

MINUTES
Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA)
held on

Thursday, August 1, 2024 @ 12:30 p.m.

at

CCLB Headquarters
340 Nieto Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90814

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

Board Member Uranga called the meeting to order at approximately 12:38 p.m.

Board Member Uranga, welcomed Sally Gee, as the newest member of the LCWA Board as Amy Hutzel's designee.

2. Roll Call

Voting Members Present

Roberto Uranga, Councilmember/City of Long Beach

Lisa Landau, Mayor Pro Tem/City of Seal Beach

Sally Gee, Designee, State Coastal Conservancy

Staff Present

Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

Elizabeth St. John, Deputy Attorney General

Eric Zahn, Principal Restoration Ecologist/Tidal Influence

Megan Wolff, Associate Restoration Ecologist/Tidal Influence

Mark Hannaford, Chief Operations Officer/Tidal Influence

Sebastian De Leon, Restoration Programs Manager/Tidal Influence

Christian Garcia, Restoration Programs Manager/ Tidal Influence

Chad Oberly, Staff Services Manager I

Amanda Chan, Staff Services Analyst I

Maria Medrano, Secretary

Voting Members Absent

Kristina Duggan, Councilmember/Long Beach, Chair

Amy Hutzel, State Coastal Conservancy

3. Public Comment

Elizabeth Lambe, Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust, expressed her gratitude for being able to host the field trip program that hosts kids from Title 1 schools. Lambe stated the program was a success as they had field trips almost every day from the end of April to the beginning of June, right up until new school year. Lambe

stated field trips will be scheduled again at the start of the school year due to the high interest. Lambe stated how unsure they were about students being interested in learning about the wetlands and the habitat. Lambe stated these outings have been meaningful to the students as these field trips are the only field trip they have. Lambe thanked the great partnership with Tidal Influence for enabling this to occur. Lambe passed around a thank you card that she received from a student at Starr King Elementary School. Lambe read one of the thank you cards received, "Dear Wetland scientists, I love learning about habitats. And thank you for showing us the flowers, plants and cacti and telling us the names of all the plants and showing us the wetlands creatures. Your friend Dariana." Lambe stated she looks forward to continuing to partner with LCWA. Lambe stated she has called Chad many times asking that the program continues forward.

Board Member Uranga thanked Ms. Lambe for her compliments regarding the field trip program and stated, "we are doing something right, thank you."

4. Chair's Report

Board Member Uranga, as the most senior board member, chaired the meeting as Chair Duggan was absent.

Board Member Uranga had no chair report.

5. Approval of Minutes, May 9, 2024, & May 23, 2024

Board Member Gee asked that the name of Gum Grove Park be corrected in the May 9, 2024, minutes.

Board accepted minutes with stated correction.

Regular Calendar

6. Status Report on Work Plan Implementation **a. Land Management Update**

Eric Zahn stated the detailed Land Management report in the package covers the last three months. Zahn highlighted that summertime always brings two things, vegetation to manage and a whole lot of unauthorized trespassing of all different sorts.

Zahn stated the Callaway Marsh, a shared property with the Department of Water and Power, continues to be affected by local youth on electric motorbikes. Zahn stated they have started making ramps on the Bryant Lease West, a Los Cerritos Wetland Authority property, and making serious circuits for their enjoyment. Zahn stated not only are they infringing upon jurisdictional wetlands, but also making a lot of impact to the land. Staff have been repairing fences and have dealt with all sorts of litter and debris. Zahn stated they have also encountered a lot of bad attitudes, as these youths are extremely rude, offensive and do not respect their authority as the land manager. Zahn stated they (TI staff) will work with the Chair and her office to get some authority, that is law enforcement, out there so that these folks know they can't keep doing

this. Zahn stated this is also on an oil field, which is of big concern if they catch fire.

