



ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve Land Management Plan

Introduction

- Engagement meetings for the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve (BWER) Land Management Plan were held in Spring and Summer 2026
 - Focus Group (i.e., stakeholder) meetings were held online in April and May 2026, participation was by invitation only.
 - An in-person public meeting, which was open to all, was held on July 10, 2026.
- The following notes summarize feedback received during these meetings, organized by topic. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) or the actions that CDFW will take.
- Tribes whose ancestral homelands included what is now Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve (BWER) were contacted in early 2026, inviting them to engage as part of our request for input and/or consultation. Engagements with tribes are confidential and ongoing and therefore that feedback is not included here.

Focus Group Meetings Feedback

Community and Tribal Engagement

- Public access
 - Increase community access via different methods (walking, biking, driving, public transit, etc.)
 - Public parking: Seek parking partnerships with local businesses and in neighborhoods
 - Buses: Shuttle bus from nearby parking areas to increase access to freshwater marsh
 - Biking: Improve bike access via bike paths on the levees, but not down in the sensitive landscape.
 - No bikes within BWER, have bike stations where people can lock their bike, then walk into BWER.
 - Encourage modifications to Culver Bridge so more of a bike/walking trail and overlook
- Educational activities and signage
 - Continue and increase opportunities for public to engage in stewardship, such as educational tours and signage, to help people understand the space and ecology
 - Education collaboration with local residents living on the Wildland Urban Interface such as the Keep Wildlife Wild campaign
 - Playa Vista Elementary School presentations on living with wildlife
- Facilitate continued and expanded opportunities for cooperation and engagement
 - Regular stakeholder meetings, suggested monthly to encourage public stewardship of the land
- Youth ballfields
 - Ensure area is well maintained and consistent use, re-examine maintenance restrictions
 - Need for facility improvements: backstop, field quality, etc.
 - Meetings between CDFW, little league organization, and potential financial supporters
 - Address safety concerns, particularly related to unhoused population
- Tribal engagement, tribal funding, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge incorporated into management

Natural Resource Management

- Fire management
 - Address fire danger from non-native plants (C North) and brush build up
 - Promote native, moisture containing plants to promote fire resiliency
 - Address increased fire risk during Santa Ana wind events
 - Unhoused population on BWER and risk of fire
- Wildlife protection
 - Assess the needs of endangered and rare species and update the Land Management Plan to include those needs and determine how they will be addressed.
 - 7-12 Federally or California Endangered Species Act listed species are present. Develop success metrics for sensitive species
 - Species eligible for endangered species protection, such as native bumblebees and burrowing owls
 - Protection of mycorrhizal fungi
- Invasive species management
 - Invasive plant control, including pampas grass and iceplant removal, and site restoration
- Human-Wildlife conflict
 - Prevent coyotes from entering Villa Marina Community (C North)
 - Engage CDFW coyote outreach program
 - Continue preventing trash accumulation and illegal dumping of trash generated on site and introduced from outside

Baseline Conditions/Surveys

- Update the current conditions, request new baseline study
 - Cover conditions during pre- and post-restoration periods
 - 1981 Schreiber Report west of Lincoln, a replication of this data collection effort would be beneficial throughout BWER
 - Build off of Interim Management Plan
 - Fill data gaps related to fill of property and hydrology of the site
 - Outline ideal minimum intervals for sensitive species surveys
- Exterior Influences
 - SoCalGas
 - SoCalGas objective and strategy is to remove themselves from wetlands. Operate within fenceline of their property
 - Abandoned 5 wells, have 13 left. Abandoned 1 by 1, process slowed due to annual 5-month work window
 - Still need access to observe the wells
 - Continue path with Partners. Cognizant different entities have different timelines
 - CalTrans
 - CalTrans project widening Lincoln Blvd. may impact wetland conditions

Wetland Restoration and Connectivity

- BWER is special because it was a freshwater wetland
- Return landscape to pre-development conditions
 - Like to see Ballona Channel reconnected to wetlands
 - Direct contribution of fresh water to BWER historically.
 - Allow nature to heal at its pace, more of a watching what is going on over time
 - Restore Ballona to as close as "natural way" as possible.
 - No heavy machinery, as little disruption of the land as possible
 - Examples from similar tidal wetlands properties within CDFW
- Increase connectivity
 - Consider how we can work with State Lands Commission for hydrologic connectivity.
 - Remove Ballona Creek concrete barriers
 - Relocate flood control protection (i.e. levees) to outside of property so hydrologically connected and larger
 - Increase connectivity across Lincoln, Culver, and Jefferson Blvds.

