

Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority

Date: November 7, 2024

To: Governing Board Members

From: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

Subject: Item 7f: 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 (SCC) and a \$6 Million grant from the Ocean Projection Council (OPC) 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 (OOCF)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. The consulting team has met weekly since June.
 - b. All subcontractors are under contract.

- c. Three requests for disbursement of grant funding have been submitted to the SCC, one is currently being developed for the OPC grant, and another for the OCCF grant.

2. Final Designs and Permitting:

- a. 90% design plans are due to the LCWA on Nov. 27, 2024.
- b. All major permit applications have been submitted.
 - i. Army Corps staff is reviewing the LCWA's Nationwide 27 permit which covers Section 10 and 404. This also includes a USFWS Programmatic Biological Opinion,
 - ii. Coastal Commission requested that the LCWA prepare a Habitat Restoration and Monitoring Plan which was submitted to them on October 4, 2024. Coastal Commission staff continues to review the LCWA's application to determine if it is complete.
 - iii. Applications for a California Dept of Fish and Wildlife Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement and Restoration Management Permit are both currently under review,
 - iv. The LCWA submitted a lease application to the State Lands Commission on September 13.
 - v. The Orange County Water District and LA County Public Works agreed in an official letter to demolish 2 monitoring wells located in the middle of the Project Area.
 - vi. The consulting team is in negotiations with So Cal Edison regarding the proposed undergrounding of their power lines.
- c. Geotechnical investigations were completed in September to inform the Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment and the structural designs.

3. Community Engagement:

- a. The Project's Community Engagement Plan was finalized in September 2024.
- b. The LCWA's Tribal Advisory Group (TAG) met on September 9, 2024, for the 8th time to discuss the components of the project's required Tribal Access Plan.
 - i. The TAG identified six features to include in the design, including a harvest garden, gathering space, monument, and more.
 - ii. The TAG will meet again this December.
 - iii. LCWA staff continues to regularly consult with all tribal groups even outside of the TAG meetings. Some members of the TAG have offered to advise the LCWA on development of Cultural educational curriculum for LCWA field trip programs at Zedler Marsh.
- c. The LCWA's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will meet on November 18, 2024, to discuss 90% designs.
- d. General Public – A series of outreach events including mixers, workshops, tours, and efforts to involve disadvantaged communities.
 - i. First public webinar will take place on December 10, 2024.
 - ii. Public input will focus on the vision of the State Lands Parcel.

4. Environmental Compliance:

The LCWA continues to provide the necessary Cultural, Biological, and Archaeological Monitoring during any work occurring on site.