Zahn stated that along the levy, gates are hard to maintain in a closed condition as the chains and fences are constantly being broken. People are constantly driving into the levy and one individual drove around the wetlands and as they were trying to escape law enforcement, decided to plow through the fence and launch off the levee into the river. The police and staff were there to talk and take report, but individual showed no concern whatsoever.

Zahn illustrated some pictures of good and bad vegetation that constantly needs maintenance. Native vegetation was cleared in the pathways that are used for the land tours and other programs. Zahn stated the non-native weeds are abundant throughout LCWA properties which staff works hard to try and stay on top of. They are unsurmountable, but staff have certain targeted areas, especially near residences, that they make sure they maintain a 30-foot buffer from any dry vegetation, especially right around 4th of July when it's bottle rock season.

b. Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewardship Program Coordinator Update

Megan Wolff stated the Stewardship Program Update would cover events from May 2024 through August 2024. Wolff stated the Stewardship Program engaged a total of 198 volunteers during that period and who contributed \$8,807.87 in in-kind service. Wolff stated staff is seeing the impact of this substantial service. Volunteers removed 1400 pounds of invasive plants.

Wolff stated the Stewardship Program, in partnership with the LCW Land Trust and Applied Energy Services (AES), hosted eighteen field trips which were funded by AES. Wolff stated they are partnering with Conservation Corps of Long Beach who assisted with the clearing of trails on the land so that they are ready for public use. Wolff stated they currently have a group of individuals doing research work at the southern Los Cerritos Wetlands.

Wolff showed photos of several events both community and school groups, that participated in various forms of habitat restoration. One photo showed the Dan Nigro class from Long Beach City College who did some weed removal in the tar plant area that staff had been working on for some time. Other group photos illustrate habitat restoration events by students from Naples Elementary in May 2024 and another which occurred on July 6 and showed the continuing removal of invasive species. Wolff showed two more pictures illustrating land tours of the Raptor Ramble, one showing the Native American monuments. Wolff stated the last picture, showed Starr King Elementary second grade students doing habitat matching. Habitat matching is learning about different animals and what types of habitats they might live in. Wolff stated this was part of an education program that they had been hosting.

c. Homeless Relocation Program Update

Lenny Arkinstall, CEO of Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewards, displaying a broken arm stated he had never missed a meeting in twenty years. Arkinstall stated

that the number of homeless are currently not bad as they are constantly on it, all the time. They have found a couple of homeless day camps, which they take care of immediately. Arkinstall stated he had received a call from Trent regarding the Pipe bridge, which is constantly being used. Arkinstall stated he was shown a picture of guy trespassing on LCW so he went to speak with him. Arkinstall stated he treated the person with respect and told him that he could not be there. The person responded and stated he would move on, but he did not. As this person likes to build fires, Arkinstall stated they posted it on social media.

Arkinstall stated when he was with the police doing homeless cleanup, he saw News helicopters and police everywhere. Apparently, some person had launched their jeep into the water. The person had launched himself up the weir, about 25 feet, and then went about 50 feet to land in the water. Arkinstall stated the jeep landed on its wheels, otherwise the person would have drowned. The person was arrested. No footage of the incident was recorded as nearby cameras had been turned off the day before.

Arkinstall showed a photo of his crew cleaning out a homeless camp as they have done many times in the past. They are out all night, removing rocks and putting them back where they belong.

Arkinstall stated he received a call this morning (8/1/24) about a giant homeless camp that had been set up at the end of Shopkeeper Road by the Trader Joe's. It was the same homeless individual that had just been removed previously from the Pipe bridge. Arkinstall stated the individual is a wire thief who had rolls of wire that apparently had been removed from light and telephone poles. Individual also broke into some storage containers. Arkinstall stated containers have been cleared and locked with an MS6 City key which police can also unlock if needed.

Arkinstall stated they continue to clear LCW of shopping carts that the homeless easily take from local shopping centers and then abandon everywhere. Arkinstall stated his staff gather the shopping carts, store them and then have their shopping cart person pick them up. They no longer take them back to the local shopping centers for health and safety reasons.

Arkinstall stated their continued work of constantly removing day camps, cleaning up and being vigilant is working to keep LCW clear.

d. El Dorado Audubon Update

Mary Parsell, President of the El Dorado Audubon, which is a local chapter of the National Audubon Society. Parsell stated they did not see very many birds out. However, the same time of the previous year, they had nine species and another year they were twelve. Parsell stated it was because it was hot, overcast and the glare did not allow you to see as much. Parsell stated there are a lot of house finches and mourning doves out there. They also saw a Red-Tailed Hawk who are usually in the forest on the edge of the meadow. The forest being Gum Grove Park, and the meadow is the open area of the wetlands which is where they like to hunt.

Parsell stated they recently saw Hooded Orioles in the palm trees, both male and females. In April, near the Synergy property and Trader Joe's, Parsell stated they saw 24 Snowy Egrets and 25 Great Egrets hanging out in the pond. Parsell also stated seeing a lot of Great Egrets and Snowy Egrets flying over because they nest in the Ficus trees of the Alamitos Bay Marina which is along the Fuel Dock Road. Parsell stated they were not happy about the tall buildings that are scheduled to be built around Second Street, PCH and Shopkeeper Road because that will affect the Egrets. Parsell stated in a few weeks, she will be meeting with staff of the National Audubon Society, that are involved in the Coast, who apparently are working with the Aquarium of the Pacific. She will be meeting them out at Zedler. Parsell stated there is intense interest in the importance of the bird areas in the wetlands.

Parsell stated she is very interested in what is happening in the restoration for the southeast portion of the wetlands as it seems to be taking a long time. She looked at the documents and noticed that the coastal development permit from the Coast Commission, Army Corps of Engineers is not complete. Parsell stated there seems to be a lot of regulation going on. Parsell stated people always ask her about that.

Parsell stated she, like her friend Lenny Arkinstall, has never missed a Board meeting. Parsell stated she was the only one in attendance, in Seal Beach, when the LCWA Board received permission of the Coastal Conservancy Board to form.

e. Expenditures Report

Amanda Chan stated she would be reporting on the Expenditure Report. Chan stated the balances in the exhibits are as of July 22, 2024. Chan stated they were on track for the contributions in the overall Revenue and Expense categories. Chan stated the outstanding Annual JPA contributions are expected to be received this quarter as staff have contacted them. Chan stated staff have recently executed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between AES Alamitos and LCWA, so the Revenue and Expense budget line items have been updated respectively.

Chan stated administration had minimal activity, but several expenditures such as Audit Services should reflect by the end of the quarter of the fiscal year. Chan stated Security expense reflects 27% and Authority expects to receive invoices from the consultant by end of the fiscal year. Chan stated overall Capital Outlay Expenses in relation to grant funding sources are in line with projections. Chan stated staff is waiting for reimbursements from several grants and contracts. Chan stated the Revenue will be reflected when reimbursements payments are received.

f. Status report for the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Project

Eric Zahn, Principal Restoration Ecologist/Tidal Influence, acting as project manager for this project for the LCWA, would be providing updates for this project. Zahn stated in January 2021, the LCWA approved and certified the

Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) which covered the entire 503-acre wetlands complex. Subsequently, in August 2023, a mitigated negative declaration was certified to this Board, specifically for the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Project. Zahn stated, there was a pause whereby the Authority planned with some other agencies for funding to support the ongoing project. In September 2023, the State Coastal Conservancy approved a grant for \$25.8 million to fund this project and an additional \$6 million grant from the Ocean Protection Council. Zahn stated two other smaller funding sources, from AES and Orange County Community Fund, were received. Zahn stated all this funding is to support final construction designs, final permits for the project, necessary public outreach, environmental compliance, construction of phase 1 plus biological monitoring and long-term management.