Hydrology

- Hydrologic integrity of the site is important
- Account for sea level rise and climate change
- Groundwater
 - Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)
 - Groundwater Dependent Ecosystem (GDE), no wells, but consider using land for groundwater recharge
 - Groundwater recharge may require freshwater detention ponds depending on saline water intrusion and external influences
 - If groundwater recharge is desirable, external collaboration required since no ground water pumping within BWER
- Consider regional context (ex: regional saltpan loss, but BWER still has salt pans. What's missing in the other areas that is still present at BWER?)
- Floodplain management, areas where Ballona Creek can enter the landscape, help with slowing water down, soil moisture, healthy ecosystem
- Hydrology dictated by available freshwater and tidal influence
 - The Freshwater Marsh agreement provides that it will be modified as necessary to accommodate restoration/management of the reserve.
 - Freshwater and tidal wetlands extent depends on timing/temporal dependency (year and season), but reference sites were primarily estuarine
 - Bring more tidal waters into the Ballona Wetlands

Public Meeting Feedback

Help us Design a
Balanced Future

What does
“protect” and
“restore” mean
to you?

Sense of Place
and Community
Engagement

Vision for
Volunteer
Opportunities

Complete the
Public Survey

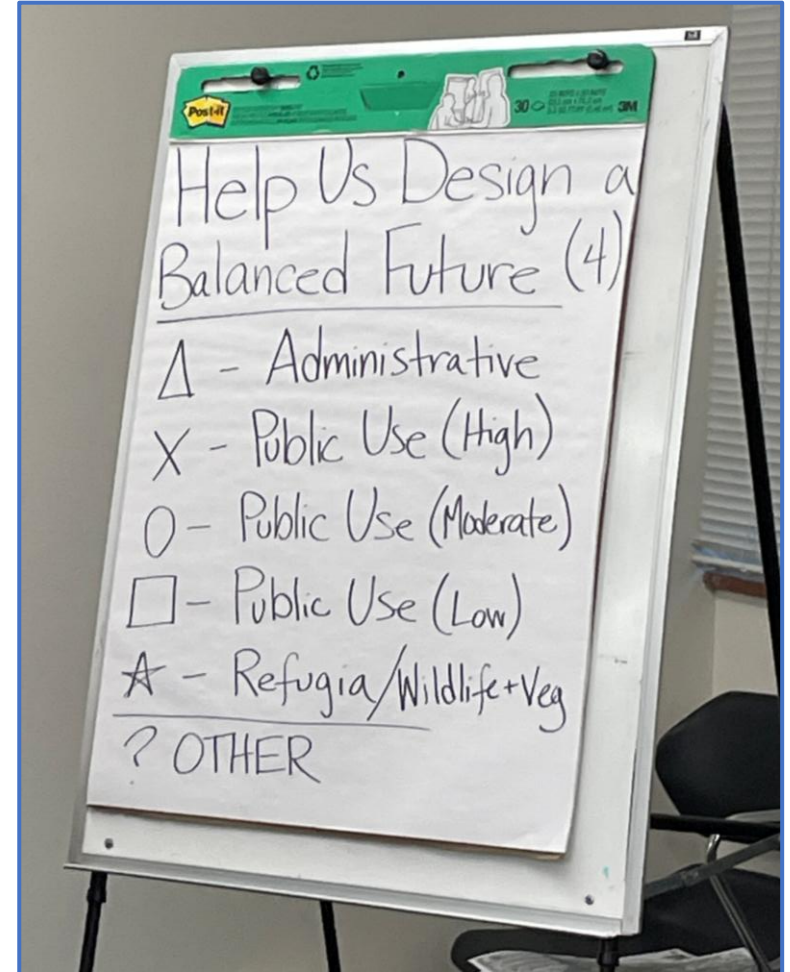
Station: Help Us Design a Balanced Future

