

# LOS CERRITOS WETLANDS RESTORATION PLAN

Final Program Environmental Impact Report  
State Clearinghouse Number: 2019039050

Prepared for  
Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority

October 2020





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***Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority***

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**COVER PHOTO CREDIT:** Tidal Influence, Looking east at Steamshovel Slough

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# CHAPTER 1

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## Introduction to the Final EIR

### 1.1 Purpose of the Final EIR

This Final Program Environmental Impact Report (Final PEIR) has been prepared in conformance to the environmental policy guidelines for the implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to evaluate the environmental effects that may result from the implementation of conceptual restoration designs for approximately 503 acres of land and water located on the border of Orange County and Los Angeles and County in the cities of Seal Beach and Long Beach.

According to *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15132, the Final EIR shall consist of:

- (a) The Draft EIR or a revision of the Draft;
- (b) Comments and recommendations received on the Draft EIR, either verbatim or in summary;
- (c) A list of persons, organizations, and public agencies commenting on the Draft EIR;
- (d) The responses of the lead agency to significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process;
- (e) Any other information added by the lead agency.

This document contains responses to comments received on the circulated Draft PEIR for the proposed project during the public review period which began May 8, 2020, and closed July 6, 2020. This document has been prepared in accordance with CEQA and the *CEQA Guidelines* and represents the independent judgment of the lead agency, the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA). This document and the circulated Draft PEIR comprise the Final PEIR in accordance with *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15132.

### 1.2 Format of the Final EIR

The following chapters are contained within this document:

- **Chapter 1, *Introduction to the Final PEIR*.** This chapter describes CEQA requirements and the content of the Final PEIR.
- **Chapter 2, *Responses to Comments*.** This chapter provides a list of agencies, organizations, and interested individuals who commented on the Draft PEIR; copies of their comment letters received during the public review period; and responses to their individual comments. To facilitate review of the responses, each comment letter has been assigned a code, and each individual comment within these letters has been assigned a number.

- **Chapter 3, *Draft PEIR Revisions*.** This chapter contains a table identifying the sections of the Draft PEIR that have been revised as a result of the comments received by tribes, agencies, organizations and individuals as described in Chapter 2, and/or errors and omissions discovered subsequent to release of the Draft PEIR for public review.

LCWA has determined that none of this material constitutes significant new information that requires recirculation of the Draft PEIR for further public comment under *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15088.5. The additional material clarifies existing information prepared in the Draft PEIR and does not present any new substantive information. None of this new material indicates that the project would result in a significant new environmental impact not previously disclosed in the Draft PEIR. Additionally, none of this material indicates that there would be a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified environmental impact that would not be mitigated, nor that there would be any of the other circumstances requiring recirculation described in Section 15088.5.

- **Chapter 4, *Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program*.** This chapter includes the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP). CEQA requires lead agencies to “adopt a reporting and mitigation monitoring program for the changes to the project which it has adopted or made a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment” (CEQA Section 21081.6, *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15097). The MMRP was prepared based on the mitigation measures included in this Final PEIR.
- **Appendix A, *Revised Draft PEIR*.** This appendix includes the chapters and sections from the Draft PEIR that have been revised in response to comments received by tribes, agencies, organizations and individuals. Changes made to the Draft EIR are identified in ~~strikeout text~~ to indicate deletions and in single-underlined text to signify additions.
- **Appendix B, *M Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan*.** This appendix provides a framework for the Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Program for monitoring, assessing, and managing potential hydrodynamic and water and sediment quality impacts to biological resources and human health from and to the program after construction.

## 1.3 CEQA Requirements Regarding Comments and Responses

*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15204(a) outlines parameters for submitting comments, and reminds persons and public agencies that the focus of review and comment of Draft EIRs should be “on the sufficiency of the document in identifying and analyzing the possible impacts on the environment and ways in which the significant effects of the project might be avoided or mitigated. Comments are most helpful when they suggest additional specific alternatives or mitigation measures that would provide better ways to avoid or mitigate the significant environmental effects. At the same time, reviewers should be aware that the adequacy of an EIR is determined in terms of what is reasonably feasible ... CEQA does not require a lead agency to conduct every test or perform all research, study, and experimentation recommended or demanded by commenters. When responding to comments, lead agencies need only respond to significant environmental issues and do not need to provide all information requested by reviewers, as long as a good faith effort at full disclosure is made in the EIR.”



*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15204(c) further advises, “Reviewers should explain the basis for their comments, and should submit data or references offering facts, reasonable assumptions based on facts, or expert opinion supported by facts in support of the comments. Pursuant to Section 15064, an effect shall not be considered significant in the absence of substantial evidence.” Section 15204(d) also states, “Each responsible agency and trustee agency shall focus its comments on environmental information germane to that agency’s statutory responsibility.” Section 15204 (e) states, “This section shall not be used to restrict the ability of reviewers to comment on the general adequacy of a document or of the lead agency to reject comments not focused as recommended by this section.”

In accordance with CEQA, Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21092.5, copies of the written responses to public agencies will be forwarded to those agencies at least 10 days prior to certification of the environmental impact report. The responses will be forwarded with copies of this Final EIR document, as permitted by CEQA, and will conform to the legal standards established for response to comments on the Draft EIR.

## **1.4 Public Meeting During the Draft PEIR Public Comment Period**

LCWA conducted a two-part virtual public meeting during the Draft PEIR comment period. Both virtual meetings were recorded and posted on the LCWA website.

The first public meeting took place on May 21st, 2020. This meeting covered the CEQA process and the project description (Chapter 2 of the Draft PEIR). Meeting attendees asked questions regarding land ownership, the no action alternative, habitat designations, nesting trees, proposed visitor centers, and the LCWA logo.

The second public meeting took place on June 4th, 2020. This meeting covered the impact analysis (Chapter 3 of the Draft PEIR) and alternatives (Chapter 5 of the Draft PEIR). Meeting attendees asked questions regarding tribal cultural resources and Native American tribal entities, earthwork, berm height and footprint, existing oil operations, and flooding of existing habitats.

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