



Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project

Advancing ecosystem health. Connecting communities with nature.

May 2012

www.ballonarestoration.org



Features

What's New on the Wetlands

Ask an Expert

Notes from the Field

What's New in the Watershed

Notes From our Partners

Hot off the Press

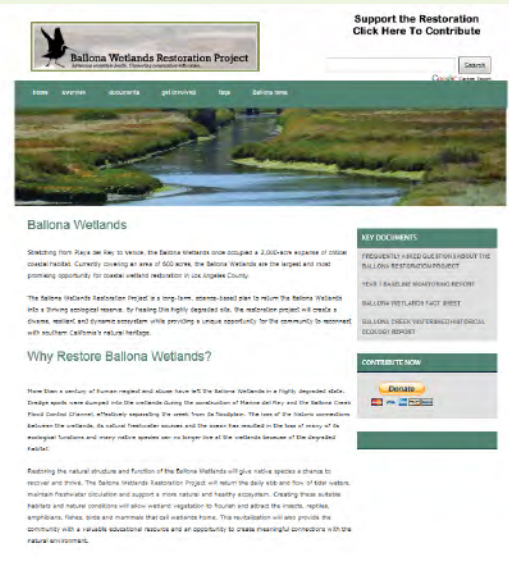
Wetlands in the News

Upcoming Events and Activities

Get Involved

About Us

Check Out Our Website: New and Improved!



The Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project website received a make over. Not only is the design revamped, but we have made some content updates as well. It is now easier to navigate and find the information. The FAQs and the project documents have been updated. Our 'Ballona in the news' section has been expanded and will be updated to regularly. Hopefully everyone will find the changes helpful. Don't forget to check out our social media pages as well for up to the minute updates and pictures!

WHAT'S NEW ON THE WETLANDS...

Southern California Urban Wetlands Research Symposium

On Monday, March 12th, 2012, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission's Center for Santa Monica Bay Studies, the Center for



Urban Resilience (CUREs), and Loyola Marymount University co-hosted the annual Southern California Urban Wetland Research Symposium at Loyola Marymount University. The symposium was a full house, blockbuster success with 180 attendees! The scientific symposium brought scientists from across southern California to present and highlight monitoring and research being performed at wetlands throughout the region.

We were incredibly lucky to have Dr. Zedler, one of the world's premier wetland scientists, as our keynote speaker for this year's Symposium. Her keynote presentation shared some of her knowledge gained in restoration activities

throughout the United States and some lessons learned for the future of wetland restoration in southern California. She also expounded on the ideas that we must look to the future when evaluating these restoration plans, including climate change, and make them an adaptive process.

Want to join our Mailing List?

Email Elena Tuttle at

etuttle@santamonibabay.org

Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project: Environmental Review Process

The environmental review process for the Ballona Wetlands Restoration will be getting underway soon. On January 23rd, 2012, the project's Scientific Advisory Committee met for an update from the Project Management Team (PMT) on refinements to the preferred restoration alternative. Over the past 2 years the PMT has been working with its technical consultants and permitting agencies to evaluate restoration constraints and permitting pathways, and to respond to input from the public. Based on the comments received so far, the PMT is further revising the proposed project description and plans to release the Notice of Preparation/Notice of Intent (NOP/NOI) in June 2012. The release of the NOP/NOI will be the first step and opportunity for the public to comment during the environmental review process. The PMT will hold a scoping meeting during the 30 day NOP/NOI public review period so any interested person parties can meet the experts working on the project and ask questions or provide comments on the issues that need to be considered in the EIR/EIS. More information about the NOP/NOI and public meetings will be circulated by the lead agencies, via the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project's listserv and will be posted to the project's website. Please contact Diana Hurlbert (dhurlbert@santamonicabay.org) for more information or questions about the environmental review process.

ASK AN EXPERT...

What species are the noisy white birds on the salt pan? What are they doing?

They are mainly Elegant Terns, (*Thalasseus elegans*), which occur in large numbers twice a year, in April, and again around August. They breed in huge colonies on offshore islands in northwestern Mexico, and in a few colonies in southern California, with the nearest being on constructed islands within Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve in Orange Co. Each April, a large flock containing hundreds of these sleek, mostly-white seabirds with dagger-like yellow-orange bills arrives to roost on the main salt pan of the Ballona Wetlands just south of Ballona Creek. Their loud calls are audible for hundreds of yards off, and they periodically rise up, keeping in a tight mass, and wheel around before landing again. This roost is not maintained all day and night - individuals will peel off and forage along Ballona Creek, just offshore, and in Marina del Rey, where they dive for small "baitfish". It is not unusual to see pairs of Elegant Terns engaged in courtship display, the males offering fish to the females, or getting into squabbles over a favored patch of salt pan. They are often joined by other species of terns, mainly Caspian Tern and Royal Tern, and occasionally by various species of shorebirds, including Semipalmated Plover and small sandpipers known as "peeps". The flock dissipates in May, when the birds disperse southward to nest (they actually fly south for the summer!), but variable numbers return in late summer following nesting, when young-of-the-year, with black and brown smudges, may be picked out of the flock. So, the salt pan roost may be both a pre- and post-nesting aggregation area for the species, though nesting - or even attempted nesting - has never occurred here (interestingly, the first local records of this species weren't until well into the 20th Century, and their numbers have been increasing since then).



