



### What's New on the Wetlands

#### Scientific Monitoring Update

This upcoming September, the Ballona Wetlands Baseline Assessment Program will celebrate its first year of scientific data collection. Led by Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission's Restoration Ecologist, Karina Johnston, this program involves professionals and volunteers who investigate the wetland ecology and collect physical, chemical and biological data at the Ballona Wetlands. Monitoring the site will enhance our understanding of the existing conditions in the Ballona Wetlands and data collected will be combined with data from previous surveys and used to develop adaptive, long-term restoration and monitoring plans for the wetlands.



During this past month's fish surveys, the monitoring team discovered several species of juvenile native fish, including diamond turbot, topsmelt and the California killifish. Fish were captured, measured and counted, then released in the muted tidal area of the wetlands. Throughout July, the team will complete the last of the upland scrub vegetation surveys, as well as some targeted amphibian and reptile surveys. The monitoring team will also collaborate with Loyola Marymount University to further investigate water quality within the wetlands.

We look forward to sharing the data collected over the past year with the public in a comprehensive report that is anticipated to be released at the end of 2010. For any questions regarding the sampling, or if you would like to help participate in our scientific surveys, please contact Karina Johnston at [kjohnston@santamonicabay.org](mailto:kjohnston@santamonicabay.org).

#### Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project Environmental Review Process

The environmental review process for the first phase of the Ballona Wetlands Restoration will be getting underway as summer comes to a close. The first step and opportunity for the public to comment during the environmental review process will be the release of the Notice of Preparation/Notice of Intent (NOP/NOI). Information about the NOP will be circulated via the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project's listserv as well as posted to the project website (<http://www.ballonarestoration.org>). Please contact Diana Hurlbert at [dhurlbert@santamonicabay.org](mailto:dhurlbert@santamonicabay.org) for more information or questions about the environmental review process.

### **What is the environmental review process and how does it apply to the restoration project?**

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (<http://www.epa.gov/compliance/nepa>) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (<http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa>) are federal and state laws, respectively, that require federal, state and/or local agencies to identify the significant environmental impacts of a project and, if feasible, to avoid or mitigate those impacts. The environmental review mandated by NEPA/CEQA imposes both procedural and substantive requirements, including identification of all project impacts, evaluation of alternatives and public notice. The environmental review and permitting process is anticipated to take approximately 18 to 24 months, beginning in 2010.

Under NEPA and CEQA, the Ballona Wetlands Restoration project is required to prepare a rigorous Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to thoroughly evaluate all short-term and long-term environmental impacts and benefits of the project and alternatives so that a successful and comprehensive project can be implemented.

### **Who is preparing the CEQA analyses?**

A multi-disciplinary team led by ICF International has been selected to prepare the EIR and oversee associated data collection and analyses. The ICF team has extensive experience working with complex habitat restoration projects such as the Malibu Lagoon Restoration and Enhancement Plan.

## **Upcoming Events & Activities**

### **Ballona Creek Watershed Task Force**

On Tuesday, July 20, 2010, the Ballona Creek Watershed Task Force resumed its bi-monthly meeting schedule. These meetings are a great opportunity for the community, local agencies and organizations to discuss current programs, projects and activities throughout the Ballona Creek Watershed and Wetlands.

During the July 20 meeting a number of presentations were made, including:

- An update and facilitated group discussion provided by the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission on the Ballona Creek Watershed Task Force's status and direction
- An overview of Mountain Recreation and Conservation Authority's recently completed gateway projects and planned future projects, including:
  - Completed Ballona Creek Gateways
  - Ballona Creek to Parks Connection Trail
  - Sawtelle to Ingelwood Greenway
  - Milton Street Greenway Project
  - Creek-wide signage and bikeway improvements
  - River parkways wayfinding and interpretive signage project
- A sneak peek at the Ballona Creek Watershed Project Map and Database Project which will act as a searchable clearinghouse for all projects envisioned, planned and completed within the watershed.

Our wetlands team will continue to attend task force meetings to provide updates on the monitoring program and restoration planning. The meetings will continue on the third Tuesday every other month,

and will be hosted by Culver City for the remainder of 2010. If you have questions regarding the task force or wish to be added to the agenda circulation list for future meetings, please contact Diana Hurlbert ([dhurlbert@santamonicabay.org](mailto:dhurlbert@santamonicabay.org)).

## **Community Open House**

**Saturday, August 21, 2010**

**9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**

*Featuring guided tours of the reserve and information about the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project*

The public is invited to enjoy the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve during a community open house. The event, hosted by the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission, is an opportunity to learn about the unique resources of the Ballona Wetlands. The public is invited to visit the Fiji Gateway entrance to the wetlands:

### **Fiji Gateway**

13720 Fiji Way

Marina del Rey, CA 90292

(Across from Fisherman's Village)



Guided tours will depart from the trailhead at 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., and 11:30 a.m. RSVP's are encouraged! To RSVP or for further information, email Diana Hurlbert at [dhurlbert@santamonicabay.org](mailto:dhurlbert@santamonicabay.org) or call 310-216-9899.

## **Get Involved**

### **Enter the Ballona Wetlands Photo Contest!**

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! Contact Karina Johnston at [kjohnston@santamonicabay.org](mailto:kjohnston@santamonicabay.org) to learn how you can help inform and inspire the public through the beauty of your photos. To view past photo winners, visit <http://www.santamonicabay.org/smbay/ProgramsProjects/HabitatRestorationProject/PhotoOfTheMonth/tabid/190/Default.aspx>.

### **Volunteer Birding Program**

You don't have to be an ornithologist to become a volunteer for the Ballona Wetlands Birding Program. All you need is an interest in birds, a dollop of sunscreen and a positive attitude! Join your fellow birders on the 1st and 4th Saturday of each month. Contact Karina Johnston at [kjohnston@santamonicabay.org](mailto:kjohnston@santamonicabay.org) for more information.

### **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 Senior Volunteer Program (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/volunteer>) for how to get involved. Also, view the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project's partner page (<http://www.santamonicabay.org/smbay/ProgramsProjects/HabitatRestorationProject/BallonaContactUs/tabid/187/Default.aspx>) for a list of additional organizations and agencies working on related issues.

## 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.

<http://www.facebook.com/ballonarestoration>

<http://www.twitter.com/restoreballona>

<http://www.youtube.com/ballonarestoration>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ballonarestoration>

### 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.

Visit [www.ballonarestoration.org](http://www.ballonarestoration.org) to learn more.

#### Project Partners:

