

## **Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority**

**Date:** September 29, 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.

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**Recommendation:** Receive and file.

### **Project Description:**

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 LCWA released a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking a qualified contractor to implement construction of Phase 1 of the project in July 2025, and a qualified low-bid was received. It is anticipated that construction will commence in late October 2025 pending board contract award to the General Contractor.

## **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 is in the process of requesting an advance from the State Coastal Conservancy.
  - e. The Project Management team continues to review all contractor/consultant invoices and prepare them for processing by LCWA staff.
  - f. The Project Management team has continued to review all deliverables from the consulting team including the final designs, specifications and basis of design report.
  - g. The Project Management team has onboarded the Construction Manager and began reviewing their submittals.
  - h. A final RFP for the General Contractor was advertised, proposals were reviewed for responsiveness and cost. The lowest responsive bidder has been identified and an Notice of Intent to award was posted.
2. Final Designs and Permitting:
  - a. Final design plans were received by the LCWA in July 2025 and revisions were made for the bid advertisement package.
  - b. 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.
  - c. 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 on September 22-23, 2025.
  - d. The City of Seal Beach will perform the sleeving of their 18-inch waterline in tandem with the project.
  - e. All major regulatory permits and lease agreements have been issued.
  - 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 has been issued.
  - ii. Coastal Commission approved the LCWA's CDP on March 13th, 2025. The LCWA signed and returned the NOI. All prior to construction items have been submitted.
  - iii. The agreement for a California Dept of Fish and Wildlife Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement was executed and the Restoration Management Permit was issued.

- iv. An amendment to the LCWA lease with the State Lands Commission was approved at the SLC's meeting on August 21, 2025 as part of their consent calendar.
  
- 3. Community Engagement:
  - a. The LCWA's Tribal Advisory Group (TAG) met on June 2, 2025, for the 11th time to discuss updates to the project designs and provide feedback regarding Tribal Access elements.
    - i. The TAG discussed the details of the Tribal Access Plan and a draft MOU.
    - ii. The LCWA provided an update on the final SLCW designs
    - iii. The TAG will meet again this September.
  - 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.
  - b. General Public
    - i. Site tours have been regularly provided for interested individuals and organizations.
    - ii. The next public outreach event is a Design Premiere schedule for the evening of September 30, 2025
    - iii. Plans are being made for a Groundbreaking Ceremony on October 24, 2025.
  
- 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 finalized the projects Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan, Archaeological and Tribal Cultural Resource Monitoring, and Treatment Plan and the Tribal Access Plan.
  - c. The team continues to work on the project's Workers Environmental Awareness Program, Cultural Resources Sensitivity Training Program, and the Long-Term Management Plan.
  
- 5. Biological Monitoring
  - a. Several baseline monitoring efforts took place from May-August, including special status plant surveys which included collection of special status plant seeds or salvaging of individual plants. Water quality monitoring takes places every 2 weeks along with downloading data 4 water level loggers deployed in the tidal creek. Fish surveys are planned for late September.

### **Background:**

The Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Project (SLCWRP) aims to restore historic habitat at the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands site, which is part of the Los Cerritos Wetlands Complex that formerly spanned approximately 2,400 acres. This restoration project is being led by the LCWA.

The Project Area includes a 100-acre property owned by the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA) and a 3.5-acre parcel owned by the California State Lands Commission that the LCWA has a long-term non-exclusive lease to manage. The Project will be implemented in two phases, with approximately 50 acres to be restored during each phase.

Phase 1 of the restoration project will enhance existing salt marsh habitat, grade new sinuous tidal channels, create intertidal habitat, and increase tidal flux by cleaning the inlet culvert and replacing a secondary culvert with a box bridge. The Project will also incorporate several features requested by the Tribal Advisory Group, including harvest gardens, a gathering place, and a monument.

#### **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).