

Project Issues Discussed in the Document:

Other: Hydrology, Sediment Management, Public Health/Safety, Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Energy

Project Description: This Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluates potential environmental effects associated with implementation of the programmatic actions described in the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Enhancement Plan (Enhancement Plan). Beginning in 2013, an updated Enhancement Plan was developed to provide guidance on restoring and enhancing the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon's (Lagoon) habitats, protecting listed species, reducing threats to public health, and involving stakeholder groups with regard to coastal resource stewardship. Lagoon improvements for restoring and enhancing the Lagoon's native habitats were developed as part of the process and are identified in the updated Enhancement Plan. In general, the improvements in the Enhancement Plan focused on restoring and enhancing native salt marsh and transition habitats in areas currently dominated by invasive grass and providing long-term resiliency to sea level rise using various strategies. Restoration and enhancement would occur through activities that include focused grading and reconfiguration of the channel network in the Lagoon to provide better freshwater management and enhanced tidal exchange/influence. This element of the proposed project is intended to guide project-level design and CEQA analysis that will occur separately, tiering off this program-level EIR where appropriate. The Enhancement Plan also identified vector and trails management and improvement activities.

The proposed project as outlined in the Program EIR represents a series of improvements developed in the Enhancement Plan for a program-level approach to restore and enhance salt marsh and other habitats historically present in the Lagoon, improve public access and public safety around the Lagoon's perimeter, and present a "natural system approach" for more effective vector management of *Culex tarsalis*, a freshwater mosquito that can transmit West Nile virus and other forms of brain encephalitis to human hosts. The proposed project has three primary elements:

- Lagoon Restoration and Enhancement – focused grading and modifications to the lagoon channel network to restore and enhance areas of historic salt marsh (*i.e.*, Freshwater Management, Channel Improvements [referred to as Lagoon Concept 2 in the Enhancement Plan]). These areas of historic salt marsh have converted to a brackish system caused primarily by sedimentation and nuisance flows of freshwater from the watershed that have facilitated the establishment of invasive grass and other non-native species. Focused grading and channel improvements would provide features in areas to promote the recovery of salt marsh and facilitate the resiliency and potential expansion of this valued habitat type over time in response to sea level rise. Freshwater management measures would include decreases of input through watershed runoff reduction, potential diversion, and beneficial use of these flows where feasible.
- Public Access Improvements – proposed improvements/enhancements to existing trails, identification of trails that are anticipated to become inundated with sea level rise and

proposed realignment strategies, and opportunities to create linkages to regional trail networks and public transit centers.

- Vector Management – vector management would focus on freshwater management and improved tidal mixing, which would improve vector management of *Culex tarsalis* in a manner that also supports the protection of existing salt marsh along with future restoration and enhancement efforts of this habitat type. Measures such as structural improvements to reduce stagnant water within storm drain systems, channel modifications to improve tidal circulation, and channel creation to connect areas of inundation to reduce residence time would be implemented.