

MINUTES
Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA)
held on

Thursday, November 7, 2024 @ 12:30 p.m.

at

CCLB Headquarters
340 Nieto Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90814

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

Chair Duggan called the meeting to order at approximately 12:35 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Voting Members Present

Kristina Duggan, Councilmember/Long Beach, Chair
Roberto Uranga, Councilmember/City of Long Beach
Lisa Landau, Mayor Pro Tem/City of Seal Beach
Megan Cooper, Designee, State Coastal Conservancy

Staff Present

Mark Stanley, Executive Officer
John Natalizio, Deputy Attorney General
Eric Zahn, Principal Restoration Ecologist/Tidal Influence
Megan Woolf, 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

Amy Hutzler, State Coastal Conservancy

3. Public Comment

Dan Knapp from Conservation Corps of Long Beach (CCLB), stated he wanted to highlight the many things they are doing in the area. Knapp stated they have a crew that goes out almost every day to Seal Beach National Wildlife refuge. Knapp

stated they are working on restoration along with NOAA scientists. CCLB also has a continued presence at Catalina Island. Knapp stated they are kicking off their short work program this year. Knapp stated they are focusing on marine, estuarine, and shoreline restoration projects. CCLB also has a river ranger program. Knapp stated they were sending a crew out to North Carolina to help with some hurricane relief. Knapp stated most of that crew was trained on chainsaws through the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy grant they received for their fire fuel reduction grant. Knapp stated their teams are being asked because they are so good at what they do.

Chair Duggan thanked Mr. Knapp for his all his great work and all the amazing programs they have.

4. Chair's Report

Chair Duggan stated she had nothing to report.

5. Approval of Minutes

One set of minutes from August 1, 2024, were approved.

Board member Uranga moved to approve. Board member Landau seconded. Approved. Roll call vote: 4 Ayes. 0 Nays. 0 Abstentions

6. Selection of a Board Vice Chair

Chair Duggan made a recommendation to elect Megan Cooper as Vice Chair representing the State Coastal Conservancy as an alternate to Amy Hutzel.

Board member Landau moved to approve. Board member Uranga seconded. Approved. Roll call vote: 4 Ayes. 0 Nays. 0 Abstentions

Regular Calendar

7. Status Report on Work Plan Implementation

a. Land Management Update

Eric Zahn stated the detailed Land Management report covers the months of August, September and October. Zahn stated that a lot of work has been done to curtail a lot of trespassing and glad the school system works. Students are back at school during the day instead of riding around on their bikes trespassing. Zahn stated they have repaired fences and gates that had been damaged. Zahn stated staff have met and worked with their partner, LA County Department of Public Works, to keep the gates closed especially in the western levy. Staff have increased patrols in the area to make sure gates are closed and locked to hopefully deter people from trespassing. Zahn stated surveillance has been increased. Additional cameras were added to assist

them in tracking which areas the public is accessing and where breaches exist. Staff continue to maintain trails. Zahn illustrated pictures of the great wildlife that are captured by their wildlife cameras, such as egrets, a great blue heron, and coyotes.

Chair Duggan asked if it was the Westminster gate that they were trying to keep close. Zahn stated there were four gates that they and Lenny's team are working on keeping close. The Westminster gate, two intermediate gates on LCWA property, and the one on Pacific Coast Highway.

Vice Chair Cooper asked if there was concern with sensitive bird nesting as a result of the coyotes doing good pest control in the area. Zahn stated they don't have concern as they don't see evidence of the coyotes getting into sensitive areas. Zahn stated they have a lot of rabbits, missing a leg or two, who like to eat their plants.

b. Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewardship Program Coordinator Update

Megan Woolf stated they have been very busy with the Stewardship Program. Woolf showed photos of volunteers attending their special events, the monthly habitat restoration events as well as attending the monthly land tours. Woolf stated Audubon California came out for a meeting event and weeded near the Marsh.

Woolf stated they also hosted a land tour through the Zedler Marsh. The Salt Marsh Stroll is the new land tour that focuses on ethnobotany. Ethnobotany focuses on the traditional knowledge of plants and their many uses. Woolf stated the tour covers the plant ecology found in the salt marsh and also a lot of coastal scrub plants.

Woolf stated they had over 113 volunteers who spread 500 pounds of mulch, cleaned up trash, propagated plants, and removed non-native plants. Woolf stated Land Trust hosted 11 field trips for students through the Be S.A.F.E. program which targeted different parks in the area.

Woolf stated they also collaborate with CCLB on Fridays. They prepare trails, dig holes for restoration projects, collect and spread seeds in areas targeted for restoration are just a few of the many things that CCLB has assisted them with.