Photo credit: D. Cooper, 2012

Daniel S. Cooper
President,
Cooper Ecological Monitoring, Inc.



An authority on California bird ecology, identification and distribution, and has a strong background in southern California ecology and natural history. Among his specific areas of expertise are the Ballona Wetlands, and remnant habitat patches on the floor of the Los Angeles Basin. He is the author of Important Bird Areas of California (Audubon California 2004), and he continues to publish in peer-reviewed journals.

Have a question about the flora, fauna, or dynamics of the Ballona Wetlands? Get an answer from one of our experts! Email us at etuttle@santamonicabay.org

The **Southern California Academy of Sciences** held its annual meeting on May 4, 2012 at Occidental College in Eagle Rock, CA. The meeting brought together scientists, stakeholders, and government agencies for lectures highlighting current research and management policies across southern California. One of the seven sessions was devoted to the 'Ballona Marsh and Restoration of Coastal Southern California Wetlands' where information was presented regarding the Ballona Wetlands current flora, fauna, and water quality conditions and its place within a larger regional restoration framework. Our very own ecologists gave two presentations presenting exciting results from our 1st and 2nd year Baseline Reports. It was a great opportunity for exchange and discussion!

On Monday, May 21st, the Ballona Wetlands Baseline Monitoring team and the Friends of Ballona Wetlands partnered to provide an environmental education opportunity for Girl Scout Troop 3345 from the South Bay. It was a great example of the collaboration possible between scientific monitoring and active restoration conducted by local community non-profits. A short talk on field biology and professional opportunities in the environmental field, given by Karina Johnston lead ecologist for the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project, was followed by non-native plant removal in the dunes led by Patrick Tyrrell of the Friends of the Ballona Wetlands. A great time was had by all!

WHAT'S NEW IN THE WATERSHED...

SMBRF participates in the Mar Vista Green Garden Showcase:

3967 Coolidge Ave.

Demonstration Rain Garden



A brand new rain garden constructed by SMBRF staff and volunteers was highlighted in the Mar Vista Green Gardens Tour (photo). Rainwater falling onto roofs is typically streamlined into storm drains where it transports an assortment of trash, oil, grease, and other pollutants off the streets and into streams and bay. This garden capture all rainwater falling on a 1500 sq. ft. roof where it will be absorbed into the soil before reaching the street and help protect out local waterways.

The rain garden is planted with over 30 species of drought tolerant native plants which will require little to no water after the first year of establishment. This will save approximately 45,000 potable gallons every year from not having to irrigate a conventional water hungry lawn!! The native plants will also provide habitat for a variety of native birds, bees, and butterflies.

The garden is designed to infiltrate and store every drop of water from a 3 inch storm event or nearly 3,000 gallons of water. This water will trickle through the soil, where it is naturally cleansed of pollutants before eventually assisting to recharge depleted southern California groundwater reserves. Use of this groundwater saves energy by reducing the amount of energy required to transport potable water from outside southern California.



<http://marvistagreengardenshowcase.blogspot.com/2012/03/3967-coolidge-avenue-map-51.html>



Earth Day on the Ballona Wetlands!

By Lisa Fimiani, Executive Director of the Friends of Ballona Wetlands

Friends of Ballona Wetlands

Kids love nature, even when they are afraid of it. During our Earth Day Celebration in the Ballona Wetlands some kids were a bit nervous about holding a Legless Lizard that I found. 'Why does it look like a worm?', one kid said, another asked, 'Will it bite?' Once I explained that it's legless and no it won't bite they were all for holding the baby lizard, at first cautiously, and then proudly. After a few minutes (and after some parents got photos of their child holding the lizard) we put it carefully back in the ground where I found it. These are what we call 'teachable moments' in the Wetlands, and many times they transform a child's misconception about the unknown from scary to fun!"



HOT OFF THE PRESS!

