

**Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority**

**Date:** November 3, 2016

**To:** Governing Board Members

**From:** Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

**Subject:** **Item 6: Consideration of a resolution to accept Proposition 1 Grant Funds subject to award from the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for the: 1. Los Cerritos Wetlands Acquisition of the Bryant Properties and 2. Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration and Planning Project.**

**RECOMMENDATION ACTION:** Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority authorizes to accept Proposition 1 Grant Funds subject to award from the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for the: 1. Los Cerritos Wetlands Acquisition of the Bryant Properties and 2. Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration and Planning Project.

**BACKGROUND:** The Los Cerritos Wetlands is a 500-acre mosaic of public and privately owned properties, land uses and resources located along Pacific Coast Highway, the lower reach of the San Gabriel River, and the Los Angeles-Orange county line. During the past several decades, various agencies and organizations prepared a number of studies and partial restoration plans for portions of the wetlands, but none offers a comprehensive strategy for restoration of the entire wetland area overtime; therefore, the LCWA initiated a conceptual restoration plan for these properties. The LCWA hired Moffatt & Nichol to complete the Los Cerritos Wetlands Conceptual Restoration Plan (CRP) which was develop by a technical team of restoration ecologists, landscape architects, engineers and hydrologists to develop the CRP for the purpose of designing alternatives which are feasible, cost-effective, and ecologically-beneficial restoration alternatives for the Los Cerritos Wetlands.

The CRP included the entire 500 acres of the Los Cerritos Wetlands Complex, which included all the LCWA properties and in combination with adjacent public and private properties, the CRP offers a rare opportunity to restore coastal wetlands and create public access improvements. The CRP was developed by technical consulting team to review previous plans and studies related to the Los Cerritos Wetlands and compiled information about many important issues that would affect restoration and public access, such as: existing habitats, sensitive species, wildlife corridors, archeological resources, hydrology, hydraulics, sediment characterization, sea level rise impacts, regulatory mandates, permitting requirements, public access and interpretative opportunities.

The CRP was adopted at the August 12, 2015 Board Meeting with the recommendation to move forward with pursuing funds for the next step of the CRP, which is the environmental review as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The environmental review will analysis the CRP's three proposed alternatives or a hybrid alternative may result in joint Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Programmatic EIR/EIS. Staff applied for various Proposition 1 grant to fund the environmental review of the CRP but only the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) awarded funds.

The LCWA applied and received preliminary award from the RMC on September 26, 2016 for the Los Cerritos Wetlands Planning and Restoration Project in the amount of \$350,000, these grant funds are contingent upon the RMC board approval. Staff continues to work with the RMC to finalize the task list, timeline and budget for the Los Cerritos Wetlands Planning and Restoration Project in order to provide a complete budget which will include all matching funds. Following is a brief project description.

### **Los Cerritos Wetlands Conceptual Restoration Plan - Project Description**

Four years of conceptual restoration planning and stakeholder engagement led to the development of three restoration alternatives for Los Cerritos Wetlands. The alternatives were developed to provide the range of possible scenarios and an intermediate action. Alternatives include:

**Alternative 1 – Minimum Alteration** – This alternative largely retains the existing site conditions and character to the greatest extent, while expanding areas of tidal influence. Tides are introduced to the sites by improving existing tidal connections and providing new ones where needed. Oil infrastructure remains largely unchanged. Culverts are used nearly everywhere to convey tides, and only minimal topographic changes are made to enable water to penetrate into the sites as far as possible. Large areas of upland habitat remain unaltered.

**Alternative 2 – Moderate Alteration** – This alternative largely reconfigures the sites with new channel networks on parcels north of the San Gabriel River, and retains existing channel networks on sites south of the San Gabriel River. Overall, this alternative emphasizes mid- and high marsh, and transitional habitats. Areas north of the San Gabriel River are lowered to provide low tidal wetland habitats, while areas south of the San Gabriel River remain relatively high with more mid- and high marsh, and supra-tidal habitats.

Open channels convey tides everywhere, except at the site referred to as the Isthmus Area. Oil operations are consolidated on all areas except the Isthmus Area. The majority of existing upland habitat areas remain unaltered.

**Alternative 3 – Maximum Alteration** – This alternative reconfigures the sites with new channel networks at all areas. Overall, this alternative emphasizes subtidal, low, and mid-marsh. Smaller areas of transitional and upland habitat remain. Large portions of each area are lowered in elevation to provide low tidal wetland habitats. Open channels convey tides everywhere except at the Isthmus Area. Oil production and exploration infrastructure is consolidated on all areas.

