

## Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority

**Date:** February 6, 2025

**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.

The project intends to advertise the Final Construction Documents for bid by a qualified Construction Contractor in Spring 2025 and anticipates breaking ground in Fall 2025.

**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 (OCCF) Warne Fund (\$35,000).

### **STATUS REPORT AND UPDATE:**

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

#### 1. Project Management:

- a. The Project Management team has met with the consulting team at least weekly since June 2024 and convened Steering Committee meeting every 2 weeks.
- b. The Project Management team has met with neighbors, utilities companies, easement holders, and City staff
- c. The Project Management team continues to manage all funding sources and negotiated an advance of \$1,425,000.00 from the OPC grant.

- d. The Project Management team continues to review all contractor/consultant invoices and prepare them for processing by LCWA staff.
  - e. The Project Management team continues to review all deliverables from the consulting team including the 90% designs, specifications and basis of design report.
  - f. A draft RFP for the project Construction Manager has been developed.
2. Final Designs and Permitting:
- a. 90% design plans were received by the LCWA on November 27, 2024 and marked-up versions were returned to the consulting team on December 20, 2024.
  - b. The consulting team is developing the 100% design package to be submitted to the LCWA in March 2025.
  - c. SoCal Edison has agreed to underground the transmission lines along 1<sup>st</sup> Street. The consulting team is working with SCE staff on the design of the underground facilities. SCE will invoice the LCWA for the cost to design and install the new underground transmission lines.
  - d. 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.
  - e. The City of Seal Beach will perform the sleeving of their 18-inch waterline in advance of this project breaking ground.
  - f. All major permit applications have been submitted.
    - i. Army Corps staff found that a 'no effect' determination on Federally protected species for the project's Nationwide 27 permit would be appropriate. The final permit is being prepared by Corps staff.
    - ii. Coastal Commission deemed the LCWA's CDP application to be complete after approving the updated Habitat Restoration and Monitoring Plan which was submitted to them on December 3, 2024. The project's CDP is currently slated for a March 2025 hearing.
    - iii. Applications for a California Dept of Fish and Wildlife Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement and Restoration Management Permit are both currently under review by CDFW who requested an extension.
    - iv. The LCWA paid the application fee to the State Lands Commission, which is processing the LCWA's Lease Amendment application. T
3. Community Engagement:
- a. The LCWA's Tribal Advisory Group (TAG) met on December 3, 2024, for the 9<sup>th</sup> time to review 90% designs and provide feedback regarding Tribal Access elements.
    - i. The TAG discussed the gathering space, monument, and more. Physical copies of the plans were presented for the members to mark up. For those that could not attend this meeting, digital versions were provided.
    - ii. The LCWA received positive feedback from the TAG and the review process
    - iii. The TAG will meet again this February.
    - iv. 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. Some members shadowed a school tour in December 2024 to gain insight and provide feedback.

- b. The LCWA's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will meet on February 24, 2025, to discuss 90% designs.
  - c. General Public – A series of outreach events including mixers, workshops, tours, and efforts to involve disadvantaged communities.
    - i. A public webinar took place on December 10, 2024.
    - ii. A public survey was released to request feedback on design elements for the State Lands Parcel.
4. Environmental Compliance:
- a. The LCWA continues to provide the necessary Cultural, Biological, and Archaeological Monitoring during any work occurring on site.
  - b. The team is developing a Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan which builds on the Habitat Restoration and Monitoring Plan and will be finalized before construction.