

MINUTES
Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority
(LCWA)

Held On
Thursday, November 2, 2023 at 12:30 pm

At
CCLB Headquarters
340 Nieto Ave Long Beach, CA 90814
Conference Room

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

Chair Duggan called the meeting to order at approximately 12:32pm.

2. Roll Call

Voting Members Present

Kristina Duggan, Councilmember/ Long Beach, Chair
Joe Kalmick, Mayor/ Seal Beach, Vice Chair
Roberto Uranga, Councilmember/ Long Beach
Megan Cooper, State Coastal Conservancy (Designee)

Staff Present

Mark Stanley, Executive Officer
Elizabeth St. John, Deputy Attorney General
Aimee Nguyen, Office Technician
Eric Zahn, Principal Restoration Ecologist/ Tidal Influence

3. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

4. Chair's Report

There was no Chair's Report.

5. Approval of Minutes

One set of minutes from the August 24, 2023 meeting was approved.

Vice Chair Kalmick moved to approve. Board member Uranga seconded. Approved.
Roll call vote—Ayes= 4; Nays = 0; Abstentions =0.

Regular Calendar

6. Status Report on Work Plan Implementation

a) Update on the Los Cerritos Wetlands Conceptual Restoration Plan (2015)

Mark Stanley stated this report includes projects and stewardship program updates. Stanley stated blue highlights in the Board Packet note potential funding sources. Stanley stated there are five projects in the packet. Stanley stated page five of the report includes pending environmental documents for Long Beach and page six includes lease agreements including for the OTD parcel. Stanley stated the Board Packet includes completed and active grants. Stanley stated page ten of the report includes consultant contracts and MOU agreements, including agreements with Signal Hill Petroleum and Seal Beach. Stanley stated education programs are noted in green. Stanley stated brief updates on the joint powers and stewardship partners are included.

Eric Zahn stated the Conceptual Restoration Plan was approved in August 2015 and the FEIR was certified by the LCWA Board in July 2021. Zahn stated the Conceptual Restoration Plan Foundational Document was comprehensive and holistic. Zahn stated the location stretched from Loynes to Gum Grove Park. Zahn stated many technical studies were conducted and three alternatives were developed. Zahn stated 503 acres were reduced from the Conceptual Plan. Zahn stated a phasing proposal was given for when parcels could go through conservation. Zahn showed a picture of what the Los Cerritos Wetlands could look like in ten years and a picture of Los Cerritos Wetlands ownership. Zahn stated there are about 11 to 12 different owners. Zahn stated the Southern Wetlands are in permit planning and the Hellman site is in acquisition. Zahn stated Callaway Marsh is a potential acquisition site, and the Isthmus Lana site is in habitat restoration. Zahn noted the Central Bryant site is an important potential acquisition. Zahn stated the Southern and Northern Synergy sites are in active acquisition.

Stanley added there are active Loynes and Bryant property discussions, but there are not discussions yet for the other parcels.

Chair Duggan asked if there are any habitat restoration activities on unowned properties. Zahn stated Orange County is doing restoration on the basin and has plans for some work in the Northern area. Zahn stated 12 acres of Zedler Marsh are most active in restoration. Chair Duggan asked about the Haynes property being acquired. Zahn stated this property would not be acquired until at least 2029, as the owner is still using the property. Vice Chair Kalmick asked if there are plans to remove the concrete foundation from the South end lands. Zahn stated no because the Program EIR looked at utilizing the existing foundation for a visitor center. Chair Duggan asked if DWP has a small portion of the land. Zahn stated yes and showed the portion they own.

b) Land Management Update

Eric Zahn provided a brief Land Management update. Zahn stated the Levee gates were found open, which allowed public passage. Zahn stated staff recommends adjusting the fence line location. Zahn stated the Northwest entrance gate was found damaged, and it is currently unable to close. Zahn stated staff recommends repairing or replacing the gate to secure property access for intended parties.

c) Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewardship Program Coordinator Update

d) Homeless Relocation Program Update

Lenny Arkininstall, CEO of the Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewards, stated there has been minimal homeless activity on the Wetlands. Arkininstall stated the Stewards have partnered with Chair Duggan's office. Arkininstall stated \$10 to 15 thousand of in-kind services were used to clean the area. Arkininstall noted mustard plants growing against native plants at the Hellman property could be a fire catastrophe, and he is working with Eric Zahn to manage these plants. Chair Duggan stated the trees could only be trimmed within certain months per the California Coastal Conservancy rules. Chair Duggan asked how fire clearance work could be done on the Hellman property. Arkininstall noted he would talk with Mark Stanley. Stanley noted the LCWA does not own the property, but he will discuss it with Arkininstall. Board member Cooper stated the California Coastal Conservancy has wildfire money. Stanley added the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy does as well.