The Final CRP presents the preliminary designs and phasing of alternatives. The document analyses habitats, public accessibility, tidal hydrology, likely construction scenarios, maintenance requirements and construction costs. Analyses are summarized by alternative, yet no alternative was determined to be preferred over others. Now that the CRP is complete, the next steps for the LCWA is to perform certain preliminary environmental studies and technical and focused biological surveys for the CRP. The environmental review will be performed for all three proposed alternatives. The document must reflect the phasing, but the project should be processed comprehensively rather than being processed at each phase. An Environmental Initial Study should be performed as part of a subsequent task to indicate the level of environmental review required. Due to the sensitivity of the existing site, the potential for contaminants to be present and the potential controversy from multiple stakeholder groups, an EIR/EIS may be appropriate for this project.

For conservatism in planning, it is assumed that the appropriate document will be a joint CEQA/NEPA document and likely an EIR/EIS. A joint EIR/EIS may be the most appropriate document to prepare to address all issues comprehensively. Completion of the CEQA/NEPA process may take up to one and one-half years (dependent upon stakeholder engagement process).

**FISCAL:** Resolution 2016-02 previously approved the development and submittal of these grant applications and designated the LCWA Chair Executive as the authorized signatory to accept Proposition 1 Grant Funds from the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for the: (1.) Los Cerritos Wetlands Acquisition of the Bryant Properties grants funds for a total amount of \$1,000,000 and (2.) Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration and Planning Project grants funds for a total amount of \$350,000 contingent upon the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy board approval. Further LCWA FY16/17 Budget will be amended as necessary to accept RMC grant funds.

California voters approved the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (“Proposition 1” or “Water Bond”) codified as Division 26.7 of the Water Code which authorized \$7.545 billion dollars in general obligation bonds for State water projects, including surface and groundwater storage, ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration, and drinking water protection.

Item 6: RMC Proposition 1 Grant Funds

November 3, 2016 – Item 6

RESOLUTION 2016 – 16

RESOLUTION OF THE LOS CERRITOS WETLANDS AUTHORITY AUTHORIZES THE LCWA CHAIR TO ACCEPT PROPOSITION 1 GRANT FUNDS SUBJECT TO AWARD FROM THE SAN GABRIEL AND LOWER LOS ANGELES RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY FOR THE: 1. LOS CERRITOS WETLANDS ACQUISITION OF THE BRYANT PROPERTIES AND 2. LOS CERRITOS WETLANDS RESTORATION AND PLANNING PROJECT.

WHEREAS, the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (Authority) has been established between the Coastal Conservancy, the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, the City of Seal Beach and the City of Long Beach to facilitate the acquisition, protection, conservation, restoration, maintenance and operation an environmental enhancement of the Los Cerritos Wetlands; and

WHEREAS, the people of the State of California have enacted the Water Quality, Supply and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1), which provides funds for the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy grant program; and

WHEREAS, The Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority to accept Proposition 1 Grant Funds subject to award from the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for the: 1. Los Cerritos Wetlands Acquisition of the Bryant Properties and 2. Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration and Planning Project; and

WHEREAS, said grant application contains assurances that the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority complies and understands the General Requirements and General Policies for the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy Proposition 1 Grant Program Guidelines; and

WHEREAS, the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority will enter into separate agreements with the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for the Los Cerritos Wetlands Acquisition of the Bryant Properties and the Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration and Planning Project contingent upon the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy Board; and

WHEREAS, the LCWA has further been established to focus on projects which will provide open space, habitat restoration, and watershed improvement projects within the Los Cerritos Wetlands; and

WHEREAS, this action is exempt from the environmental impact report requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); NOW

*Therefore be it resolved,* that the LCWA hereby:

1. FINDS that this action is consistent with the purposes and objectives of the LCWA.

2. FINDS that the actions contemplated by this resolution are exempt from the environmental impact report requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.
3. Authorizes the LCWA Chair the authorized signatory to accept the accept grant funds from San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for the Los Cerritos Wetlands Acquisition of the Bryant Properties and the Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration and Planning Project contingent upon the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains board approval and amends the LCWA Budget FY16/17 as necessary.
4. Appoints the LCWA Chair, or designee, to execute and submit all documents including, but not limited to, applications, agreements, amendments, payment requests and so forth, which may be necessary for the completion of the aforementioned grant agreement.
5. ADOPTS staff report dated November 3, 2016.

*~ End of Resolution ~*

Passed and Adopted by the Board of the LOS CERRITOS WETLANDS AUTHORITY on November 3, 2016

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Sam Schuchat, LCWA Chair

ATTEST:

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David Edsall  
Deputy Attorney General