Unapproved animal practice (dog walking, dog training, falconry, horse-back riding, etc.)
- ❖ Hunting or Fishing
- ❖ Camping or permanent inhabitation
- ❖ Unpermitted habitat alterations (dredging, filling, mowing, burning, etc)
- ❖ Bonfires or barbeques

**Figure 10. Examples of non-beneficial uses**



## **V. Criteria for Approving Activities on LCWA lands**

- ✓ Needs to be...
  - ...consistent with the LCWA Mission.
  - ...consistent with the wetland restoration purposes for which the land was acquired.
  - ...consistent with the adopted LCWA interim stewardship and management plan regarding the safety of participants.
  - ...lawful (CEQA, CESA, CDP, ESA, MBTA, NEPA, 404, 1601, WQ, encroachments).
- ✓ It should...
  - ...provide a benefit to the resources on the site.
  - ...increase the scientific knowledge base or emphasize management applications for the site.
  - ...provide an educational benefit to the participants.
  - ...have a manageable and appropriate number of participants for the subject activity and site, and supervision be satisfactory.
- ✓ It cannot...
  - ...impact or disrupt any listed or sensitive species, sensitive habitat or cultural resources? (specific location, time of year, duration, methods of the activity are evaluated)
  - ...take place in wetlands areas during nesting season (February-June)
  - ...result in a "gift of state"? (i.e. someone cannot make a profit by the activity)

Examples of generally approved activities on LCWA land:

- Habitat improvement projects (biological/geological surveys)
- Educational fieldtrips (public tours, school group trips)
- Research projects and academic studies

Examples of activities generally NOT approved on LCWA land:

- Competitive events (sporting events, athletic races, animal shows)
- Filming (commercials, television, films)
- Weddings

## **VI. Acquiring Permission to Participate in LCWA Stewardship Program**

1. Contact LCWA staff to acquire application or to sign up for an event.
2. If requested, complete application and return to LCWA staff (researchers will be required to submit a project proposal).
3. If application is approved, schedule and attend an on-site orientation.
4. Once orientated, provide LCWA with schedule of use that details the time of activities, tools to be used, and areas of use.
5. Contact LCWA staff at least 24 hours before accessing the property. (72 hours for public events)

NOTE: The LCWA reserves the right to terminate site access permission due to unsafe, unpermitted, or disruptive land uses.

## **VII. Volunteer Guidelines**

Individual volunteers must sign a liability waiver, and volunteer groups must be accompanied by an orientated group member or by LCWA staff. Volunteers should use their best judgment when on site and must wear appropriate attire including: shirts and pants at all times, closed-toed shoes with sturdy soles, hats, and sunscreen. It is also the responsibility of volunteers to drink plenty of water to stay hydrated.

Volunteers under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a responsible adult. At all times it is imperative that all volunteers stay clear of any oil operations and equipment occurring on site.

The LCWA assumes zero liability for participants.



**Figure 11. Oil operations are one of several hazards volunteers must be aware of.**

## **Appendix A**

This list includes all the native organisms found on both east and west parcels of the newly acquired LCWA land. Non-native plants are also included.

### **Native Plants**

*Frankenia salina*\* - Alkali Heath  
*Juncus acutus*\* - Spiny Rush  
*Distichlis spicata*\* - Salt Grass  
*Salicornia virginica*\* - Pickleweed  
*Salicornia subterminalis*\* - Glasswort  
*Salicornia bigelovii*\* - Annual Pickleweed  
*Batis maritima*\* - Saltwort  
*Monanthochloe littoralis*\* - Shoregrass  
*Jaumea Carnosa*\* - Salty Susan  
*Spergularia marina*\* - sand spurry  
*Cressa trunxilensis*\* - Alkali Weed  
*Limonium californicum*\* - Sea Lavender; Marsh Rosemary  
*Triglochin cocinum*\* - Arrow-Grass  
*Scirpus spp.*- Tule/Bulrush  
*Typha spp.*- Cattail  
*Malvella leprosa* – Alkali Mallow  
*Isocoma menziesii* - Goldenbush  
*Baccharis salicifolia* - Mulefat  
*Baccharis pilularis* – Coyote Bush  
*Baccharis emorii* – Emorys Baccharis  
*Heliotropium curassavicum* – Seaside Heliotrope  
*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *australis* (southern tarplant) Species of Special Concern  
*Ulva spp.*– Sea Lettuce (algae)  
\*salt marsh plant

### **Non-Native Plants**

*Acacia spp.*  
*Eucalyptus spp.* – Gum Trees  
*Myoporum laetum* – Lollypop Tree  
*Raphanus sativus* – Wild Radish  
*Brassica nigra* – Black Mustard  
*Centaurea melitensis* - Napa Thistle  
*Xanthium strumarium* – cocklebur  
*Atriplex semibaccata* - Australian Saltbush  
*Mesembryanthemum nodiflorum* – Slender-Leafed Iceplant  
*Mesembryanthemum crystallinum* – Crystalline Iceplant  
*Salsola sp.* - Russian Thistle  
*Rumex crispus* – Curly dock  
*Cortedaria seloana* - Pampas Grass  
*Washingtonia robusta* – Mexican Fan Palm  
*Phoenix canariensis* – Canary Island Date Palm