The SMBRC 2011 Annual Report is Now Available On Line

The SMBRC Annual Report for 2011, outlining our accomplishments and on-going projects, is now available on our website. Highlights of the report include the completion of the Ballona Rain Gardens and the Culver City Rainwater Harvesting Program, removal of urchins to restore healthy kelp forests, expansion of our popular Boater Education Program, and our certified Clean Bay Restaurants program. The report summarizes our programs in broad categories that include Wetland and Coastal Habitats, Green Neighborhoods, Ocean, Outreach, and Planning & Policy Development.



Go to www.smbrc.ca.gov to download a PDF copy

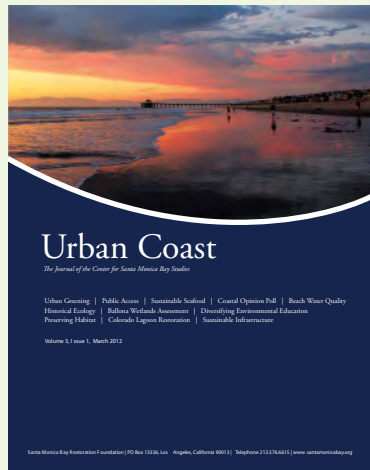
Interested in reading more about the Ballona wetlands?

Find project documents and new research and publications at:

www.ballonarestoration.org

They can be found under the Project Documents link of our new website.

The Latest Issue of *Urban Coast* is Now Available On Line



Urban Coast is a multidisciplinary journal that highlights the opinions, research, policies, and projects that are impacting and informing the most pressing issues and conditions of our urban coastal resources. It is produced by the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation and the Center for Santa Monica Bay Studies at Loyola Marymount University.

This issue contains pertinent, interesting articles on a variety of coast-related topics, and is our longest and most visually compelling issue yet. Our feature topic for this issue is Sustainable Seafood. Other highlights include: urban greening, public access, coastal opinion poll, beach water quality, historical ecology, Ballona Wetlands assessment, diversifying environmental education, preserving habitat, Colorado Lagoon restoration, and sustainable infrastructure.

Thanks to all who contributed to this issue of Urban Coast. Enjoy the online publication and please share it with your contacts, too. The link is here:

<http://www.santamonicabay.org/Documents/documents.html> (Click on the Current Issue, and you can also check out previous issues.)

LA Audubon Birk Walks: Ballona Wetlands

3rd Sunday of the month, except for December.
Three hour walk. Scopes and binoculars helpful.
Time: 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Leaders: Bob Shanman and Friends

Meet at the Del Rey Lagoon
6660 Esplanade Place,
Playa Del Rey, CA 90293.
Parking lot off 65th Avenue
Contact: Bob 310-326-2473
wbutorance@gmail.com



Friends of Ballona Wetlands

Guided Tours of the Salt Marsh and Dunes: second Sunday of each month, 1:00-3:00 pm

An informative nature tour of the salt marsh and dunes. Learn about our coastal ecosystem and explore the wonders of nature right in the middle of urban Los Angeles.

Self-guided tours at the Salt Marsh and Dunes:

Second Saturday of each month, 2:00-4:00pm
A self-guided tour of the salt marsh and dunes where visitors are free to walk on trails unescorted, with docents at various stations to explain sights and answer questions.

Habitat Restoration Volunteer Days:

Come help the Friends restore one of the last coastal wetland habitat in Los Angeles County. Volunteers get hands-on experience while learning about wetland ecology. The Friends provide gloves and tools. Children under 15 must be accompanied by an adult.

Where to Meet:

Parking Lot behind Gordon's Market at 303 Culver Blvd., Playa del Rey
www.ballonafriends.org

Pick up organic veggies and learn about our programs: now in one convenient package!!



We will be at the Playa Vista Farmers' Market on the 2nd Saturday of every month.



See our Ballona Wetlands Scientists in Action!

6th National Conference on Coastal Estuarine Habitat Restoration: Restoring Ecosystems, Strengthening Communities.

October 20-25, 2012
Tampa, Florida



Restore America's Estuaries' 6th National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration is the only national conference focused on the goals and practices of coastal and estuarine habitat restoration. The five-day Conference will explore the state-of-the-art in all aspects and scales of restoration, and will be comprised of field sessions, plenary sessions, expert presentations, special evening events, workshops, a poster hall (in which we will be presenting a poster on our vegetation results in the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve), and the nation's only Restoration Exposition.