Zahn highlighted the different tasks for this project. Project management, very important, included Tidal Influence being awarded the project manager role and entered in contract with LCWA in May of 2024. Zahn stated Tidal Influence's first major effort was to get approval for the work plans or work programs with two large grant agreements. They have been signed, are active and staff are already working on those plans. Zahn stated the other thing that staff has been working on are developing protocols for all the administrative processes that are going to be required to manage this large project.

Zahn stated the second task was final designs and permitting. Moffatt and Nichol, who have historically worked on this project since early 2011 for the Authority, was awarded the primary consultant role as the engineer to develop these designs. The contract was awarded in June 2024. Five days later, a kick-off meeting was held on June 5 and then the entire consultant team was on a site visit on June 27. Zahn stated staff is in the process of acquiring the Coastal Development permit from the Coastal Commission, the Lake and Streambed Alternation Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and a Nationwide 27 permit from the Army Corps of Engineers. Zahn stated they have been provided the 401 certification from the Water Board. Zahn stated staff is working with State Land Commission to acquire a new lease on the property to implement some of the project which overlaps about three and a half acres that they own and operate. Zahn stated staff has other land issues that are being worked on. Zahn stated the Alamitos Barrier Project, has two monitoring wells which are supposed to make sure salt water does not intrude in the freshwater aquifers. The monitoring wells, located in the middle of the Project area, had not been accessed since the 1990s, so staff met with the Orange County Water District and the LA County Public Works. Both agencies agreed that the two monitoring wells needed to be removed, so they obtained approval from their committees. Zahn stated staff will report the progress to the Board. Zahn stated staff submitted an application to Southern California Edison regarding the undergrounding of their power lines that traverse the Project area.

Zahn highlighted the third task, a big part of this Project, community engagement. Zahn stated several contracts were awarded to support this Project's public outreach, tribal engagement as well as creating graphics for the outreach programs. A draft community engagement plan was recently developed which staff stated would get the community excited and engaged especially in the Seal Beach area. Zahn stated they will also look to target disadvantaged community groups in Orange County. Staff wants to get them involved and recognize that this is a cultural resource that they can enjoy now and in the future. Zahn stated there are plans to have different mixers and workshops that are more about friend and awareness building and less technical. Zahn stated they have a Tribal Advisory Group that just had its seventh meeting back in February. Staff continues to meet with the Group and has another meeting scheduled for September. They are a critical part of planning the access feature of this Project. Zahn stated they also have a Technical Advisory Committee, who have met twice, but will get engaged in three different meetings of the design process. Zahn stated the consultant team, and outside advisors are leading the charge to help shape the Project.

Zahn, highlighted the fourth task, environmental compliance, which ensures that the project is compliant with all applicable regulations. Zahn stated staff has begun to get the team together. One group will be doing all of the archeological and tribal monitoring. There will be a biological monitors out during all construction. Zahn stated staff has developed a draft biological monitoring plan as part of the goals of development permit. This will eventually grow into a larger plan that covers all the monitoring adaptive management programs throughout the Project.

Mark Stanley stated Prop 4, a climate bond, will be on the ballot in November. It will provide funding for some of the joint powers authorities and may provide funding for the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority. Board Member Uranga, asked that they be kept abreast.

7. Consideration of a resolution to approve the LCWA FY 2024/2025 Budget Project.

Amanda Chan stated she would be presenting the LCWA fiscal year 2024/2025 budget for the Board's approval. Exhibit A is separated by revenue and expenditure components: administration, operation and capital outlay.