Woolf stated 32 participants have attended their land tours. 27 AES (Applied Energy Services), employees attended the AES values day that was held at the Marsh. Together with CCLB, they learned the new techniques of going out collecting seeds and then spreading those seeds as well.

Woolf stated the Stewardship Program has continued research that is both short and long term. The short research can be a minimum of two days where they are dealing with setting traps. An example of longer research is dealing with mammal research along the southern Los Cerritos Wetlands. Woolf stated they are hoping to do more outreach research opportunities to engage students.

Elizabeth Lambe stated the Be S.A.F.E. program was designed to make the parks as family friendly as possible in the summertime. Lambe stated the Be S.A.F.E. program coordinated with the City of Long Beach Parks Recreation and Marine to make these summer field trips happen. Lambe stated this initiated their field trips from Drake Park, Seaside Park, Mountain Park, Admiral Park and Silverado Park. Lambe stated they are the only field trip program associated with Be S.A.F.E.. Lambe stated these field trips exposed the kids to the Los Cerritos Wetlands and the open space which a lot of them do not have access to these opportunities. The kids learned about nature, the ecosystems and all the wetlands.

Chair Duggan stated she was at Jefferson Middle School and spoke about doing a wetland field trip. She asked the question is there availability of funds for bus transportation. Chair Duggan also asked Lambe if she worked specifically with Long Beach USD (LBUSD). Lambe stated she did work for LBUSD as she does all the coordinating. Lambe stated they are a great institution and partner. Lambe stated that to enable a field trip with Jefferson Middle School, they had to take out the entire grade and not just a classroom. Lambe stated they might not have room to accommodate over a hundred students at Zedler Marsh and the educational experience might not be great. Lambe stated, Megan has done a fantastic job with larger groups. Lambe stated that has been the challenge with the middle school. Chair Duggan asked Lambe if she would follow up and see if they could work on providing some assistance.

c. Homeless Relocation Program Update

Lenny Arkinstall, CEO of Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewards, stated it was the 3rd quarter and no homeless. Arkinstall stated they come and go, but none stay as they are constantly on it. Arkinstall stated they have a protocol in dealing with the homeless. Their first priority is with the police and the multi-service center to get these people help. Arkinstall stated the police encountered one homeless person who was a veteran and through their help cleaned him up. Arkinstall stated being proactive and spending extra time and work helping these individuals has meant less of them out there.

Arkinstall stated the coast highway bridge is a drug den that keeps popping up but they are constantly on it, so most of the time it is clear. Arkinstall stated the great quality of people he works with along with the police have made it possible for them to keep the number of homeless people low. Arkinstall stated their main thing is to get the homeless people help and into shelters. He would like to see more involvement with the City so that you can teach these people to be more proactive.

Arkinstall stated at the Bryant Lease there was a homeless person who kept cutting the fence that had been repaired by LA County Flood Control. Arkinstall stated the person was very scary and took off when they confronted him leaving all his belongings. Arkinstall stated they cleaned up everything and are constantly patrolling the area. Arkinstall stated they need to trim the trees as this invites the homeless to set up their camps.

Arkinstall stated their main goal is to help these homeless people and it feels good when they hear their stories after they get the help they need.

Chair Duggan stated she has known Lenny for over 10 years and has watched the exceptional work he has done. Duggan stated Lenny cares, has empathy and is working through the proper channels with the quality of life for these individuals. Chair Duggan presented Lenny with a certificate from her office thanking him for all the work he has done and has made a big difference in so many places. A picture was taken with Lenny, the Board, and Executive Officer.

d. El Dorado Audubon Update

Mary Parsell, President of the El Dorado Audubon, stated they enjoy their walks. Parsell stated seeing many species of birds at the Hellman property. Parsell stated that sometimes when it is cloudy you can't see the birds but you can definitely hear them. Parsell stated the El Dorado Audubon has been doing this for the past 15 years out at the wetlands.

Parsell stated that she reports important things that occur to Audubon California which is the National Audubon Society in California. There is someone there in charge of important bird areas there and someone else in charge of the Central Coast. Parsell stated she sends out these reports to approximately 30 chapters in Southern California. They have quarterly zoom meetings where reports are given by each chapter. Parsell stated there is also a special conservation committee meeting where a person from each chapter also participates if they have something important or deadlines to report. Parsell stated significant or important things occurring are also sent on the national level.

e. Expenditures Report 27:06

Amanda Chan stated she would be reporting on the Expenditure Report. Chan stated Exhibit A reflects balances as of September 30th. Chan stated the Authority is approximately at 100 percent through the current year and activities are on par for contributions with overall revenue and expense categories. Chan stated the overall capital outlay expenses in relation to grant funding sources are in line with projections. Chan stated they are reflecting a negative net position. They are, however, waiting for reimbursements. Chan stated security expenses reflect 27 percent expenditures. The Authority expects to receive the last invoice from the consultant by the end of the quarter.

