

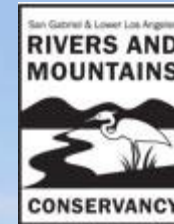


Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewardship Program Vision Plan

Created By:



Funded By:



Proposition 84



January 2018

LCWA Stewardship Program Vision Plan

Purpose of this Plan

The purpose of this Vision Plan is to provide a framework for future Stewardship Program restoration projects. Whereas the entirety of Los Cerritos Wetlands has many years of acquisition, remediation, and large scale restoration projects in its future; this document is a guide to how smaller scale restoration projects, implemented by community-based programs, can be achieved in the near future and where the best locations exist to implement this type of restoration approach. Five potential restoration projects are proposed by this plan, and it is expected that these projects would be phased over time as land is acquired and funding becomes available. Each phase's project is described in detail including information about the location's history, funding opportunities, habitat types, site improvements, community involvement, and the timeline for implementation. This plan also considers how to safely allow for public access and provides graphics that depict future habitat restoration areas complemented by proposed trail systems and interpretive elements. The main goal of this plan is to provide stakeholders and decision makers with a vision for future increased habitat value and community connectivity through parts of Los Cerritos Wetlands by means of community-based programming.

To best convey the current status of Los Cerritos, this plan first provides a history of Los Cerritos Wetlands and a description of current conditions, before describing the details of each proposed project phase.

The Mission of the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority

“provide for a comprehensive program of acquisition, protection, conservation, restoration, maintenance and operation and environmental enhancement of the Los Cerritos Wetlands area consistent with the goals of flood protection, habitat protection and restoration, and improved water supply, water quality, groundwater recharge, and water conservation”



Site Context

Los Cerritos Wetlands (LCW) is a complex of coastal wetlands that spans over 500 acres throughout Seal Beach and Long Beach, California at the estuary of the San Gabriel River. This tidal wetlands complex is connected to the Pacific Ocean through two water bodies; the San Gabriel River (via small culverts) and Alamitos Bay.

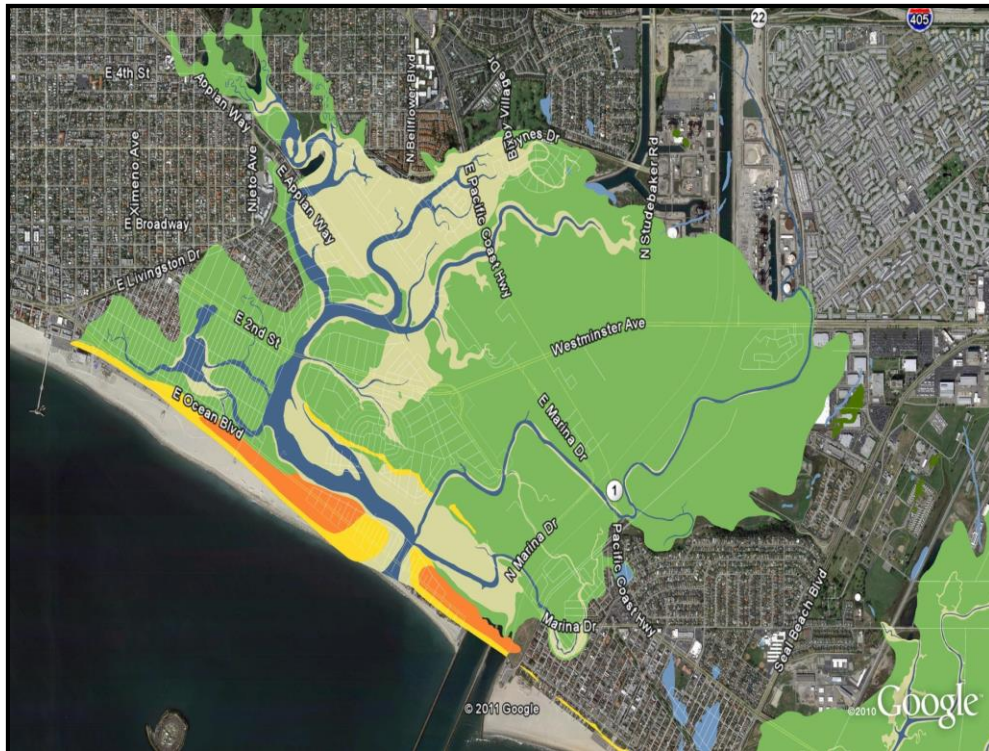
This plan identifies about 50 acres of Los Cerritos Wetlands that are prime for being enhanced and restored by the LCW Stewardship Program. This area stretches from the intersection of D.W.P and 2nd Street in Long Beach to the intersection of Pacific Coast Highway and 1st Street in Seal Beach and beyond to Gum Grove Park. This 50-acre expanse has 4 different land owners: the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA), Bryant-Dankin, LLC, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and the State Lands Commission. The properties also have numerous lessees including Signal Hill Petroleum, the City of Seal Beach, and Southern California Edison. The LCWA works with each of these entities in different capacities and the success of this project will be heavily based on coordinating with all of these stakeholders.