Chan stated the budgeted revenue is around \$2.7 million and is balanced at \$2.7 million by the expense with expected reimbursements from the grantees of \$2.6 million. Chan stated that expenses and revenues exponentially increased at 185%. The reason for this was because staff was about to implement the Southern Area Restoration project with additional contractors. Chan stated staff took on new

grants from the Southern Area Restoration Project which included the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC), Ocean Protection Council (OPC) and the AES. Chan stated lease revenues were at -60% as the OTD parcel is no longer owned due to the lease swap which ended the lease. Chan stated that the contract line is -50% because the master agreement was not renewed or amended so it was not budgeted for the next year. Chan stated that mitigation revenue showed an increase at 300%, projecting \$100,000 in revenue for the next fiscal year due to the land swap that just occurred. As the mitigation had not started, staff carried over the \$25,000 per year in the budget. Chan stated for the next fiscal year, staff anticipate receiving \$100,000 in revenue from Synergy property that LCWA just acquired from the land swap. Chan stated the line, other-miscellaneous under grants, shows a 400% increase projecting \$5,000 for the next fiscal year. Because half of the expenses are from contracts, when they are received from easements, the pay is greater than expected. Chan stated staff increases it \$5,000 in case an easement is asked which is short-term.

Chan stated under revenue, the website line shows an increase of 4000%, \$20,354, which is the website redesign so that it is ADA accessible. Chan stated there was an increase in grant management of 47% and consultants at about 430% because staff is about to implement the Southern Area Restoration which includes bringing in additional contractors to do the work. The security line increased 443% because several major projects are about to embark, and staff felt the need to increase security steps. Chan stated if things change mid-year, this will be updated in the expenditure report.

Board member Landau moved to approve. Board member Gee seconded. Approved. Roll call vote: 3 Ayes. 0 Nays. 0 Abstentions.

8. Consideration of a resolution authorizing the Executive Officer to negotiate and enter into one or more contracts for coastal restoration, community stewardship, and sea turtle monitoring at the Los Cerritos Wetlands.

Chad Oberly stated back in April, LCWA gathered on the wetlands for the AES signing ceremony because LCWA received \$1,000,000 in grant funding from AES Alamos for coastal restoration, tribal programming, community stewardship programs and sea turtle monitoring. Oberly stated on May 17th, staff released a request for qualifications (RFQ) to find qualified firms that could carry out the intent of the work plan of the MOU that was entered into.

Oberly stated, five qualified responses were received. After being scored by a panel appointed by LCWA, and considering all the different qualifications, the panel is seeking to negotiate and enter into contract with Tidal Influence and Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust due to their local knowledge and to continue the first allocation they received under AES. Oberly stated it is expected that their scope of work would include activities related to Zedler Marsh restoration. These should include outplanting of endangered salt marsh bird's beak, native plant nursery improvements, collection of native plants for nursery and the creation of a seed storage cabinet. Oberly stated the Tidal Influence contract would not exceed \$125,000. The first year, \$30,000 is set, if approved for Land Trust, to continue the community stewardship and field trip programming previously mentioned. Oberly

stated LCWA has three years of funding under the MOU. Staff will negotiate for the first year and then have an option to extend into subsequent years should the program go according to plan.

Oberly stated, that in the MOU, AES had the intention to support the Aquarium of the Pacific Sea Turtle Monitoring Community Science Program as they are the best organization that has the most local experience to carry out that program. Staff intends to award a \$25,000 contract each year for two years to the Aquarium of the Pacific for the Community Science Program.

Oberly stated it is staff's recommendation that the Board authorize Mark Stanley, Executive Officer, to enter into those contracts.

Board Member Uranga asked how many sea turtle monitoring do we have presently? And what are the expectations for the future? Oberly stated, program has been in place for a few years and knows that data has been collected, but staff personally does not know. Oberly stated that with this funding, staff will find out more. This will expand the program do some outreach, get better camera equipment, coordinate volunteers and really enhance the program.

Board member Landau moved to approve. Board member Gee seconded. Approved. Roll call vote: 3 Ayes. 0 Nays. 0 Abstentions.

9. **Oral Communications**
 - a. **Statements, responses, questions or directions to staff pursuant to Section 54954.2(a) of the Government Code.**
 - b. **Future agenda items.**
10. **Announcement of next meeting date – Thursday, November 7, 2024, at 12:30 p.m.**
11. **Adjournment upon completion of business.**

Board Member Uranga adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:24 pm.