e) El Dorado Audubon Update

Mary Parsell, Founder of the El Dorado Audubon, stated her chapter helped set the Long Beach tree trimming permit. Parsell stated 32 killdeer birds were on the Hellman property, although there are usually seven to ten. Parsell stated there are white ground sparrows and a lot of other birds on the Wetlands. Parsell stated the checklist has about 130 species. Parsell highlighted the 12/16/2023 Christmas Bird Count event and noted people could leave early and be safely escorted out.

f) Expenditures Report

Mark Stanley stated attached as Exhibit A in the Board Packet is the FY 2023/2024 Budget with balances as of September 30, 2023. Stanley stated key elements of the Expenditure Report for FY 2023/2024 (Exhibit A) are summarized. Stanley stated that as the Authority is one month into the current fiscal year, activity with consultant professional services of the BOMP and

property management have been minimal. Stanley stated revenue is also minimal as the Authority's primary receipt of revenue are from its OTD Parcel tenant. Annual JPA contributions are expected to be received within the next quarter. Stanley stated administration has no activity; however, several expenditures in this category, such as Audit Services and Insurance, generally do not occur until the second and third quarters of the current fiscal year. Stanley stated staff is awaiting reimbursement from several grants and contracts. The revenue will be reflected when submitted costs expended under the grant have been approved for reimbursement and the reimbursement is received.

7. Consideration of resolutions authorizing acceptance of grants, totaling \$31,852,000, from the State Coastal Conservancy and Ocean Protection Council for the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Project

Mark Stanley stated the SLCWR Project is the first large scale restoration effort to be implemented in the Los Cerritos Wetlands after more than a decade of planning and stakeholder engagement. Stanley stated the SLCWR Project will restore degraded uplands and tidal salt marsh, increasing coastal resilience to climate change by creating new areas for coastal salt marsh migration in the face of sea level rise. Stanley stated this will additionally offer opportunities for Tribal access and co-management and will result in open space access for communities in Seal Beach, Long Beach, and inland along the San Gabriel River bike trail. Stanley stated that on September 14, 2023, the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) Governing Board approved a grant award of up to \$31,852,000 for the LCWA's Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Project (SLCWR Project). Stanley stated the funding was awarded to conduct planning and permitting for restoration and construction of Phase 1 which is inclusive of 54 acres of site. Stanley stated the plan includes management of the wetlands for providing public access on the 103.5-acre site. Stanley stated the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) anticipates consideration of a grant of up to \$6,000,000 for the SLCWR Project at their next Council Meeting in December, utilizing funds collected through the Once Through Cooling Mitigation Policy. The OPC grant award would offset the funding award from SCC by that amount for planning and permitting of the SLCWR Project, and construction of Phase 1. Stanley stated planning and permitting for the SLCWRP will include technical studies, permitting, developing construction documents, and competitive contractor bidding. Phase 1 implementation activities will focus on restoration of 54 acres, enhancing existing habitat areas currently supported by a muted tidal channel connection via a culvert connected to the San Gabriel River. Stanley stated these activities include remediating contaminated soils, grading of fill dirt to return areas to wetland elevations, revegetation with wetland and upland plants, construction of flood management facilities, and modification of existing infrastructure and utilities. Stanley stated phase 1 of the public access improvements will create a trail connection from the San Gabriel River in the west through the State Lands Parcel and follow an existing trail on the project site, install access gates and interpretive signage along the trail, and develop a formal gathering site on the State Lands parcel that may include signage, shade,

equipment storage, and seating. Stanley noted a new restricted trail will be constructed along the top of the new perimeter berm with a viewpoint that will be restricted to docent-led tours and maintenance access. Tribal specific access will also be implemented Phase 1. A Tribal Access Plan will be developed during planning in consultation with a Tribal Advisory Group, and such features may include a story porch, special access areas, and tribal cultural interpretive signage. Stanley stated funding will also support construction management, environmental compliance, and pre- and post-restoration ecological monitoring in conformance with permit and CEQA requirements. Project management, wetland management, and stakeholder engagement will take place throughout the design and construction phases and after construction is complete. Long-term management of the wetlands will employ adaptive management efforts informed by annual monitoring program reports, as well as facilitate administration of the management funds and public stewardship activities.

Vice Chair Kalmick moved to approve. Board member Uranga seconded. Approved. Roll call vote—Ayes= 4; Nays = 0; Abstentions =0.