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Historic Timeline of Los Cerritos Wetlands

The Kizh (who later were named Gabrielenos by the Spanish) were the original humans who inhabited this region. Alamitos Bay, which was historically over 2,400 acres of coastal wetlands, was a critical resource for the villages in the area which included Puvungna.

- Late 1700's** – European immigration into the area impacted Kizh villages
- 1784** – Lower LA County and Upper Orange County were granted to Spanish soldier Manuel Nieto and split into 5 ranchos
- Late 1800's** – Rancho Los Alamitos (containing what is now LCW) was purchased by the Bixby family
- 1897** – Long Beach is incorporated as a City
- 1903** – Long Beach begins dredging and filling of Alamitos Bay to create Naples and Belmont Shore



- 1921** – Oil discovered in Signal Hill
- 1924** – Oil discovered in Seal Beach Oil Field
- 1938** – Los Angeles Flood and the start of the channelizing of the San Gabriel River
- Mid 1900's** – Large housing boom and increased oil drilling caused wetlands in the area to be reduced greatly
- 1973** – Endangered Species Act passed by US Congress to protect all endangered and threatened species and their respective habitats
- 1976** – Coastal Act passed, thus creating the California Coastal Commission to protect California's coastlines
- 1990's** – Stakeholder groups such as the El Dorado chapter of the Audubon Society began hosting bird walks on Los Cerritos Wetlands property
- 2001** – The Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust was formed
- 2006** – The Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority was formed as a joint powers agreement between the City of Long Beach, City of Seal Beach, San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles River's and Mountains Conservancy, and the State Coastal Conservancy
- 2006** – The LCWA purchased 66 acres of land in partnership with Signal Hill Petroleum Inc. from the Bryant Family in June 2006
- 2009** – Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority Stewardship Program was adopted
- 2010** – LCWA acquired the 5-acre 'Offer to Dedicate' Parcel from SCE
- 2010** – LCWA acquired 100 acres in Seal Beach from Hellman Properties LLC with funds from the Wildlife Conservation Board
- 2016** – LCWA adopted the Los Cerritos Wetlands Conceptual Restoration Plan, which provides analysis of 3 restoration alternatives for the entire wetlands complex
- 2017** – LCWA currently owns 171 acres of Los Cerritos Wetlands, but is constantly pursuing acquisitions of other properties with the approximately 500 acres of remaining open space.

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Restoration

The LCWA's Stewardship Program has afforded the community an opportunity to initiate making improvements to portions of the Los Cerritos Wetlands. The LCWA adopted the Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewardship Program in September of 2009 as a way to engage the public and allow volunteers to help the LCWA with managing and enhancing the habitat that exists on LCWA property. Since 2009 the Stewardship Program has hosted over 200 public events that have led to the cleanup and enhancement of 12-acres of land in-and-around a 3-acre tidal wetland called Zedler Marsh.

The work at Zedler Marsh is just the first phase for the Stewardship Program, and since it is nearly complete, it is time for the Stewardship program to expand their efforts. This Vision Plan provides insight into future phases of habitat restoration that can be completed through community-based programs.



Restoration of Zedler Marsh began in 2009 with the removal of thousands of pounds of trash out of the marsh, followed by the first planting on October 10, 2010. Since then, over 10,000 native plants have been installed by over 8,000 public volunteers. As many as 16,000 volunteer hours, equaling over \$375,000 in in-kind services have been applied to the project. The Stewardship Program hosts an average of 20 volunteers each first Saturday of the month, as well as two service-learning field trips per month. The Stewardship Program also boasts partner programs led by the Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust, the Aquarium of the Pacific, and the El Dorado Chapter of the Audubon Society. These programs include land tours, bird walks, and a citizen science sea turtle monitoring program. Currently the Los Cerritos Wetlands are not accessible to the public outside of these programs. The goal is to allow for unescorted public access in the near future.

From 2014 to 2016, the LCWA and LCW Land Trust received funding from four grant programs (including Prop 84 from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy) to create the Zedler Marsh Trails Project, which resulted in the creation of 0.6 miles of trail, installation of 3,000 native plants, removal of 2,000 pounds of non-native plants, and construction of an outdoor classroom. The grand opening for this project occurred on September 30th, 2017.