- Mapping Exercise

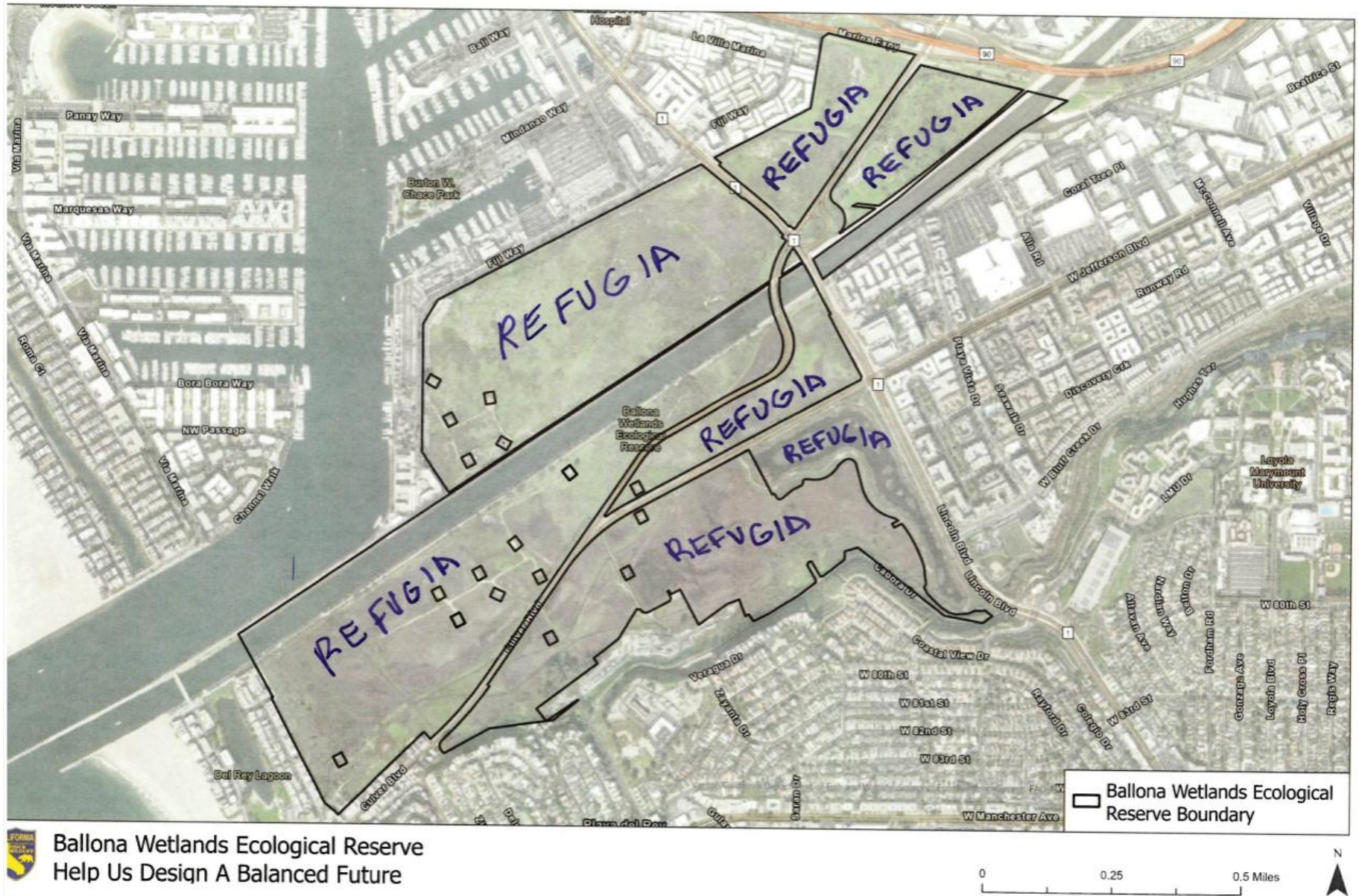


Mapping Exercise

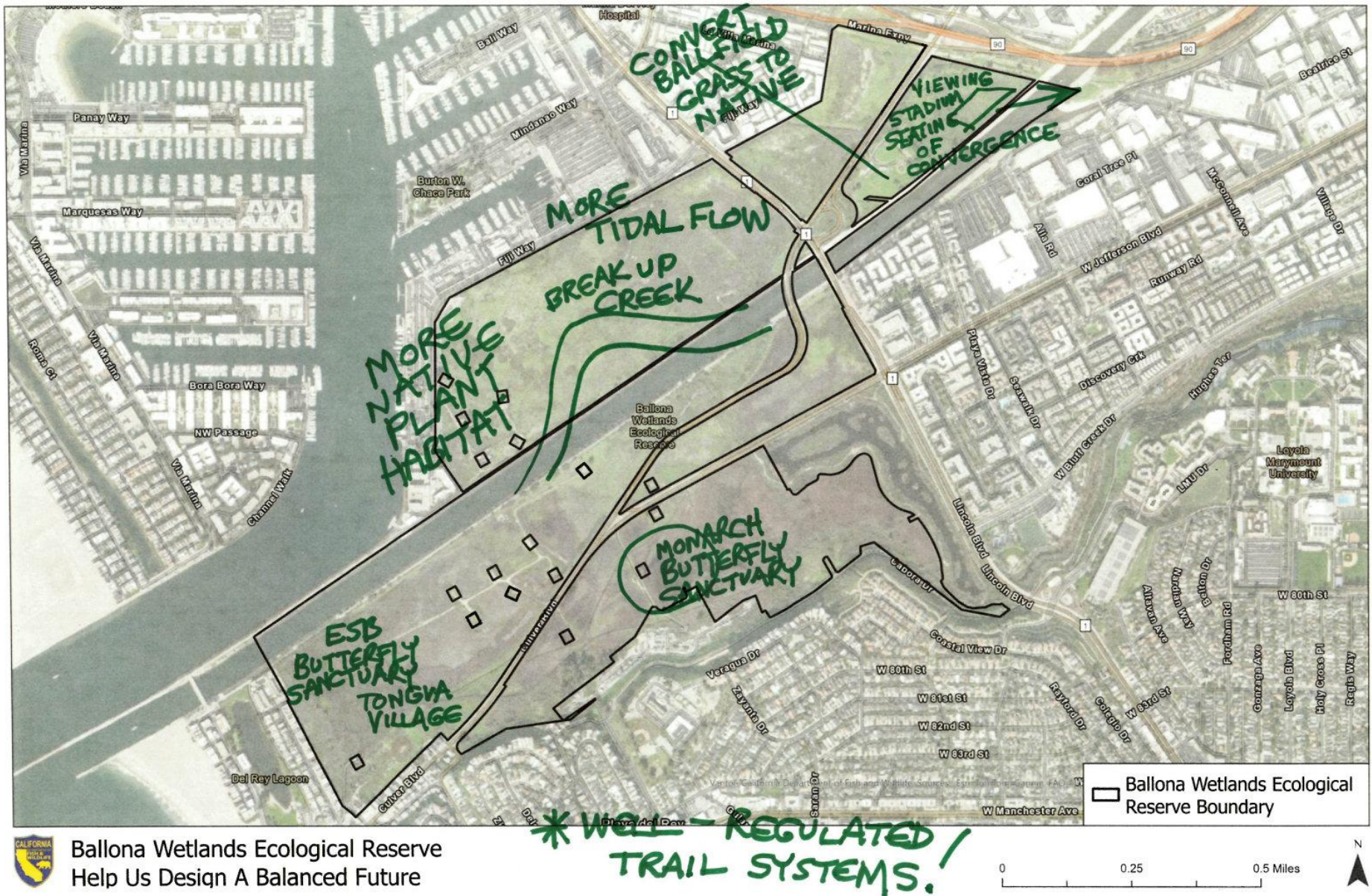
- Participants were each provided an 11x17 inch map of Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve with an aerial image as the background
- Using standardized symbols (image to right), participants were asked to draw on their map their vision for Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve.
- Following are a few examples of maps produced by participants.



