



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge South San Diego Bay Unit

Restoration Update, September 2010

Come Join Us for Coastal Clean-Up Day

*And while you are here,
take time out to watch
the many birds that visit
San Diego Bay!*

**Saturday
September 25, 2010
9:00 AM to Noon**



The San Diego NWR Complex and Friends of San Diego Wildlife Refuges, will meet you at the Imperial Beach Public Works Building (located at the north end of 10th Street in Imperial Beach) for Coastal Clean-Up Day activities. **Please park on the street.**

Bring a hat, gloves, sunscreen, water, and any questions you might have about the restoration plans for South San Diego Bay. We'll be there to work with you, bird watch - and answer questions.

Restoration in South San Diego Bay Scheduled to Begin this Month!

After years of research and planning, the goal of restoring coastal wetlands in south San Diego Bay is about to become a reality. Through a partnership of federal, state, and local agencies, as well as several local non-profit organizations, almost 300

acres of tidal flats, salt marsh, subtidal, and native upland habitat will be restored in and around south San Diego Bay. In total, three areas of the bay will be transformed to provide habitat essential to birds, fish and other marine life, and native plants. These include the western most salt ponds located adjacent to State Route 75; the Chula Vista Wildlife Reserve, located in the Bay to the west of the South Bay Power



Plant; and the western edge of Emory Cove, located just to the north of the South Bay Overlook on State Route 75.

Restoration of the western salt ponds and the Chula Vista Wildlife Reserve will require the use of construction vehicles such as dump trucks, excavators, and a floating dredge. To achieve the right elevations for growing marsh plants and creating tidal channels, soil will be excavated from one restoration area and deposited in another restoration area. For instance, areas at the Chula Vista Wildlife Reserve are too high to support wetland vegetation, so that material will be pumped to the southeast corner of Pond 11 to establish an area for seabird and shorebird roosting and potentially nesting. In addition, material generated to create the tidal channels in Pond 10, located just to the north of the Bayshore Bikeway near 7th Street in Imperial Beach, will be moved into Pond 11, which is currently too low to support salt marsh plants.

Initial construction will begin in mid-September and will continue through March of 2011. Additional construction activity will likely be required in Pond 11 between September 2011 and March 2012. Planting, maintenance, and monitoring activities will continue at the western salt ponds for a period of up to five years.

Once construction activity is completed and the soils in the ponds have consolidated, a permanent opening will be made in the levees and natural tidal flows from the Bay will be restored. The tides will carry fish and other marine organisms, as well as seeds or vegetative matter, into the



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restored area setting the stage for the natural recruitment of native species. As these organisms and plants become

established, they will provide food and protection for the wide range of bird species that annually visit San Diego Bay during their migration along the Pacific Flyway. Some salt marsh plants, like cordgrass, will be planted to ensure an appropriate mix of plant species. This new salt marsh vegetation will be particularly important for the extremely rare light-footed clapper rail, whose native habitat has been all but lost in south San Diego Bay.



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This project would not be possible without the support of various public agencies, organizations, elected officials, and members of the public. Project partners include the Port of San Diego, California Coastal Conservancy, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. EPA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association, Coronado Rotary Club, San Diego Oceans Foundation, San Diego Audubon, and Ocean Discovery Institute. A portion of the funding for this project, approximately \$3 million, was provided by NOAA through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

As construction begins, there will be visible changes occurring in the western ponds that may not look as appealing as they do now, but as the project proceeds the appearance will begin to take on the features of a natural coastal marsh. We have incorporated measures into the project to minimize the effect of construction on the adjacent community, but in case there are issues or concerns that we should know about, the San Diego Bay NWR has established a project “hot line” to answer your questions and address any concerns while the construction phase of the restoration project is underway.



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Questions about our construction activities?

Call the Public Information Hot Line at 619-840-0587

To learn more about the projects described in this Update, you can visit us at the Refuge table during Coastal Clean-Up Day (September 25 - 9:00 AM to Noon); we will be located near the sign-in table at the north end of 10th Street in the Imperial Beach Public Works parking lot.

You can also call the Refuge Office at 619-575-2704, dial ex. 334 for Acting Refuge Manager, Kurt Roblek or ex. 318 for Refuge Wildlife Biologist, Brian Collins.

California Coastal Conservancy to Fund the Bayside Birding and Walking Trail

Thanks to a \$300,000 grant from the California Coastal Conservancy that comes via Proposition 84 Bond Act funds, the San Diego Bay NWR will begin work on the design and construction of the Bayside Birding and Walking Trail. The trail will extend along the north side of the Bayshore Bikeway from 7th Street to 10th Street in Imperial Beach and will be available only for pedestrian activities. Walkers and birders will no longer have to look over their shoulder for on-coming bicyclists and bicyclists will no longer have to maneuver around walkers and bird-watchers.

Spectacular views of the bay and the many species of birds that utilize the habitats in south San Diego Bay will be available from this trail. The six-foot-wide, stabilized aggregate surface trail will be just under a half mile in length and will include a pedestrian bridge and an



interpretive overlook for wildlife observation. The trail and overlook will provide bird-watchers from around the world with places to safely set up spotting scopes and cameras. Two additional overlooks will be constructed in future years as the necessary funding is secured. Design work for the trail, bridge, and overlook will begin in October 2010, with construction scheduled to begin in September 2011.

Providing this designated pedestrian trail along the edge of San Diego Bay will also reduce the continuing loss of wetland habitat that is occurring along the edge of the bay in this area due to unregulated pedestrian use. Large areas to the north of the bikeway lack any vegetation due to continuous trampling. The proposed trail project will direct users to a designated path allowing reestablishment of salt marsh vegetation along the edges of the Bay. We will be replanting some of these areas with native plants to accelerate the revegetation process.

More Partners - More Habitat

We are excited to be working with a new partner, River Partners, a non-profit organization with an excellent track record of restoring riparian habitat in northern California. They are now bringing their expertise to southern California and will be working on several restoration projects in the Otay River Valley. One of their projects involves the eastern portion of the San Diego Bay Refuge, where the Otay River crosses under Interstate 5 and onto Refuge property. Some 60 acres of riparian habitat are proposed for restoration in this area. This project will benefit wildlife and migratory song birds, as well as the users of several newly constructed County trails in this area that are part of the Otay Valley Regional Park Trail.

Stay tuned; there is much more to come on this topic over the next year!



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South San Diego Bay Restoration Timeline

September 2010	Begin Restoration Process at Chula Vista Wildlife Reserve and Pond 11
November 2010	Begin Dredging Tidal Channels in Pond 10 and Moving Material into Pond 11
March 2011	Begin Planting Salt Marsh Vegetation in Pond 10
September 2011	Continue Restoration Work in Pond 11

HAVE QUESTIONS - PLEASE CONTACT US

If you have questions, comments, or concerns about the construction activity occurring at the salt ponds, please call us.

The Public Information Hot Line is
 619-840-0587.