8. Consideration of a resolution authorizing the Executive Officer to negotiate and execute an award for final planning and permitting of the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Project

Mark Stanley stated that on September 14, 2023, the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) Governing Board approved a grant award of up to \$31,852,000 for the LCWA's Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Project (SLCWR Project). Stanley stated the funding was awarded to conduct planning and permitting for restoration and for providing public access on the 103.5-acre site. Stanley noted that as a component of the \$31,852,000, the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) anticipates consideration of a grant of up to \$6,000,000 for the SLCWR Project at their next Council Meeting in December, utilizing funds collected through the Once Through Cooling Mitigation Policy. Stanley stated a Request for Proposals (RFP) will be prepared to seek qualified firms to finalize all required permits and produce the final restoration design construction plans for the 103.5-acre SLCWR Project. Stanley stated the designs will build on the existing 65% construction design plans and the SLCWR Project's Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND), which describes restoration to be implemented in two phases. The Consultant will provide bid support and construction support for the implementation of Phase 1 of the Project which measures approximately 54 acres in size. Stanley noted qualified firms would include specialists in archeological and tribal cultural resources, tidal salt marsh habitat restoration design and engineering, landscape architecture, and other appropriate environmental planning and permitting disciplines. Stanley stated the LCWA intends to contract the work with a single primary consultant, which may perform the work in house or through one or more subcontractors. A major deliverable is final construction documents containing enough detail for construction of the entire SLCWR Project. Stanley stated the plans will include restoration of tidal marsh, as well as transition zones and coastal upland habitat to allow

for upslope wetland migration in response to sea level rise, creation of public access trails and facilities, relocation or redesign of existing utilities and roadways, a grading plan covering the remediation of contaminated soils and details regarding the beneficial reuse of cut material and improved hydrological connections and flood management facilities. Stanley stated funding for the professional services contract will be provided by grants from the State Coastal Conservancy, Ocean Protection Council, and AES Voluntary Grant Program.

Board member Cooper asked if approval for this item is just for permitting and planning. Stanley stated yes.

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

9. Consideration of a resolution approving a contract budget increase to Tidal Influence for expanded coastal wetlands habitat restoration and community stewardship programming at the Los Cerritos Wetlands

Mark Stanley stated that on May 5, 2022, the LCWA Board authorized the Executive Officer to negotiate and execute a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with AES Redondo Beach, LLC to accept funds from their Voluntary Environmental Benefits Grants Program in the amount of \$1,000,000. The plan called for AES to grant \$1,000,000 to the LCWA over two years, and \$400,000 was granted for Year One. Stanley stated that on August 17, 2022, the LCWA Board authorized the Executive Officer to negotiate and award one or more contracts solicited from a Request for Proposals for expanded coastal wetlands habitat restoration and community stewardship programming at the Los Cerritos Wetlands. Stanley stated the RFP stated that all proposed Program activities be completed by March 30, 2024, for use of AES's Coastal Enhancement Grant fund. Each Program award was for an amount not exceed \$100,000. Stanley stated Tidal Influence is currently contracted to implement a Habitat Restoration Program at Zedler Marsh to supplement current restoration efforts and will utilize community members and volunteer groups to assist with implementation of the restoration program whenever feasible. The 4 main activities of the contract are expansion of mulefat scrub and willow scrub habitat improvements at Zedler Marsh to support least Bell's vireo foraging and breeding habitat, continued enhancement of high marsh habitat at Zedler Marsh in locations that have been challenging to restore due to poor soil conditions or other constraining factors, establishment of a population of the rare Lewis' Evening Primrose that is currently found on the LCWA's south area property, and incorporation of community-based programs into the implementation of activities 1-3. Tidal Influence was originally contracted to perform the above services for a not to exceed amount of \$100,000. Stanley stated a budget increase of \$52,053 for the duration of the contract through April 30, 2024, will provide funds to support workplan coordination and oversight with the Conservation Corps of Long Beach and stewardship programs led by Los Cerritos Land Trust. Activities include removal/disposal and amendments of highly

degraded soils, additional public programs, and vegetation management in the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands

Chair Duggan asked if \$400,000 needs to be spent by March 2024. Stanley stated yes. Chair Duggan asked if it is split between three entities. Stanley stated no, the Land Trust and Conservation Corps of Long Beach were under the original \$100,000 threshold. Stanley stated AES wanted the LCWA to spend \$400,000, and the Los Cerritos Land Trust, CCLB, and Tidal Influence each got \$100,000. Stanley stated all the funds will be expended, but Tidal Influence needs additional funds. Stanley stated there will be a draft plan to spend the other \$600,000 of the original one million given by AES.

Vice Chair Kalmick moved to approve. Chair Duggan seconded. Approved. Roll call vote–Ayes= 4; Nays = 0; Abstentions =0.

10. Closed Session

The Board held closed session. Elizabeth St. John stated that pursuant to Government Code section 54956.8, LCWA may hold a closed session to consider the Draft Appraisal Report and the Draft Land Transfer Agreement, and related items, between Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority and Los Cerritos Wetlands, LLC for the APN 7237-019-809; 7237-017-010 thru 014; 018; 019; LCWA Negotiators: Mark Stanley and Property Owner Negotiator: John McKeown. Under Consideration: Price and Terms. No action was taken.

11. Oral Communications

- a) **Statements, responses, questions or directions to staff pursuant to Section 54954.2(a) of the Government Code.**
- b) **2024 LCWA Board Meeting Schedule**
- c) **Future agenda items.**

12. Adjournment upon completion of business.

Chair Duggan adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:11pm.