LCWA Stewardship Program Vision Plan



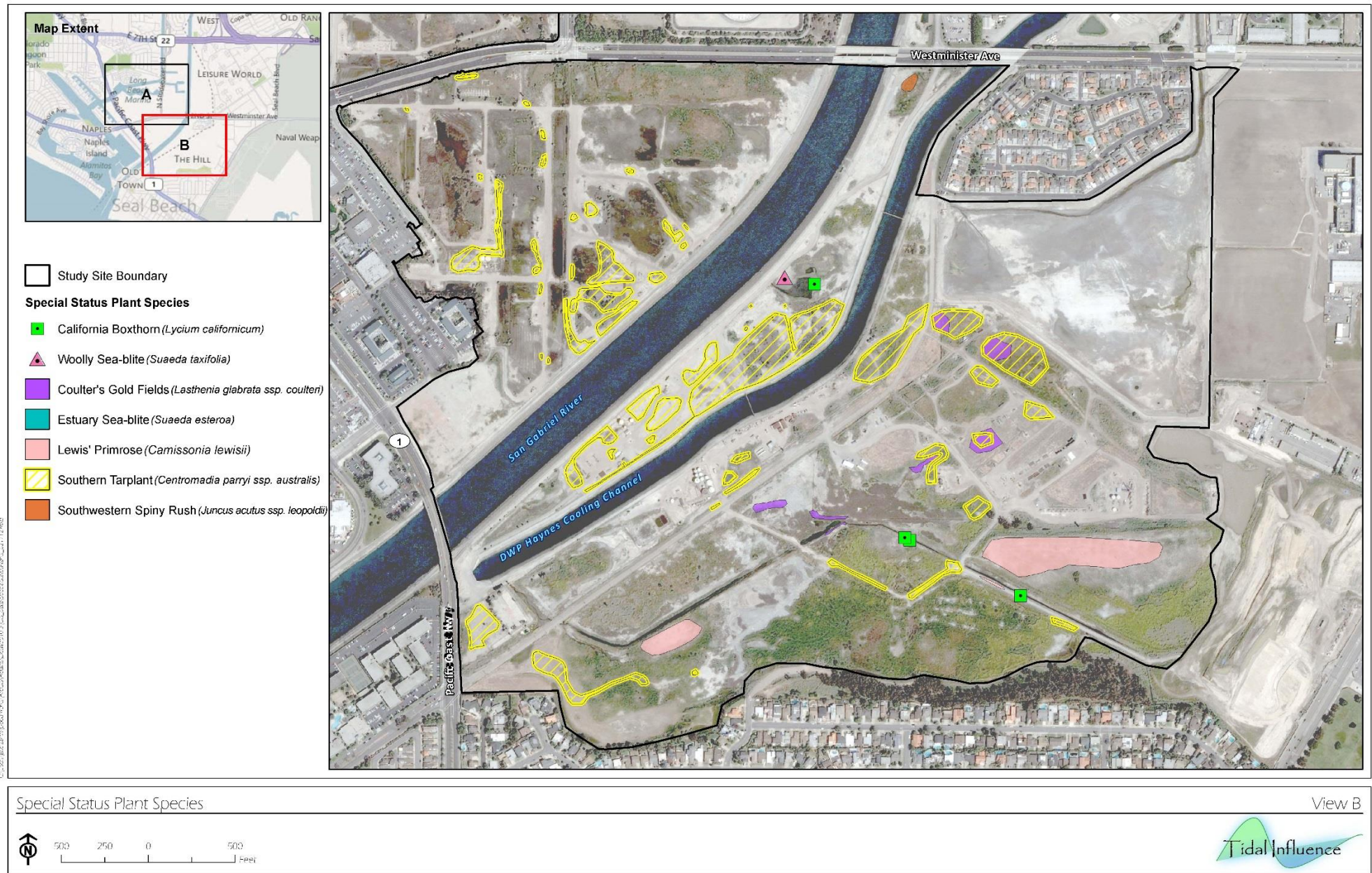
Current Conditions

Much of the subject 50-acres are degraded. However, several plant communities exist, including: southern coastal salt marsh, coastal sage scrub, alkali meadow, and mulefat scrub. These plant communities are mostly found within the 12-acre Zedler Marsh Phase 1 area, however, patches of these plant communities can be found throughout the 50-acre vision plan area. Three endangered animal species, the Belding's savannah sparrow, the California least tern, and the Pacific green sea turtle are found within the vision plan area, as well as 7 special status plant species, *Lasthenia glabrata coulterii* (Coulter's goldfields), *Juncus acutus* (spiny rush), *Suaeda esteroa* (estuary sea blite), *Suaeda taxifolia* (woolly sea blite), *Lycium californicum* (California box thorn), *Centromadia parryi australis* (southern tarplant), and *Cammissonia lewisii* (Lewis' primrose).

Currently, Zedler Marsh is the only portion of Los Cerritos Wetlands undergoing habitat restoration activities. Zedler Marsh is located on the "isthmus" of Los Cerritos Wetlands between 2nd Street/Westminster Avenue and Pacifica Coast Hwy in Long Beach.