10th Annual H2O Conference

May 29-31, 2012
San Diego, California



The 2012 Headwaters to Ocean "H2O" Conference is being organized by the California Shore and Beach Preservation Association, the California Coastal Coalition, the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project, the Society of Wetland Scientists – Western Chapter, and the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve Coastal Training Program. The conference program consists of roughly 120 presentations with the latest information relating to coasts, oceans, beaches, wetlands, rivers and watersheds. Our own Charles Piechowski will be presenting on "Water Quality Analysis in the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve: Do You Really Want To Know?"

Share Your Photos of the Ballona Wetlands

We're always in search of fantastic photographs of the wetlands and its plants and animals to be used on the Ballona Wetlands Restoration



Project's website and in our materials. If you have photos, we'd love to see them! To view past photo winners, visit the "Get Involved"

link at our home page www.ballonarestoration.org. To learn how you can help inform and inspire the public through the beauty of your photos contact Karina Johnston (kjohnston@santamonicabay.org)

Help Educate the Public about the Ballona Wetlands



Interested in learning more about the Ballona Wetlands and helping to inform the public about

this valuable ecosystem? Contact the California Department of Fish and Game's Volunteer Program for how to get involved (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/volunteer/>).

Also, visit the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project's partner page at <http://www.ballonarestoration.org/> for a list of additional organizations and agencies working on related issues.



Ballona Creek Watershed Task Force Update

On Tuesday, May 15, 2012, the Ballona Creek Watershed Task Force held its regular bimonthly meeting to discuss current programs, projects and activities throughout the Ballona Creek Watershed and Wetlands. During the meeting Lee Torees & Kaden Young of the Culver City Dept. of Public Works presented on Culver City's Rain Garden & Ballona Creek Improvement Projects.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 17, 2012 at its new time from 10:00 am-Noon in the Dan Patacchia Room, Culver City Hall. If you have questions regarding the task force or wish to be added to the email list for future meetings and agendas, please contact Diana Hurlbert (dhurlbert@santamonicabay.org).

Governing Board Meetings

All Governing Board meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of even-numbered months (starting with February) at 9:30 a.m. at the Del Rey Yacht Club in Marina del Rey.

Dates for 2012: February 16, April 19, June 21, August 16, October 18, December 20

If you would like information about the meetings, agendas, staff reports, or other related items, we encourage you to first visit our website at www.smbrc.ca.gov.

Otherwise, please contact Scott Valor at svalor@santamonicabay.org for information.

WASHINGTON, April 19, 2012 —A landmark study released by Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) for the first time links ecologically important coastal habitat restoration with adaptation and mitigation strategies as a way to reduce the impacts of ongoing global climate change.

The report, "Restore-Adapt-Mitigate: Responding to Climate Change through Coastal Habitat Restoration," demonstrates that coastal wetland restoration—everything from restoring salt marshes, to protecting mangroves, and creating new coastal wetland habitats—can be an integral part of public and private initiatives to combat climate change.

The report examines the current state of U.S. coasts; likely effects of climate change on those coasts; coastal planning, design, and policy making considerations; why coastal habitat restoration is essential to climate change adaptation and mitigation; and new findings that indicate that coastal tidal wetlands are efficient carbon sinks for greenhouse gases responsible for much observed global warming, making them essential components of efforts to reduce climate change impacts. The report is a multi-author collaboration bringing together internationally recognized experts in environmental science, policy, and coastal habitat restoration.

Among the report's key findings and recommendations:

- America's coasts face unprecedented stresses as a result of ongoing—and likely accelerating—global climate change; early and swift action is essential if we are to reduce its effects.
- Government policy makers and restoration professionals must adopt an ecosystem-based restoration perspective featuring coordinated regional planning and projects.



Restore America's Estuaries Releases Landmark Climate/Coastal Habitat Restoration Report

"Restore-Adapt-Mitigate: Responding to Climate Change through Coastal Habitat Restoration"

Links Restoration, Adaptation, and Mitigation as Strategies to Limit Climate Change Impacts

-- Coastal restoration does not exist apart from coastal communities and their residents. In fact, the fate and, in some cases, existence of these communities is inextricably linked to healthy coasts and estuaries. Coastal residents must be made aware of and invested in the need for preservation and adaptation where possible, and restoration and mitigation where needed.

-- Many of the expected effects from climate change—global warming, sea level rise, coastal erosion, and an increase in the number and intensity of major storms—may not happen gradually and incrementally. Current evidence suggests that there may be a sudden tipping point, beyond which major and potentially catastrophic changes in weather, temperature, and sea level occur.

-- New science indicates that coastal wetlands—particularly tidal-saline wetland systems—are incredibly efficient carbon sinks for greenhouse gases (GHG). This makes coastal restoration, adaptation, and mitigation essential elements in government planning and policy,

cont . . .



