

Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority

Date: May 8, 2025

To: Governing Board Members

From: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

Subject: Item 8f: 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 Protection 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 the budgets for 4 funding sources including 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 has continued to review all deliverables from the consulting team including the 100% designs, specifications and basis of design report.
- f. A final RFP for the project Construction Manager was advertised, proposals were evaluated, and interviews were held. Selection of the Construction Manager is imminent.

2. Final Designs and Permitting:

- a. 100% design plans were received by the LCWA on April 11, 2025 and marked-up versions were returned to the consulting team on April 24, 2025.
- b. The consulting team is developing the final design package to be submitted to the LCWA in May, 2025.
- c. SoCal Edison has agreed to underground the transmission lines along 1st 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. This will take place in advance of Phase 1 of the project.
- e. The City of Seal Beach will perform the sleeving of their 18-inch waterline in tandem with the project.
- 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 approved the LCWA's CDP on March 13th, 2025. The LCWA signed and returned the NOI. Three prior to issuance items were submitted to CCC staff on April 16th, 2025, and prior to construction items are currently being prepared by multiple consultants.
 - iii. The agreement for a California Dept of Fish and Wildlife Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement is nearly finalized and the Restoration Management Permit was issued.
 - iv. The LCWA lease with the State Lands Commission has been revised and will be on the SLC's agenda for their August meeting as a consent item.

3. Community Engagement:

- a. The LCWA's Tribal Advisory Group (TAG) met on February 21, 2025, for the 10th time to discuss updates to the project designs and provide feedback regarding Tribal Access elements.
 - i. The TAG discussed the gathering space, harvest gardens, monument, artistic elements on the State Lands Parcel and more. The TAG also discussed strategies for managing access and the development of MOUs.
 - ii. The LCWA received positive feedback from the TAG and the review process.
 - iii. The TAG will meet again this June.
 - 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) met 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 2-hour public workshop took place on March 22, 2025, at the State Lands Parcel with approximately 40-50 people in attendance, mostly from the nearby community. Several stations with visual displays were available for the public to explore and learn about the project. The consultant team spoke with the public about the planned trail design, habitat types, work schedule, public amenities, wildlife benefits, and other topics.
 - ii. The public survey was completed and feedback on design elements for the State Lands Parcel was summarized in a final report.
 - iii. On April 16th the LCWA's Public Engagement Coordinator and Project Manager attended a joint meeting of the City of Seal Beach's Environmental Quality Control Board and the Parks and recreation Committee.
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 developed a final Habitat Restoration and Monitoring plan which will inform the Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan to be finalized before construction.
 - c. The team is also working on an Archaeological and Tribal Cultural Resource Monitoring and Treatment Plan, Tribal Access Plan, and Long-Term Management Plan.
5. Biological Monitoring
- a. Several baseline monitoring efforts took place from February to April, including special status and general bird surveys, and photo point surveys, water quality monitoring, vegetation cover surveys, and California Rapid Assessment Method monitoring of four wetland areas. A water level logger was also deployed in the tidal creek. Special status plant species and fish surveys are planned for later this spring.