Chan stated Exhibit B reflects balances for the current fiscal year. Activities have been very minimal given it is only a month into the current fiscal year. Chan stated they have received \$60,000 in total revenue.

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

Eric Zahn, Principal Restoration Ecologist/Tidal Influence, stated they would be reporting on this project at every quarterly board meeting as this is LCWA's biggest project. Zahn thanked the funders, the State Coastal Conservancy who funded \$25 million dollars, the Ocean Protection Council funded \$6 million, AES and the reoccurring grant from the Orange County Community Foundation.

Zahn reported on the project management and stated that they were able to get all of the consultants under contract. Zahn stated they have weekly meetings with the design team because of the intense timelines that they need to meet. Zahn stated these meetings help everyone keep on track and focused. Zahn stated as reported in the expenditures report, there are a lot of expenditures happening. Invoices are being received and processed and then turning them into disbursement requests with the funders. Zahn stated they have successfully been reimbursed, so his team's process has worked great.

Zahn stated they are focused on the final designs and permitting. Consultants, landscape architects, engineers and CAD drawing folks are all out of their offices walking around out in the field. Zahn stated designs are at 90 percent conceptual but not final. Zahn stated they hope to deliver designs to LCWA for their review by November 27th. Tidal and LCWA staff will have three weeks to review and get revisions done at 100 percent.

Zahn stated they are also doing permits and are happy to report that they have submitted their Army Corps nationwide permit. Zahn stated they are continuing to negotiate with the Coastal Commission, which is one of their more challenging permitting agencies. Zahn stated they are also working on obtaining two permits from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. One which allows potential take of native species and the other which allows alterations to lake and stream beds. Zahn stated an application was submitted to the State Lands Commission as they need to obtain new lease agreements between them and LCWA.

Zahn stated they are working closely with Edison to move the utility lines underground, which is going to be a long process. After long discussions, Edison understood the reasoning and why it is an important part of habitat restoration. Zahn stated the funding is there to do this work and it will be costly but well worth it.

Zahn stated in September they performed geotechnical investigations to further identify contaminated areas and understand the exact horizontal and vertical extents.

Zahn stated community engagement is very important to this project. They worked on and got approved an engagement plan in September. A major one is their workings with the Tribal Advisory Group (TAG). Staff have had their eighth meeting with them and have received great real advice which has been given to the design team. Zahn stated the great part, is that the design team is changing and adapting this great advice into the designs. TAG has also made it clear that they want to see certain features including harvest gardens, a gathering space, and a monument to the local tribal communities. Zahn stated they are also assisting with providing cultural aspects for the environmental education that will be given to the young students. Zahn stated there is also a general public workshop in December for the community to inform them of the project's status.

Vice Chair Cooper stated she wanted to thank all LCWA staff, the consultants, Eric and all who are involved to make this project happened. Hearing about all the work being done, and that the money is being spent where it should is great. Vice Chair Cooper emphasized how special it is to be doing a project like this on a Statewide level. The difficulty in making these projects happen, especially the coastal wetland restoration projects on this scale are incredibly difficult. To see this happening is great and so exciting. Vice Chair Cooper also wanted to acknowledge Sally G, grant manager, and her staff for all that they have been doing as well.

Chair Duggan asked if Zahn could explain about the LADWP wells regarding fresh versus salt water. Zahn stated that the Alamitos Barrier Project had been monitoring wells throughout the Alamitos Bay area and beyond. They monitored the wells to make sure salt water did not intrude into freshwater wells. As the wells are no longer being used or monitored and they support wetland restoration, they received approval from their committees to demolish the wells.

8. Consideration of a resolution to authorize the Executive Officer to enter a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding with Ecosystem Investment Partners to investigate the viability of creating a wetland mitigation bank on LCWA property.

Chad Oberly stated back in June Ecosystem Investment Partner approached LCWA to gauge their interest in the creation of a mitigation bank on the LCWA central property. After speaking with the City of Long Beach and Synergy and they being open to the idea, EIP approach LCWA to enter into a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with them. Oberly stated it outlines a framework for further negotiations for figuring out what an agreement could look like in the future. Oberly stated it is non-binding and would not force LCWA into any financial obligations. Oberly stated it is more of a good faith showing that LCWA is willing to invest its time and that is worth for them to do the same.