To download the full report, go to:

www.estuaries.org/reports.

For additional information, please contact:
Howard White,
at 703-524-0248,
hwhite@estuaries.org.

and has profound ramifications and opportunities for government and commercial investments in domestic and international carbon markets. "The restoration and conservation of the world's coasts is among the greatest challenges of the 21st century. We are now at a crossroads. This report gives both governments and private interests new information and recommendations in the effort to reduce the effects of global climate change," said Dr. Brian Needelman, lead author and editor for the report, and Associate Professor of Soil Science at the University of Maryland. Particularly important, he noted, are the findings and research into the efficacy of coastal wetlands in carbon sequestration. Carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane are potent greenhouse gases (GHG), which contribute to global warming. While it is well known that forest ecosystems can store large amounts of GHG carbon—popularly known as "Green Carbon"—and help reduce global warming, new research is focusing on so-called "Blue Carbon" in coastal wetland ecosystems such as mangroves, seagrasses, and salt marshes. Recent findings suggest that coastal wetlands can sequester carbon at rates 3-5 times greater than temperate forests, making them efficient—and essential—carbon "sinks," as world temperatures and sea levels rise.

"Coastal wetlands not only store carbon, restored and expanded tidal wetlands sequester vast amounts of carbon dioxide as well, providing big incentives for the private sector to invest in large-scale restoration of tidal wetlands," said Jeff Benoit, President and Executive Director of Restore America's Estuaries. He notes that Restore America's Estuaries has been a leader in the effort to create a national greenhouse gas protocol for coastal tidal wetlands. Such a protocol would bring coastal wetlands into international carbon markets, providing new opportunities and incentives for public and private investment in the restoration and preservation of vital tidal wetlands.



**RESTORE
AMERICA'S
ESTUARIES**

Report contributors include: Stephen Crooks, Director of Climate Change Services at ESA PWA; Janet Hawkes, Managing Director of HD1 LLC; Brian Needelman, Associate Professor of Soil Science at the University of Maryland/Department of Environmental Science and Tech-

nology; Caroly Shumway, President of CAS Environmental Solutions; Richard Takacs, NOAA Fisheries Biologist; and James G. Titus, a Lawyer-Applied Mathematician with the U.S. EPA.

Funding for the report was provided by the Henry Phillip Kraft Family Memorial Fund of the New York Community Trust, the Marisla Foundation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-Coastal Program.

Founded in 1995, Restore America's Estuaries (www.estuaries.org) is a national alliance of 11 regional, coastal conservation organizations with more than 250,000 volunteer-members dedicated to preserving our nation's estuaries. RAE members include: American Littoral Society, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Conservation Law Foundation, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Galveston Bay Foundation, North Carolina Coastal Federation, People For Puget Sound, Save The Bay-Narragansett Bay, Save The Bay-San Francisco, Save the Sound, a program of the Connecticut Fund for the Environment, and Tampa Bay Watch.

-Jeff Benoit 703-524-0248 jbenoit@estuaries.org

Internship and Volunteer Opportunities:

Assist with Scientific Monitoring and improve watershed health with the SMBRC

The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission and its partners has many programs and projects happening at any one time so there is always something great to participate in!



Interested in becoming a intern or volunteer?

Email Elena Tuttle at:

etuttle@santamonicabay.org

Report the Wildlife You Observe!



Help inform the monitoring program and submit a report about what plants and animals you

observe when visiting the Ballona Wetlands. Please download the Plant and Wildlife Observation Form (www.ballonarestoration.org, under the Get Involved tab) for more information and then submit it electronically to Karina Johnston at kjohnston@santamonicabay.org or mail it to: Karina Johnston, 1 LMU Drive, Pereira Annex MS:8160, Los Angeles, CA 90045.



WHAT IS THE BALLONA WETLANDS RESTORATION PROJECT?



Stretching from Playa del Rey to Venice, the Ballona Wetlands once occupied a 2,000-acre expanse of critical coastal habitat. Currently covering an area of 600 acres, the Ballona Wetlands

Ecological Reserve is the largest and most promising opportunity for coastal wetland restoration in Los Angeles County.

The Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project is a long-term, science-based plan to return the Ballona Wetlands into a thriving ecological reserve. By healing this highly degraded site, the restoration project will create a diverse, resilient and dynamic ecosystem while providing a unique opportunity for the community to reconnect with southern California's natural heritage.



Stay Connected!



Fanatical about Facebook?

Tickled with Twitter?

Join the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr to stay informed and up-to-date on the exciting phases of the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project.



bay restoration commission
STEWARDS OF SANTA MONICA BAY