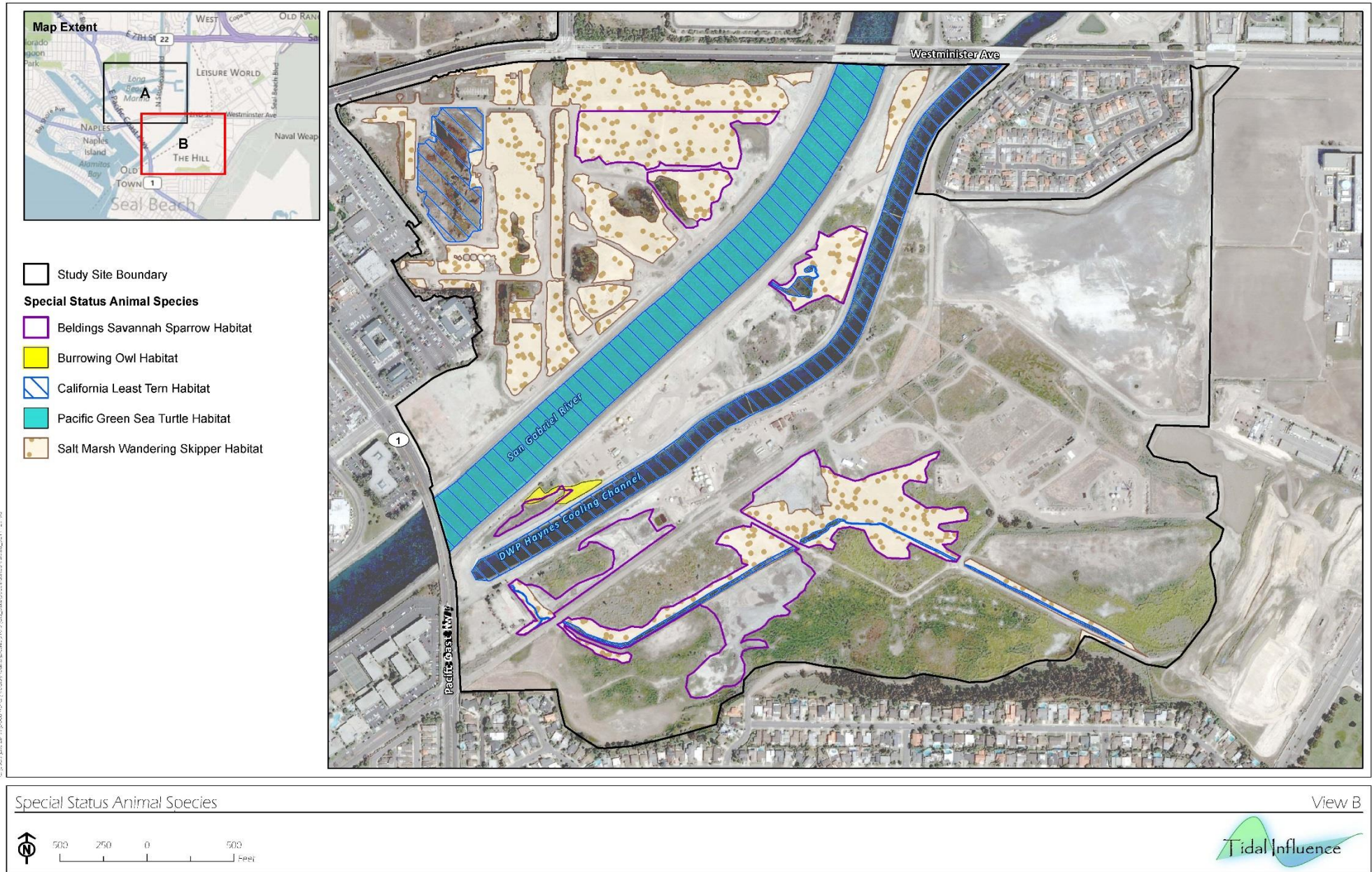
The Zedler Marsh trail system allows the public to safely access Los Cerritos Wetlands for the first time and also creates a usable outdoor education classroom for elementary to university-aged students to learn about their local urban wetlands. Once open, access will be confined to the Zedler Marsh restoration area and allowed only on certain hours of the week and weekend. The limitations are primarily due to the active oil facility that is adjacent to Zedler Marsh, making it unsafe for true unfettered access. High vagrancy rates in the area also present a challenge. Future plans are to create more free-flowing access to different portions of Los Cerritos Wetlands, allowing for the public to safely move along over 1.5 miles of trails throughout the wetlands. This document provides the vision for those future plans.