Oberly stated not having too many details as this is just an agreement to explore what this could look like. It would not cost LCWA anything only staff time in the normal course of business. The agreement has not been signed and LCWA can adjust the MOU as needed.

Board member Landau asked why LCWA has had problems with obtaining the Bryant property. Oberly stated that there had been several attempts and back in 2019 there were issues with the appraised value. Oberly stated that a public agency cannot purchase land above its appraised value. Mark Stanley stated that LCWA had the land appraised and presented the value to the landowner. Stanley stated that in negotiating with the landowner, there was a difference of opinion on the value of the land. The landowner decided not to move forward. Stanley stated now EIP has had discussions with the landowner which look more promising.

Board member Landau stated EIP would pay for the land and LCWA would get the benefit of a mitigation bank. Oberly stated in theory that is correct. LCWA currently does not have all the details on the plan. Oberly stated it would be the City of Long Beach's parcel, the LCWA Bryant lease parcel and two other parcels.

Vice Chair Cooper directed a comment for Council. In 7B in the obligations of the MOU, it seems LCWA is agreeing to quite a lot. Cooper stated the MOU is basically

stating that if EIP does all those items listed in 7B, then we are agreeing to it. John Natalizio responded, referencing section 6, that LCWA put in strong language indicating this was a non-binding agreement for all parties. Natalizio also stated that in section C, LWCA is not responsible for expanding any sort of funds. Natalizio stated, essentially EIP is responsible for their own costs. Natalizio stated the LCWA board can change or suggest changes to any of the language. Cooper stated does the EIP understand that there would be additional agreements to be signed between them and LCWA to bind agreement and revisit all the stated items in 7B. Stanley stated that was correct and if the Board was more comfortable changing the wording to say “consider” as opposed to “agree.” The board was in agreement to change the wording.

Vice Chair Cooper motioned and Chair Duggan seconded that the wording in 7B of the proposed MOU be changed to:

*7B. If EIP is able to successfully complete the following activities, LCWA would **consider** that EIP would have earned, and be entitled to, any mitigation bank credits that are authorized and approved by the Inter-Agency Review Team ("IRT"), consisting of the Agencies responsible for overseeing California's natural resources and mitigation bank development and approval in California."*

Board member Cooper moved to approve. Board member Duggan seconded. Approved. Roll call vote: 4 Ayes. 0 Nays. 0 Abstentions.

9. Consideration of a resolution authorizing the Executive Officer to negotiate and enter into a contract for Homeless Community Liaison Services with the Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewards.

Chad Oberly stated the Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewards (LCWS) have been LCWA’s homeless community liaisons since 2013 when LCWA adopted protocols for safety and dealing with the homeless on the wetlands. The LCWS contract expired on May 2nd and they have been providing the services on an as needed basis. Oberly stated they have done a great job. After analyzing Lenny’s and the Stewards’ compensation it was determined that it has been a long time since they received a raise. Oberly stated Lenny puts in a lot of volunteer hours to make sure the properties are well maintained and safe.

Oberly stated LCWA issued an RFP to provide homeless community liaison services to 95 firms in southern California. LCWA received and like Lenny’s proposal. Oberly stated LCWA has been really pleased with the services provided by Lenny for the past decade. LCWA wants to increase the contract to \$20,000 which will be obtained from the general fund.

Board member Duggan moved to approve. Board member Uranqa seconded. Approved. Roll call vote: 4 Ayes. 0 Nays. 0 Abstentions.

10. Receive and File FY2022/2023 LCWA Audit Report

Amanda Chan stated LCWA Audit for Fiscal Year 2022/2023 budget. Chan stated as a reminder, LCWA follows the City's fiscal year which is from October to September. Chan stated the audit was conducted by C.J. Brown & Company with the cooperation of the City of Long Beach & LCWA staff. Chan stated during the Fiscal Year 2022/2023, the Authority's net position decreased by 1.22 percent a result of ongoing operations. Total revenue decreased by 51.65 percent due primarily to closing of project activities. Total expenses increased by 8.64 percent due to increased consulting and legal expenditures related to the land exchange.

Chan stated the Authority continues to have no long-term debt. One material weakness was identified during the audit which was grant revenues recognition. Chan stated the Authority would be more proactive in identifying future deposits by working closer with the City of Long Beach when submitting payment requests.

Chan stated there was no findings noted in the current fiscal year. Receipt and filing of the FY 2022/2023 audit has no financial impact.

11. Oral Communications

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

12. Announcement of next meeting date – Thursday, February 6, 2025, at 12:30 p.m.

13. Adjournment.

Chair Duggan adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:40 p.m.