

MINUTES

Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA)

held on

**Thursday, January 22, 2026
at 2:30 pm**

At the following location:

**CCLB Headquarters
Conference Room
340 Nieto Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90814**

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

Chair Duggan called the meeting to order at approximately 12:48 pm

2. Roll Call

Voting Members Present

Kristina Duggan, Councilmember/Long Beach, Chair
Joe Kalmick, City of Seal Beach, Vice Chair
Megan Cooper, State Coastal Conservancy
Roberto Uranga, Councilmember/City of Long Beach

Staff Present

Mark Stanley, Executive Officer
John Natalizio, Deputy Attorney General
Eric Zhan, Principal Restoration Ecologist/Tidal Influence
Christian Garcia, Restoration Programs Manager/Tidal Influence
Sebastian De Leon, Restoration Facilities Manager/Tidal Influence
Megan Wolff, Associate Restoration Ecologist/Tidal Influence
Neysa Frechette, Associate Restoration Ecologist/Tidal Influence
Chad Oberly, Staff Services Manager I
Amanda Chan, Staff Services Analyst I
Maria Medrano, Secretary

3. Public Comment

Monica Garcia, AES, asked to address and present a check to the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority. Part of the AES Council Enhancement program, which had its kickoff 2.0 version in 2024, included three years of funding. Garcia stated this being

year three, she was here to present this check. Garcia stated the program's objectives and goals were to help restore the local wetlands as well as to provide meaningful educational and stewardship programs. AES wanted to thank LCWA for all the hard work that's been done and is continuing to do for the local wetlands.

LCWA Board Members Duggan, Kalmick, Cooper and Uranga, along with Executive Officer Mark Stanley, and AES representative Monica Garcia took a picture displaying the \$400,000 check.

Elizabeth Lamb, Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust, advocate for the protection and restoration of the Los Cerritos Wetlands stated she wanted to give the board an update a proposed project adjacent to the Southern Wetlands Restoration project area.

Lamb stated she had serious concerns about the proposed solar panel project by the Hellman Corporation. The proposed project would install an array of panels extremely close to threatened species in a sensitive biological area. The purpose of these panels is to provide energy for oil extractions, a benefit for the corporation rather than a public benefit. Lamb stated the vote on the project will be held on February 9th before the Seal Beach City Council. Lamb stated it is the Council's hope that Hellman's project scale is much smaller. The City's plan to rely on a mitigated negative declaration is inadequate and that a full environmental impact report is necessary.

Lamb urged the LWA to consider becoming formally involved or at a minimum, establish a policy for handling similar future projects that could affect long term health and restoration of the wetlands. Lamb also stated that the LCWA has previously taken position on prior developments.

4. Chair's Report

Chair Duggan stated she was very pleased at the number of people from the public attending LCWA board meetings. She pointed out and thanked Eva and June, two young ladies she meet at the Colorado Lagoon trash pickup, who were present. Duggan stated, these are our future.

5. Approval of Minutes

One set of minutes from the November 13, 2025, meeting was approved.

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

Regular Calendar

6. Status Report on Work Plan Implementation

a. Land Management Update

Eric Zhan stated he would be provide the land management report on behalf of Sebastian De Leon. Zhan stated, the Authority has 243 acres of land under ownership which Tidal Influence staff help manage. Recent inspections focused on property boundaries near the Marina Hills neighborhood above Gum Grove Park. Staff have identified multiple encroachments and concerns. When the property was purchased in 2009, encroachment was an issue that was encountered various times.

Zhan stated with the new project underhand, the issue of encroachment is again an issue that needs to be revisited. Staff have identified areas where neighbors are able to jump over fences onto the Authority's newly restored property. Also of concern are gates, access points, motion sensor devices that have been installed that make a lot of noise, pavers, a fire pit, a rat trap and objects placed on Authority property.

Zhan stated trail cameras and signage are being used to document trespassing and off hours access with the current approach focused on data collection rather than confrontation. Future steps may include outreach to neighbors, coordination with City or Coastal Commission authorities if needed. Development of a plan to address easements and encroachment might also be an option. All aimed to avoid unnecessary conflicts.

Vice Chair Kalmick asked if City of Seal Beach needed to get involved with helping to police and monitoring area. Zhan stated not yet, as staff is still collecting data and will put forth a plan of action to deal with not only the encroachment concern but also the continuous trespassing on the Authority's property.

b. Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewardship Program Coordinator Update

Megan Wolff gave an update on the Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewardship Program (LCWSP), highlighting recent stewardship activities and community engagement efforts focused on wetland restoration and education. 135 volunteers participated over two months contributing significant in-kind labor. Activities included plant propagation, planting salt marsh vegetation, and removing invasive species like ice plant and weeds.

Wolff stated restoration work included 450 plants propagated in one event. 147 salt marsh plants were installed, and 150 pounds of weeds were removed.

Wolff further mentioned the community and educational programs included monthly first Saturday volunteer events and weekday group activities by college

and high school volunteers. 8 school field trips were conducted which resulted in the participation of 4,045 students from underserved schools. Field trips were supported by AES funding. Public engagement events such as the Salt Marsh Stroll featured guided tours and educational talks.

Wolff stated collaboration with the Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust and the Conservation Corps of Long Beach have contributed to the program's success. The program has successfully engaged volunteers, advanced habitat restoration, and expanded environmental education. All factors which demonstrate the results of strong community involvement and measurable ecological impact.