LCWA Stewardship Program Vision Plan



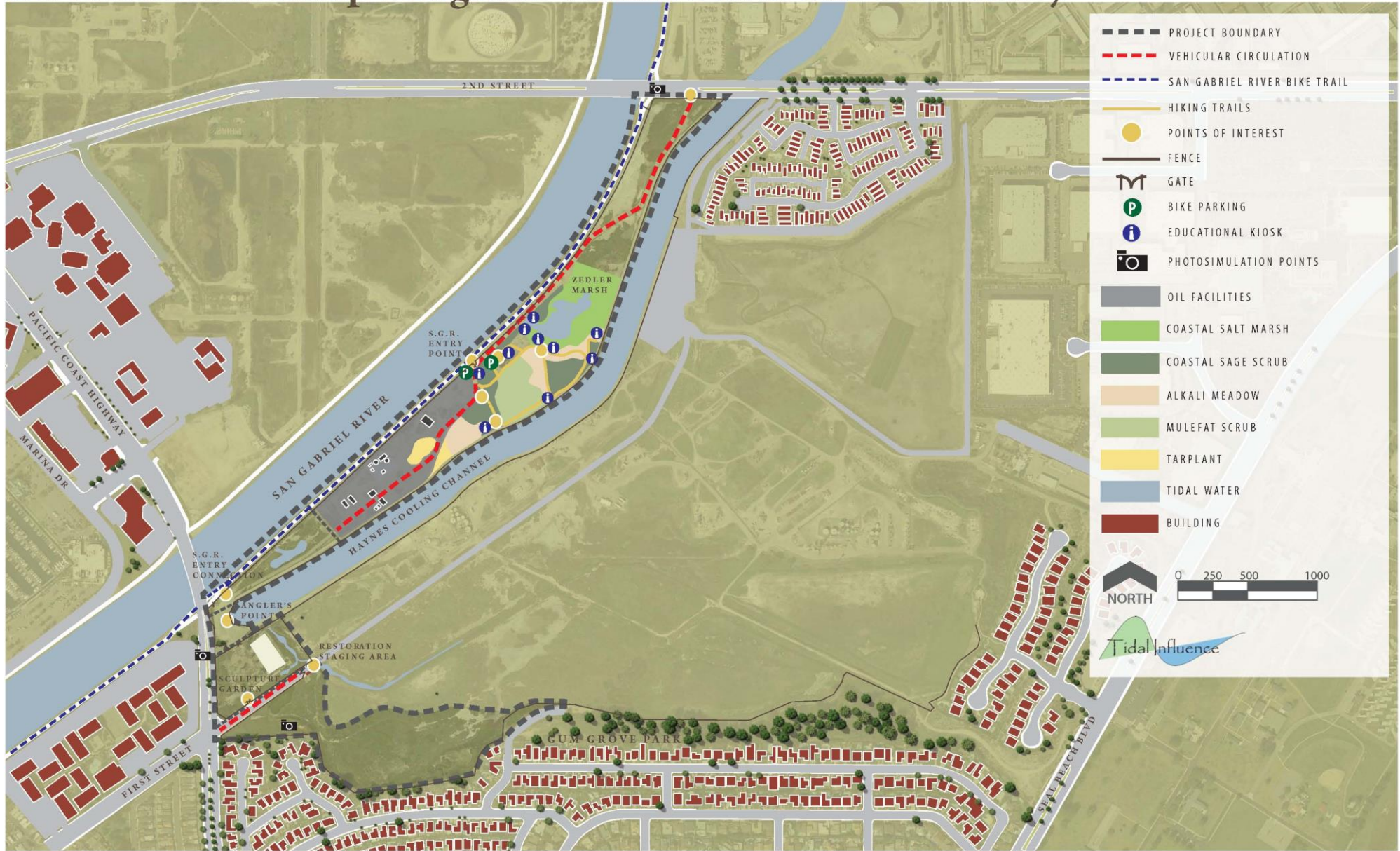
Current Conditions: Special Status Plant Species Habitat Areas

LCWA Stewardship Program Vision Plan



Current Conditions: Special Status Animal Species Habitat Areas

LCWA Stewardship Program Vision Plan: Site Inventory



Current Conditions

Project Phasing Timeline

Phase 1 - Zedler Marsh Restoration - September 2009 - November 2017

Phase 2 - Zedler Marsh Bryant Expansion - June 2018 - December 2023

Phase 3 - LCW Stewardship Program Center - 2019 - 2021

Phase 4 - Hellman Bluffs- 2020 - 2026

Phase 5 - Callaway Interactive Marsh - 2030 - 2035



LCWA Stewardship Program Vision Plan: Overview



Phase 1 - Zedler Marsh Restoration - Complete

The Program:

This phase began in September 2009 and was completed in November 2017. The goal of this phase was to protect, enhance and restore a 3-acre tidal salt marsh and the surrounding habitat areas while increasing public accessibility to coastal resources in Los Angeles County through the creation of a new trail network. Zedler Marsh is adjacent to the Class I San Gabriel River Bike Trail, which runs 38 miles inland through 19 cities from Seal Beach River's End to the Azusa Wilderness Park. The adjacency of this facility allows for the public to enter the project area from the San Gabriel River to explore over a half mile of nature trails. Along with increased accessibility, several plant communities were enhanced to support special status species including a small population of the state-endangered Belding's savannah sparrow. Together these plant communities provide exceptional ecological diversity with over 50 different species of native plants that attract a wide variety of residential and migratory birds, reptiles, insects, fish, and mammals.

Site Improvements:

- Over 10,000 native plants installed
- Over 20,000 pounds of non-native plants removed
- Over 3,000 linear feet of trails created
- 11 interpretive kiosks and a bulletin boards installed
- 2 new access points created
- Benches and picnic tables installed
- Native plant nursery improvements
- Outdoor classroom area created
- Native plant demonstration gardens
- Upgraded irrigation system

Community Involvement:

The community was involved with every piece of this project, from planting native plants to building the decomposed granite trails. Multiple school classes, organizations, and groups attended over 100 events over the 3-year project. CSULB, LBCC, Rosie the Riveter Charter School, Long Beach Conservation Corps, Whitney High School, and many more joined our team to create this beautiful area for the public to enjoy.