*Riscinus communis* – Castor Bean  
*Carpobrotus edulis* – Hottentot Fig  
*Cotula coronipifolia* – brass buttons  
*Paraphols incurva* – Sickie Grass  
*Polypogon monospermioides* – Rabbits Foot Grass  
*Nicotiana glauca* – Tree Tobacco

## **Animals**

### **Birds**

Belding's Savannah Sparrow – *Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi* endangered species  
(1 pair in Zedler Marsh; 1 pair in Callaway Marsh;  
2-4 pairs in west parcel)

California Least Tern - *Sterna antillarum brownii* endangered species  
California Brown Pelican – *Pelecanus occidentalis* endangered species  
Forsters Tern – *Sterna forsteri*  
Willet – *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*  
Killdeer – *Charadrius vociferus*  
Mallards – *Anas platyrhynchos*  
Long-Billed Dowitcher – *Limnodromus scolopaceus*  
Turkey Vulture – *Cathartes aura*  
Great Blue Heron – *Ardea herodias*  
Cliff Swallow - *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*  
Western Kingbird - *Tyrannus verticalis*  
Cinnamon Teal – *Anas cyanoptera*  
Anna's Hummingbird – *Calypte anna*  
Belted King Fisher - *Ceryle alcyon*  
Osprey – *Pandion haliaetus*  
White Crowned Sparrow – *Zonotrichia leucophrys*  
Marsh Wren – *Cistothorus palustris*  
Canada Geese – *Branta canadensis*  
Snowy Egret – *Egretta thula*  
Great Egret – *Ardea alba*  
Marbled Godwit – *Limosa fedoa*  
White-Tail Kite – *Elanus leucurus*  
Buffle Head – *Bucephala clangula*  
American Widgeon – *Anas americana*  
Black Pheobe – *Sayornis nigricans*  
Lagger Head Shrike – *Lanius ludovicianus*  
Lesser Scaup – *Aythya affinis*  
Double-Crested Cormorant – *Phalacrocorax auritus*  
House Finch – *Carpodacus mexicanus*  
Mouring Dove – *Zenaida macroura*

Invertebrates

Wandering Skipper – *Panoquina errans*      Species of Special Concern

California Horn Snail – *Cerithidia californica*

Striped Shore Crab – *Pachygrapsus crassipes*

Mammals

Coyote - *Canis latrans*

Western Harvest Mouse - *Reithrodontomys megalotis*

Fishes

Topsmelt – *Atherinops affinis*

Stripped Mullet - *Mugil cephalus*

Reptiles

Side Blotch Lizard - *Uta stansburiana*

## Appendix B

# Application for Access to LCWA Lands for Public Event

<u>1. Applicant Organization</u>	<u>2. Telephone Number</u>
<u>3. Street Address/City/State/Zip</u>	<u>4. Web Address</u>

<u>5. Name, Affiliation, Title, Address, Phone Number, Email of primary individual event organizer</u>
<u>6. Name, Affiliation, Title, Address, Phone Number, Email of secondary individual event organizer</u>

<u>7. Aim &amp; Purpose for Gaining Access</u>
<u>8. Scope of Proposed Activity</u> (include # of individuals, intended audience, equipment being used, duration)
<u>9. Proposed Location of Activity</u> (include map if necessary)

10. Has your organization previously organized an event on LCWA land?	<b>Yes or No</b>
11. Does your organization have Volunteer Liability insurance?	<b>Yes or No</b>
<u>If yes</u> , what is the amount of your coverage? _____	
12. Has anyone in your organization been given an orientation by LCWA?	<b>Yes or No</b>
<u>If yes</u> , what is their name? _____ Will they be in attendance?	
13. Will you need vehicle access?	<b>Yes or No</b>
<u>If yes</u> , how many vehicles? _____	
14. Is your organization a registered 501(c)3 Non Profit?	<b>Yes or No</b>

**Appendix C**

# Application for Access to LCWA Lands for Scientific Research

<u>1. Applicant Organization</u>	<u>2. Telephone Number</u>
<u>3. Street Address/City/State/Zip</u>	<u>4. Web Address</u>

<u>5. Primary Investigator</u> (Name, Affiliation, Title, Address, Phone Number, Email)				
<u>6. Investigator in charge of field work</u> (Name, Affiliation, Title, Address, Phone Number, Email)				
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"><tr><td style="width: 35%;"><u>7. Field Assistant Names</u></td><td style="width: 20%;"><u>Address</u></td><td style="width: 20%;"><u>Phone Number</u></td><td style="width: 25%;"><u>Email</u></td></tr></table>	<u>7. Field Assistant Names</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone Number</u>	<u>Email</u>
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<u>8. Aim &amp; Purpose for Research Activities</u>
<u>9. Scope of Proposed Activity</u> (include detailed proposal of methodology if necessary)
<u>10. Expected Duration of Project</u>
<u>11. Proposed Location of Activity</u> (include map if necessary)

12. Have you previously done research on LCWA land?	<b>Yes or No</b>
13. Have you given an orientation by LCWA?	<b>Yes or No</b>
14. Will you need vehicle access?	<b>Yes or No</b>
<u>If yes, how many vehicles?</u> _____	