Chair Duggan asked if the school trips were through the Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust. Wolff stated that was correct as part of the AES grant.

c. Homeless Liaison Update (Oral Report)

Lenny Arkininstall, CEO of Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewards, provided an update on the efforts to reduce homelessness and improve conditions across several of the Los Cerritos properties. Arkininstall stated he continues to patrol the properties with Seal Beach and Long Beach police departments.

Arkininstall stated the areas that previously had large homeless encampments have been cleared and are now clean with no active encampments or trash. Also collaborating with this effort is the long-term relationships he's built with these individuals experiencing homelessness. Staff continue to provide outreach efforts and offer services to these individuals. Some individuals have even voluntarily begun using trash bags and have avoided overnight stays.

Arkininstall stated the conditions around the properties have improved tremendously from what was seen three years prior. The encouragement of improving these individuals' overall quality of life has reduced the issues previously encountered. Staff plan to reduce overgrown vegetation to eliminate hiding spots thereby discouraging new encampments.

Chair Duggan stated she remembered when Lenny took her to see some of these areas three years ago. The difference that three years make with Lenny, his staff, the assistance of law enforcement and the city's outreach programs are remarkable.

d. El Dorado Audubon Update

Lenny Arkininstall provided a brief overview on behalf of Mary Parsell, President of the El Dorado Audubon, who couldn't make it to the meeting. The bird walks continued although a different pattern was seen due to the restoration efforts in

the Southern area. But there are still a lot of beautiful birds out in the different angles of the wetlands.

e. Status Report for the Southern LCW Restoration Project

Eric Zhan (Tidal Influence) and Robert Bersbach (Syrusa Engineering) provided a brief overview of the Southern LCW Restoration project. Eric stated he would be highlighting the administrative aspects of the projects, whereas Robert would provide the progress of the construction phase.

Zhan stated community engagement has been ongoing with continued coordination with residential neighbors and the Hellman oil operations team to maintain easement road and gate access. Community concerns so far have been minimal. The project site is highly visible so the team is actively managing community questions and maintaining transparency.

Zhan stated the required preconstruction surveys have been completed, and data is still being analyzed. As far as the construction phase operations are concerned, daily environmental compliance monitoring is in place, archaeologists and tribal monitors have been present during ground disturbances, and significant coordination among the teams have been put in place to manage daily activities.

Zhan stated weekly meetings are held with the construction management team, the engineering teams and staff. Managing multiple funding sources has been challenging but staff were successful in securing the first advance payment. Zhan stated advance improved cash flow, contractor payments and was very helpful for this type of project.

Bersbach continued with the construction update stating the contractor mobilized quickly and made significant early progress. This included a lot of demolition, clearing, and grubbing. Rain delays caused a slight schedule slowdown which pushed timeline back from what contractor originally projected. Projected completion is now around mid-December with a contract extension into early February. Despite delay, project is still on track.

Bersbach stated work completed included site being fully mobilized, that is equipment, trailers and temporary power onsite. Installation of BMPs and ESA fencing has also been completed and being monitored weekly. Contaminated soil has been removed and backfilling has begun. Bersbach stated demolition and clearing in state lands and wetlands is complete. Initial top-soil testing looked favorable for reuse onsite. Northern wetlands berm construction is underway.

Bersbach mentioned the challenges encountered such as road collapse due to failed pipe occurred right after rain, difficult wetland site conditions impacting equipment movement, and the upcoming nesting bird season. Planning is underway to minimize impact as this may restrict work area when the February 15 deadline comes around. Site is being monitored with the assistance of Tidal Influence staff for active birds.

Bersbach stated a positive and collaborative relationship with the contractor. Contractor is relatively reasonable and both team and contractor navigate challenges effectively. Both see each other's perspective and work on making sure overall project is completely successful at the end of the day.

Bersbach stated next steps were to continue grading and exaction in northern wetlands, expand topsoil testing and harvesting, continue berm installation, material hauling, and aim to complete channel evacuation and upland grading.

Consent Calendar

7. Closed Session: Conference with Legal Counsel – Anticipated Litigation

- a. Significant Exposure to litigation pursuant to Government Code section 54956.9(d)(2) and (e)(3) One Case: Government Tort Claim submitted by Steven Castro. The claim is on file with the LCWA clerk and available upon request)

John Natalizio, Deputy Attorney General, stated closed session began at 1:31pm to discuss Item 7a on the agenda. No reportable action was taken. Opening session reconvened at 1:43pm.

8. Oral Communications

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

Chair Duggan indicated no comments or responses amongst board members.

- b. Future agenda items.

Mark Stanley stated LCWA has a new website but not yet publicly announced. Staff is waiting on a new graphic for logo and expect full rollout with new branding in approximately two to three months. Board will review and vote on the design logos before finalization.

Chair Duggan stated coordination is underway with SCE on underground utilities to address cost concerns. Jim Kelly will assist in expediting timelines.

Board Member Kalmick stated in regards to the water main relining that there is a minor delay, but nothing significant. Staff coordinating to align set schedules.

Board Member Kalmick mentioned the solar panel project. City of Seal Beach is expected to act around February. Possible reduction in project size instead of requiring a full EIR. It was suggested that LCWA not directly intervene but monitor the outcome.

Chair Duggan stated a broader issue for future discussion is the adjacent land policy. There is a need for a formal policy on when and how to comment on projects outside the LCWA-owned land. There is growing pressure from the community to weigh in on adjacent properties. The Board may want to consider developing a policies on jurisdiction, partnerships, and external project development. Broader discussion on LCWA's mission and possible expansion discussion potentially to take place.

9. Announcement of next meeting date – Thursday, May 14, 2026 @ 12:30pm

10. Adjournment

Chair Duggan adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:01 pm.