



For Immediate Release

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Final Comprehensive Monitoring Report of Malibu Lagoon Indicates Proven Success Towards Project Goals

Los Angeles, CA (September 18, 2019) – The Bay Foundation (TBF) and California State Parks just released the Malibu Lagoon Restoration and Enhancement Project Final Comprehensive Monitoring Report (Year 6), indicating that the restoration project has been determined to be wholly successful as assessed against project goals and success criteria. When compared to pre-restoration data, post-restoration results show improved water quality, improved circulation, removal of dead zones and excess sedimentation issues, and a diverse native ecosystem resilient to impacts. The lagoon, located in Malibu Lagoon State Beach, has been on a positive trajectory for the past six years of monitoring, even through recent events such as the Woolsey Fire, which tested its resilience.

The report completes the requirements associated with permitting for the restoration project by the California Coastal Commission, including assessing the site over time and comparing it to pre-restoration data. (For a copy of the full report, please use: https://www.santamonicabay.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Malibu-Lagoon_YR6-Report_FINAL_8-12-19.pdf)

“The successful restoration of the Malibu Lagoon is testament to our reliance on good planning rooted in science and best practices,” states CA Assemblymember Richard Bloom. “It is heartening to have sea birds like gulls and cormorants along the beach as well as waterfowl and herons frequenting the tidal areas around native plant covered islands. The simple fact that someone visiting the lagoon and beach today wouldn’t even make note of the ‘restoration’ unless told, speaks volumes to its success. We stand in debt to the many committed scientists and environmentalists that made this happen.”

Prior to the restoration, the 31-acre Malibu Lagoon was on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency list of impaired water bodies for over a decade due to excess nutrients and low oxygen

levels. Watched carefully by many for its potential to be a test case for giving life back to a local wetland, the project's core goals included improving the ecological health of the lagoon's system by enhancing habitats for native wildlife, improving water quality, and eliminating "dead zones", or oxygen-deprived areas.

TBF Science Director, Karina Johnston, said, "To see that results across six years of comprehensive monitoring reveal that the Malibu Lagoon restoration project could be a wetland restoration model for the region is very inspiring. Informed by extensive scientific information and a collaboration across a wide range of partners, the restoration project transformed the lagoon from a stagnant, impacted system to a healthy and diverse native ecosystem resilient to disturbances."

The report comprehensively compares and evaluates pre-restoration conditions to six years of post-restoration conditions, through detailed physical, chemical and biological monitoring components which have resulted in several overarching trends.

Based on comprehensive data collected across the long-term monitoring program, the Malibu Lagoon Restoration Project shows that it met or exceeded the documented criteria for success:

- Circulation throughout the lagoon was improved—both wind-driven and tidal flushing—as indicated by mixing and high levels of dissolved oxygen throughout the lagoon. This was especially noticeable in the back channels, which previously had very low dissolved oxygen and anoxic "dead zone" conditions due to limited circulation.
- Improved circulation allowed for the burned debris and sediment from the Woolsey Fire (Nov 2018) to move through the restoration area with little impact, showing a strong level of resilience for the lagoon against external stressors.
- Rare birds such as western snowy plovers and California least terns successfully nested at the lagoon in 2018 for the first time in nearly 70 years, and the birds foraged in the restoration area.
- The restoration area continues to function as a habitat for juvenile fish, including the federally endangered tidewater goby, most recently surveyed in July 2019.
- The wetland continues to support a wide diversity of native plants and wildlife.
- The mats of algae that smothered the lagoon in pre-restoration conditions were significantly reduced post-restoration, and well below established criteria limits.
- The post-restoration surveys have shown a more diverse and sensitive invertebrate community composed of more organisms that cannot exist in highly polluted conditions.
- Based on the standardized, statewide California Rapid Assessment Method, which measures the condition of wetlands, the lagoon's scores were much higher than pre-restoration conditions, and data indicated improving condition scores over time.

"The success of the lagoon project is the culmination of years of focused work and advocacy by environmentalists, public resource agencies, scientific advisors, grantors, and dedicated volunteers on the ground, all of whom were essential to these gratifying results," said Suzanne Goode, California State Parks Senior Environmental Scientist. "The rapid flushing of Woolsey Fire sediments and debris flows out of the lagoon during the winter of 2018-19 provided dramatic proof of the resilience of nature when dedicated humans commit to reversal of mistakes of the past."

The Malibu Lagoon Restoration and Enhancement Project was completed by California State Parks with project partners State Coastal Conservancy, Resource Conservation District of the

Santa Monica Mountains, and The Bay Foundation. Hundreds of volunteers have also contributed to the success of the project by donating their time to removing invasive species throughout the site. Monitoring included funding from Wildlife Conservation Board and the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation.

The restored Malibu Lagoon is the result of 20 years of discussion and 10 years of planning involving more than 100 individual and group stakeholders in a public process that included the local community, environmental groups, state and national agencies. The stakeholders conceived the major elements of the plan including the new educational and access features, and provided direction to technical experts who did the detailed design.

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About The Bay Foundation (TBF)

The Bay Foundation (TBF) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit environmental group founded in 1990 to restore and enhance the Santa Monica Bay and local coastal waters (from the LA-Ventura county line to the Palos Verdes Peninsula). The Bay Foundation is a partner in the Santa Monica Bay National Estuary Program along with the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission and many other organizations. TBF works collaboratively with a broad group of stakeholders, including government agencies, industry, environmental groups, and community members. TBF engages scientists and conducts research while mentoring student interns and volunteers in conjunction with the Frank R. Seaver College of Science and Engineering through the Coastal Research Institute at Loyola Marymount University. (TBF: www.santamonicabay.org, CRI: lmu.edu/cri)

About California State Parks

With more than 340 miles of coastline, 970 miles of lake and river frontage, 15,000 campsites and 4,500 miles of trails, State Parks provides for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation. Off-highway motor vehicle recreation, boating activities, horseback riding, on- and off-road cycling, hiking, camping and rock climbing are some of the recreational activities enjoyed in 280 state parks. For more information, visit www.parks.ca.gov.