Example: Habitat Protection Focus



Example: Habitat Protection Focus



Example: Protection and Access



Example: Protection and Access



Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve
Help Us Design A Balanced Future

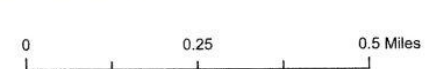
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Example: Public Access Focus



Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve
Help Us Design A Balanced Future



Example: Public Access Focus



Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve
Help Us Design A Balanced Future

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Station: Vision for Volunteer Opportunities

- Education and Outreach
- Infrastructure and Access
- Data Collection
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- General Feedback



Education and Outreach

- Formal docent program
 - California Naturalist Course
 - Ballona wetlands “crash course”
- Multilingual guides
- Volunteers conduct education events
 - Protection of endangered species
 - Keep out bulldozers
 - Remote or offsite presentations
 - Native species (plants and animals) focused walks
 - Arts and design
 - Nature journaling
 - Science illustration
- Youth and student education
 - Nearby middle and high schools
 - Photo walks
 - Scout-focused programming
- Junior Ranger style program
- Professional development and class projects in collaboration with higher education (community colleges, four-year colleges, graduate programs)
 - Public policy
 - Environmental Science
 - Food systems
 - Design and architecture
 - Economic Infrastructure
 - Storytelling
 - Landscape Architecture
 - Science Programs
 - Film schools

Infrastructure and Access

- Trail restoration, maintenance, building
- Install boardwalk trails
- Visitor Center
- Local transit routes, or a shuttle, between areas
- Remove the oil company

Data Collection

- Community Science Projects
 - iNaturalist
 - Science and research-based volunteering
- Live camera feeds
 - Collaborate with schools, students record data
- Thorough baseline survey of all flora and fauna
- BioBlitz
 - Butterfly counts
 - Bat surveys
 - Herp. (reptiles and amphibians) surveys
 - Entomological surveys
- Species monitoring
 - Birds
 - Butterflies
 - Etc.
- Native species monitoring – new growth of plants
- Water quality monitoring
- Air quality monitoring
- Monitor scientific information and human behavior

Biological Resources

- Native plant nursery, plant propagation
- Work with County to prevent removal of bird habitat along creeks
- Arbor Day tree planting (native trees)
- Owl habitat preservation
- Native plant restoration
- “Adopt and Area” invasive species control
- Light pollution survey
- Wildlife conservation

Cultural Resources

- Talks by indigenous people
- Form an indigenous tribal council for Ballona, consisting of elders in Los Angeles
- More resources/access for a diversity of people (languages and disabilities)
- Tribal mecca site for ceremonies/gatherings/celebrations
- Tribal engagement and education for adults and youth
- Indigenous led volunteer group to inform about traditional knowledge

General Feedback

- Leveling the playing field and building the skillsets across all communities (how can I volunteer if I'm hungry, tired, and on the street?)
- More community events in public access areas
- Demonstrate the beauty of habitat restoration and properly stewarded conserved areas along highways/freeways
- Stewardship volunteer opportunities should be more than just removing invasive plants, but tending and restoring
- Develop partnerships between educational institutions, CDFW, and nonprofits that allows for research that benefits students, CDFW, wildlife, and native habitat
- Increased funding for volunteer opportunities
 - Food or other incentives for volunteers
 - Annual volunteer recognition day
- Nature sound bath - guided sound bath that weaves listening to wetlands wildlife