Funding:

This phase was funded by numerous grants. Initial habitat improvements were funded by the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project, California Coastal Commission, South Coast Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, and US Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program. The trail development was funded by Los Angeles County (Measure A), Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (Prop 84), and the Wildlife Conservation Board (Prop 40).

Permitting:

A coastal development permit was acquired before the start of any restoration work.

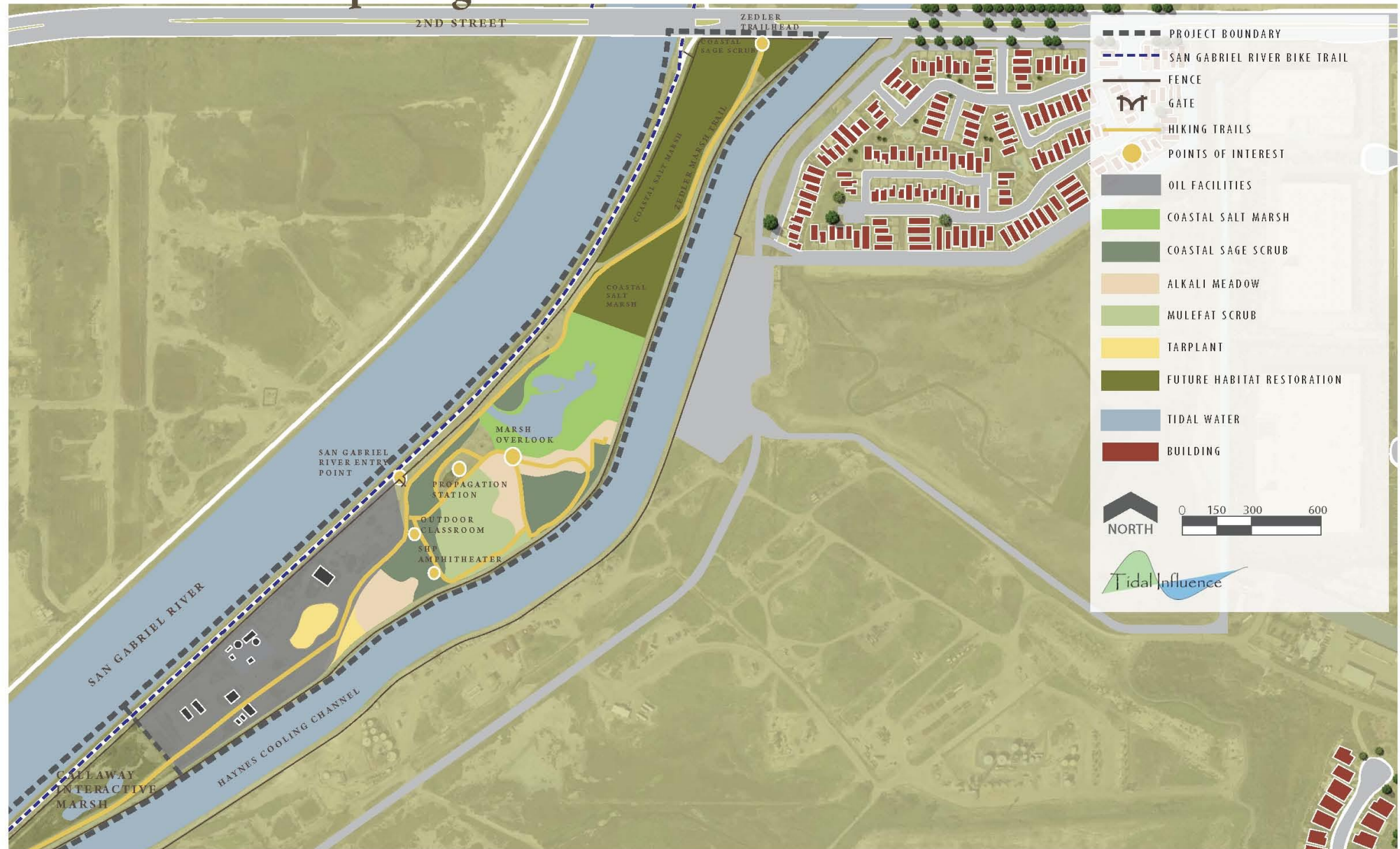
Plant Communities Enhanced:

- Southern California Coastal Salt Marsh
-*Salicornia*, *Franeknia*, *Distichlis*...
- Marsh-Upland Transition Zone
-*Suaeda*, *Lycium*, *Isocoma*...
- Coastal Sage Scrub
-*Encelia*, *Artemesia*, *Atriplex*...
- Alkali meadow
-*Anemopsis*, *Elymus*, *Juncus*...
- Mulefat Scrub
-*Baccharis salicifolia*, *Baccharis pilularis*

Phase 1 - Zedler Marsh Restoration – Before/After



LCWA Stewardship Program Vision Plan: Zedler Marsh



Phase 2 - Zedler Marsh Extension

The Program:

The goal of this phase is to create a non-tidal wetland buffer adjacent to Zedler Marsh that will allow for upward migration of the coastal salt marsh ecosystem when predicted future sea level rise occurs. This essentially will be an expansion of the work that occurred in Phase 1 and its proximity makes it the most sensible project for the Stewardship Program to pursue next. This phase will be composed of multiple stages that will be completed over several years. These stages include property acquisition, planning and permitting, habitat restoration, and access improvements. The future habitat restoration will result in the diversification of existing non-tidal salt marsh plant communities, vegetation of existing non-tidal salt flats, creation of transition zone and coastal sage scrub plant communities, enhancement of existing ruderal wetlands and protection of special status plant species including southern tarplant and spiny rush. In total, 4.87 acres of habitat will be restored. Additionally, this phase will result in over 1,200 linear feet of new trails along the existing roadway designed to connect of the Zedler Marsh Trails to 2nd Street, as well as make aesthetic improvements to the property's roadway frontage and the creation of a designated parking near the entrance driveway.

Current Ownership:

Bryant-Dankin, LLC (numerous easements including Signal Hill Petroleum and LADWP); The LCWA anticipates acquiring the property in 2018.

Proposed Site Improvements:

Non-native plant control, soil amendments, water meter and irrigation system installation, erosion control measures, superficial hydrologic improvements, native plant installation and care, trail creation, trailside fencing and interpretive kiosk installation

Community Involvement:

Service-learning programs will perform the majority of the site preparation and vegetation installation. Urban youth employment organizations (e.g. Conservation Corps) can provide a labor source for trail creation. Consultants and contractors needed to create designs, submit permits, amend soils, install irrigation systems and procure vegetation.

Existing Plant Communities:

Non-tidal salt marsh and salt flats; Ruderal uplands and wetlands

Proposed Plant Communities:

Tidal salt marsh, marsh-upland transition zone, alkali meadow, coastal sage scrub

Potential Funding Sources:

California Proposition 1, LA County Measure A, Warne Family Fund, 5 Star Restoration Grant Program, California Native Plant Society

Permitting:

Coastal Development Permit; Inclusion in the LCWA's Restoration Plan Environmental Impact Report

Phase 2 - Zedler Marsh Extension - Current



Phase 2 - Zedler Marsh Extension - Vision



Phase 3 – LCW Stewardship Program Center

The Program:

The goal of this phase is to create a hub for all of the Stewardship Programs activities while fashioning a highly accessible place for people to explore Los Cerritos Wetlands. This phase will clean up a derelict property that is located on the gateway between the cities of Seal Beach and Long Beach. This portion of the Los Cerritos Wetlands Complex has one of the richest histories. In the 1940's William Robertson created a gambling zone and Airport Club at this location that lasted until gambling was banned in Seal Beach in 1953. The site was then used for boat sales until the 1960's when Robertson turned the Quonset hut Airport Club into a dance hall and rock-and-roll venue called Marina Palace. This facility hosted headliners such as Ike and Tina Turner, Little Richard, Alice Cooper, Van Morrison, and many other local bands. The foundation from this building still exists on-site, offering a great opportunity to reinvigorate this location for a new purpose as a center for the LCWA's Stewardship Program. This phase is slated to begin in 2019 and will take around 2-years to complete. This facility will be designed for quick access to wetlands and educational resources for all abilities. Once complete, the 4.15-acre property will showcase a trail system connecting the Long Beach and Seal Beach portion of Los Cerritos Wetlands along a small portion of the California Coastal Trails. The Trails will meander through a native plant demonstration garden, an urban nature sculpture garden, a tidal wetland, interpretive kiosks, and lead to the Stewardship Program Center. The Stewardship Program Center will likely take the form of a portable structure (e.g. trailer or shipping container) that will be staged on the existing foundation. A 'Welcome to Los Cerritos Wetlands' sign, designed to act as a landmark, will be installed on PCH.

Property Ownership:

The State Lands Commission owns 3.5 acres and has several lessees including the LCWA, Edison, LADWP, and the City of Seal Beach. The LCWA owns 0.65 acres behind the foundation.

Proposed Site Improvements:

Trash clean-up, non-native plant control, fence repairs, ADA trails, native plant demonstration garden, tidal wetlands restoration, installation of portable structure for Stewardship Program Center, urban nature sculpture garden, 'Welcome to Los Cerritos Wetlands' sign, southern tarplant population protection, interpretive kiosks, parking improvements

Community Involvement: Service-learning programs will perform trash clean-ups, non-native plant control, installation of native vegetation, conservation of the existing southern tarplant population, and trail creation. Consultants and contractors will be needed to create designs, submit permits, repair fences, install signage and procure structure for the Center.

Existing Habitats:

Ruderal uplands dominated by mustard, castor bean, and fennel; southern coastal salt marsh; tarplant populations; and non-native trees.

