

Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority

Date: August 1, 2024

To: Governing Board Members

From: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

Subject: Item 6f: Status Report and Update on the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Planning Project.

BACKGROUND: The LCWA adopted the Conceptual Restoration Plan (CRP) in August 2015, which identified opportunities for restoring tidal connections, creation of new wetland and associated upland habitats, consolidation of oil operations, improvement to passive recreation facilities, creation of a visitor's center, and accommodation of special status species at the Los Cerritos Wetlands. In January 2021 the LCWA certified a Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) utilizing the CRP designs to create a program description for a 503-acre program area. The potential impacts of this proposed program were analyzed, and mitigation measures were determined for potentially impacted resources. In May 2021 the LCWA adopted the Los Cerritos Wetlands Habitat Restoration Plan that refined the designs from the PEIR and made recommendations for which projects should be prioritized to tier off from the PEIR. Finally, in August 2023 the LCWA certified a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Project which was based on 65% construction design plans.

The Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration project covers 103.5 acres identified as the South LCWA site and the State Lands Commission site (together comprising the Project Area), both managed by LCWA. This Project Area was historically salt marsh but has been altered through anthropogenic activities. The site currently contains former sumps, landfills, foundations, and contaminated areas from prior oil operations and land uses.

FISCAL: The LCWA acquired a \$25.8 Million grant from the State Coastal Conservancy and a \$6 Million grant from the Ocean Projection Council to perform Project Management, Final Construction Design Plans and Specifications, Final Permitting, Community Engagement, Environmental Compliance, Construction of Phase 1 of the Project, and Post-construction Monitoring and Adaptive Management. Additional funding has been provided by AES (\$305,000) and from the Orange County Community Fund Warne Fund (\$17,500).

STATUS REPORT AND UPDATE:

Following are the updates regarding the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Planning Project.

1. Project Management:

- a. Tidal Influence, LLC was awarded the Project Manager role and entered into contract with the LCWA in May 2024.
- b. Approved work plans/programs were completed for both major state grant agreements.

2. Final Designs and Permitting:

- a. Moffatt and Nichol was awarded the Prime Consultant role for this task and entered into contract with the LCWA in June 2024
- b. A kick-off meeting was held on June 5, 2024

- c. A site visit with all of the design team consultants and subconsultants was held on June 27, 2024
- d. A response to the 2nd notice of incompleteness letter regarding the Project's Coastal Development Permit (CDP) Application was submitted to Coastal Commission staff in July 2024.
- e. Discussions are ongoing with Army Corps (Nationwide 27 permit), California Dept of Fish and Wildlife (Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement), and the State Lands Commission (Lease Agreement).
- f. The Orange County Water District and LA County Public Works agreed to demolish 2 monitoring wells located in the middle of the Project Area.
- g. An application to So Cal Edison has been prepared regarding the proposed undergrounding of their power lines.

3. Community Engagement:

- a. Several contracts were awarded to support this project's public outreach:
 - i. Tidal Influence, LLC and Altman Environmental Consulting will lead the general public outreach.
 - ii. Cogstone will lead the tribal engagement.
 - iii. Hans Bauman will provide outreach graphics.
- b. A draft Community Engagement Plan was developed in July 2024.
- c. Tribal Advisory Group (TAG)– The LCWA's Tribal Advisory Group met on February 22, 2024 for the 7th time to discuss the components of the project's required Tribal Access Plan. The TAG will meet again this September. LCWA staff continues to regularly consult with all tribal groups even outside of the TAG meetings.
- d. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)– This advisory group composed of resource agency staff, technical experts, and other collaborators has convened twice since during the previous phase of planning. The group will be convened again this Fall to review the 90% design plans.
- e. General Public – A series of different outreach events are planned as this next phase of planning ramps up. Outreach events include mixers, workshops, tours, and efforts to involve disadvantaged communities.

4. Environmental Compliance:

- a. Cogstone was awarded the Cultural and Tribal Monitoring work and their contract is still in negotiations.
- b. Tidal influence LLC was awarded the Biological Monitoring work.
- c. A Biological Monitoring Plan was developed for the CDP application which will be used for developing the Project's Mitigation and Adaptive Management Plan which is required by the MND.