Station: Sense of Place and Community Engagement

- Access and Infrastructure
- Education and Outreach
- Safety
- General Feedback



Access and Infrastructure

Expanded access

- Set criteria for access
- Key for Land Trust Groups
- Volunteer Programs
- Partnerships with transportation entities and organizations
- Reservation system
- More advertising about when the wetlands are open

Infrastructure

- Improved Infrastructure (e.g., parking and restrooms)
- Bike access
- No bike access
- Coordination with federal partners to build observation infrastructure such as observation towers on levies
- Better signage
- Advertise as a premier place for nature tourism

Education and Outreach

- Engage with ball field users
- Education for all ages, field trips for all ages
 - Education programs about wildlife
 - Clear messaging that Ballona is not about fishing and hunting
- Events: weed pulling and other land management-oriented events
- Educational contests and awards such as student essays or art
- Wildlife live-streaming cams with a focus on nesting sites, like the Big Bear bald eagles
- Messaging to the public about observation etiquette
- Remind the public about proximity to wildlife
- Public service announcements to the community
- Docent program and volunteer training
- Interpretive signs and ramps
- Multi-lingual programs
- Regular community member meetings
- Map distribution/access
- Intentional engagement with the Tongva

Safety

- Tsunami
 - Parcel connectivity
 - Raising the roadways
 - Raised bikepaths
 - Tsunami safety signage
- Roadways
 - Roadkill prevention initiatives/wildlife crossing improvements- particularly on Jefferson where speeding kills an inordinate amount of wildlife at night.

General Feedback

- The wetlands have evolved, keep them as they are
- Adopt a species program with funding
- Coordination between CDFW, LA County, etc. to reduce compartmentalization and treat Ballona as a whole instead of parts

Station: What Does “Protect” and “Restore” Mean to You?

- Protect
- Restore
- Protect and Restore



Protect

- Thorough baseline survey of all flora and fauna
- Determine requirements to protect all threatened and endangered species
- Don't bulldoze Ballona
- Do not displace wildlife
- No saltwater intrusion in freshwater wetlands
- Non-tidal wetlands
- Brackish ecosystem
- Riparian habitat protected from saltwater incursion
- Restoration
- Native habitat diversity
- Native species biodiversity
- Invasive species (plants and insects) controlled/removed
- Retain trees
- Law enforcement presence
- Protection of herps from collectors (e.g., lizards and snakes)
- No hunting
- Regular trash pickup
- Climate change mitigation
- Urban fire risk, no fireworks
- No built infrastructure in wetlands
- Wildlife corridors and crossing/undercrossings
- Healthy community and public access
 - Perimeter trails
 - Instill community awareness for value of protecting wetlands
 - Better signage
 - Tours

Restore

- Restoration is not needed
- No heavy machinery, be gentle, do not disturb wildlife or plants
- Conditions similar to the past, restore native habitats
 - 200 years ago
 - Ballona Historical Ecological Study
 - Historical freshwater volume and aquifer below the wetlands
 - Remove cement lining creek channel, restore native plants and habitat
 - Dune habitats
- Plant trees
- Native species present
 - Ballfields grass replaced with native meadow (mow during baseball season)
 - Remove non-native invasive species
 - Remove ballfields
- Healthy, biodiverse ecosystem
- Natural hydrology
- Freshwater ecosystem present
- Functioning tide gates
- Meeting area for Gabrielino Tongva tribal members
- Indigenous land management practices
- New updated baseline survey
- Connectivity to other open spaces
- Regional context
- Trash cleanup
- Public access, participation, and education

Protect and Restore

- Main ideas for the land and the animals and their habitat
- Do not restore without protecting animals and their homes
- Remove invasive weeds
- Remove non-wildlife dependent uses
- Develop compatible uses for tribal and public access
- Fine poachers

Station: Complete the Public Survey

Public Survey

- Participants were provided the opportunity to complete the online public survey using CDFW tablet computers during the public meeting
- The public survey was open from June 30, 2026 through July 26, 2026
- Results are still being analyzed and will be shared soon, an email will be sent to the distribution list notifying when they are available on the website.