Future habitats:

Coastal Sage Scrub, Tarplant, and coastal salt marsh with transition zone

Potential Funding Sources: State Lands Commission, California Proposition 1, County of Orange, City of Seal Beach, Orange County Community Foundation, California Native Plant Society, Arts Orange County, Southern California Edison, Annenberg Foundation

Permitting: Coastal Development Permit, City of Seal Beach Building Permit

LCWA Stewardship Program Vision Plan: State Lands & Callaway Marsh



LCWA Stewardship Program Vision Plan

Phase 3 – LCW Stewardship Program Center - Current



LCWA Stewardship Program Vision Plan

Phase 3 – LCW Stewardship Program Center - Vision



Phase 4 – Hellman Bluff Trails

The Program:

The goal of this phase is to connect a popular trail system in Gum Grove Park to the California Coastal Trail and beyond, while restoring a historic coastal bluff system. This project is one of the most essential projects for Los Cerritos Wetlands for it involves achieving public access to a 100-acre parcel of land owned by the LCWA since 2010. This 100-acre location is not currently accessible to the public outside of Stewardship Program events. Much of the landscape is composed of non-native vegetation, however, temporary trails have been carved out for tours and land management access. This phase is slated to begin in 2020 and will last as many as six years and will be composed of multiple stages. The stages will comprise 5- to 10-acre sections of the Bluff and adjoining habitats starting near the PCH entrance and ending at Gum Grove Park. Two new access gates will be installed with one located along 1st street where Stewardship Program participants currently park and the other connecting the property with Gum Grove Park. The existing parking area along 1st Street will also be improved by this phase. The proposed 3,500 linear foot trail system will be designed so it can be used as a loop and will have 2 spurs that lead to elevated overlooks on the bluff. The bluff runs behind homes located in the Seal Beach neighborhood commonly referred to as “The Hill”. Therefore, plant palettes will be designed to ensure fire safety and limit the need for regular maintenance through full modification. This phase is located solely in upland habitat areas that are not planned to be restored as tidal wetlands. Therefore, this phase will help to preserve a portion of the terrestrial habitat since a much of Los Cerritos Wetlands are being planned to become tidally influenced.

Property Ownership: Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority

Proposed Site Improvements:

Non-native plant control, fence repairs, trail improvements and creation of overlooks, native plant installation, access improvements, interpretive kiosks, parking improvements, and establishment of a Stewardship Program Restoration Staging Area

Community involvement:

The public will have a large roll with helping remove non-native plants, planting native plants, and trail building for this project. This project will necessitate the creation of a “Trail Team” program designed to engage volunteers interested in building and maintaining long sections of trails through urban wildlands. Conservation Corps will be of use to assist with trail creation and facility improvements.

Existing habitats:

Ruderal uplands dominated by iceplant, mustard, and Russian thistle mixed with a few native plant species

Future habitats:

Coastal sage scrub, Southern Coastal Bluff Scrub, and Non-tidal Salt Marsh; Fire resistant landscaping near homes

Permitting:

Coastal Development Permit; Inclusion in the LCWA’s Restoration Plan Environmental Impact Report

Potential Funding Sources:

California Proposition 1, County of Orange, Orange County Community Foundation, trail building grant programs

LCWA Stewardship Program Vision Plan: Hellman Bluffs



Phase 4 – Hellman Bluff Trails - Current



Phase 4 – Hellman Bluff Trails - Vision



Phase 5 – Callaway Interpretive Marsh and Recreation Area

The Program:

This phase is located in a dynamic part of the conservation area which offers the opportunity to blend several different recreational opportunities and beneficial uses into a relatively small 3.5-acre space. Currently this location is fully accessible to the public and has become an undermaintained “no-mans-land”. A portion of the site includes a tiny tidal marsh commonly called Callaway Marsh. This habitat area is highly degraded and therefore offers a unique opportunity to be utilized as an interpretive marsh designed for hosting student research projects and as an outdoor laboratory for K-University level field trips. This phase is located adjacent to the beginning of Haynes cooling channel, which is a popular fishing spot that should be perpetuated. This phase is also connected to the San Gabriel River Bike Trail and offers an opportunity to install a variety of recreational facilities for use by cyclists or other passersby. Ultimately this location will hopefully act as a sink for certain recreational activities that are not appropriate for the more sensitive portions of Los Cerritos Wetlands.

Property Ownership:

City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

Potential Site Improvements:

Wetlands mural, mini rock-climbing wall, bike rest depot with shade structures, handball court, ping pong tables, exercise equipment, non-native plant removal, native plant landscaping, trail directional signage, parking improvements, Callaway Marsh enhancement (examples below)

Community Involvement:

Much of this phase has potential for capital projects that are best implemented by contractors, however there is an opportunity for service-learning programs to be involved with overall clean-up of the site and in the enhancement of Callaway Marsh

Potential Funding:

Los Angeles County measure A, State Park Bond Measures, Urban greening grant programs, Environmental education grant programs

Permitting:

Coastal Development Permit, City of Seal Beach Building Permit



LCWA Stewardship Program Vision Plan: State Lands & Callaway Marsh





Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewardship Program Vision Plan

For more information about how to get involved with the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority's Stewardship program contact:
iwanttohelp@tidalinfluence.com

