Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project Revised EIR

State Clearinghouse No. 2012071090

INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Thursday, November 12, 2026

Goals for Today's Meeting







- Today's meeting is informational
- CDFW's role as Lead Agency
- Comments accepted only in writing
- Please allow presenters to speak without interruption
- Be respectful and courteous to all attendees

Safety

- Who is CPR/first aid Certified?
- Who can call 911?
- Address of building – see postings
- Who can meet ambulance out front?



A Final REIR ≠ Shovel-ready project

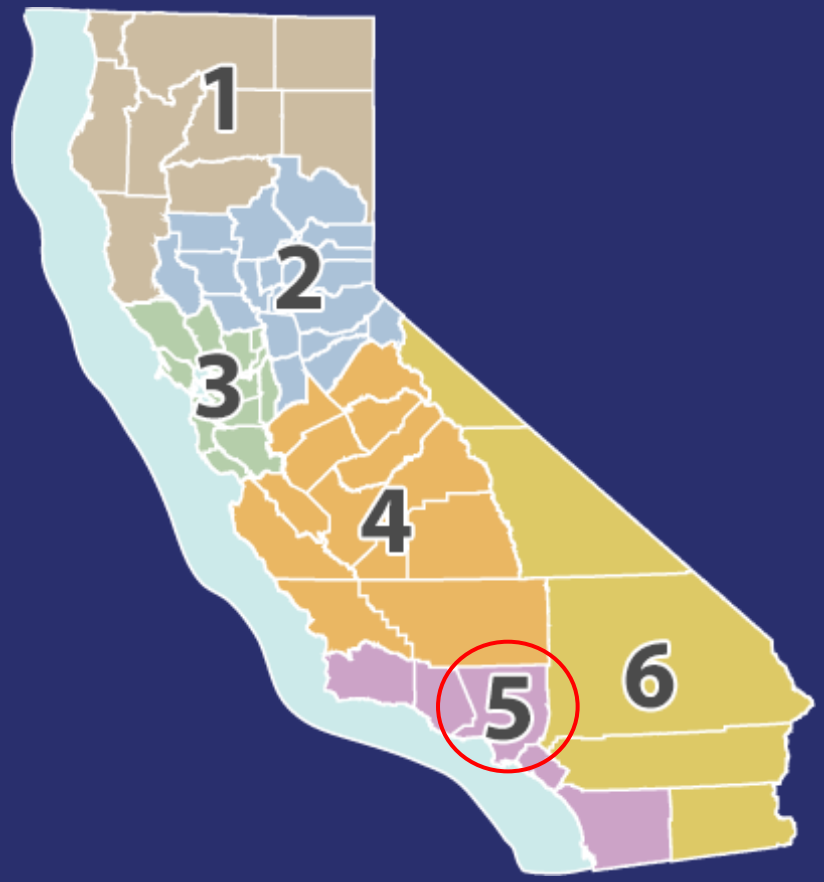
- ❑ CEQA Environmental Review
- ❑ Project Manager
- ❑ Funding
- ❑ Designs and Plans
  - ❑ Phase 1 – Sequences 1 – 24
  - ❑ Phase 2 – Sequences 25 – 35
- ❑ Permitting, Authorizations and Consultations
- ❑ Contracting
- ❑ Pre-construction activities (i.e., biological surveys)

Agenda



- CDFW South Coast Region Overview
- Project and REIR Overview
- How to Submit Comments
- Looking Ahead, Next Steps

CDFW South Coast Region Overview



Region 5

The "North" - Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles

The "South" - Orange and San Diego Counties.

San Diego is headquarters for the South Coast Region

South Coast Region Staff – Region 5

- Glen M. Lubcke – Environmental Program Manager
    - Oversee Habitat Conservation (HabCon) Planning Functions for San Diego and Orange Counties:
        - California Endangered Species Act
        - Lake and Streambed Alteration – Section 1600
        - California Environmental Quality Act
        - Natural Communities Conservation Planning
        - Mitigation and Conservation Banking
    - Regional Tribal Liaison
    - B.S. and M.S. in Biological Sciences, MBA
    - 20+ years of Conservation Planning and Environmental Policy expertise
    - 40+ years of herpetology expertise

South Coast Region Staff – Region 5

Hans Sin- Environmental Program Manager

- Leads Lands and Wildlife Biodiversity Programs across the South Coast Region
  - Lands – Coordinates management of Wildlife Areas and Ecological Reserves
  - Wildlife Biodiversity - Supports wildlife conservation, biodiversity management, and endangered species recovery programs
  - Regional Lead for bi-national conservation efforts with Mexico

- 30 years of professional experience in natural resource management, wildlife research, habitat conservation, game management, human wildlife conflict, invasive species management, and endangered species recovery.
- Former Wildlife Manager for the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources. Managed more than 300,000 acres of public lands and wildlife programs on the Island of Hawai'i.
- B.S. in Wildlife Biology and Management, M.S. in Wildlife Biology

Headquarters Staff – West Sacramento

- Mark Gard, PhD – Senior Hydraulic Engineer
  - Conservation Engineering Branch
  - PhD in Ecology, M.S. in Civil Engineering
  - 38 years in the environmental field
  - Specializing in hydraulic modeling, fish passage and fisheries

South Coast Region Staff

- Melanie Burlaza – Supervisor, HabCon South
  - 15 years, B.S. Biology, Mammalogist
- Jennifer Turner – Supervisor, HabCon South
  - 18 years, B.S. Biology & B.A. English Literature, Generalist
- Robin Madrid – Supervisor, Lands North
  - 26 years, B.S. Biology, Interpretation
- Ali Kalinowski – Environmental Specialist, HabCon South
  - 7 years, B.S. Zoology, Ornithologist
- Grant Samaniego – Environmental Scientist, HabCon South
  - 10 years, B.S. Wildlife and Fish Conservation Biology, Generalist
- Chase Schneider – Fish and Wildlife Technician, Lands North
  - 10 years, B.S. Biology, Herpetologist & Ecologist

Total years combined experience = 194 years

Our Mission

To manage California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and their use and enjoyment by the public.






CDFW Roles

Public service for Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties

Our Roles

- Environmental Review & Permitting
- Manage Public Lands
- Regulate Hunting & Fishing
- Monitor Plants & Wildlife Species
- Public Education
- Support & Fund Grants

CDFW Lands Program

- CDFW manages over 700 properties covering 1.1 million acres of fish and wildlife habitat throughout California
- Within Region 5, lands are managed by 15 permanent staff and 20 temporary staff.
  - Includes 6 Reserve Managers with multiple Wildlife Areas and Ecological Reserves assigned to each.

CDFW Owned and Managed Lands		
County	Total Properties	Acreage
San Diego	29	51,394.99
Orange	6	3,195.22
Los Angeles	4	1,614.75
Ventura	3	368.22
Santa Barbara	3	5,653.38
Total	45	62,226.56

CDFW Conservation Easements		
County	Total Properties	Acreage
San Diego	33	8,008.68
Orange	9	410.16
Los Angeles	11	1,605.96
Ventura	3	209.96
Santa Barbara	1	128.19
Total	57	10,362.95

Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve

- An **Ecological Reserve** is maintained to protect rare, threatened, or endangered plants, wildlife, and the habitats they depend on (Title 14, Fish and Game Code, Section 630)
- Approximately 577 acres
- Owned and managed by CDFW, with a smaller interest held by the California State Lands Commission
- Acquired in 2003 and 2004 with the goal of protecting and restoring one of the last undeveloped wetland areas in the County





Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve

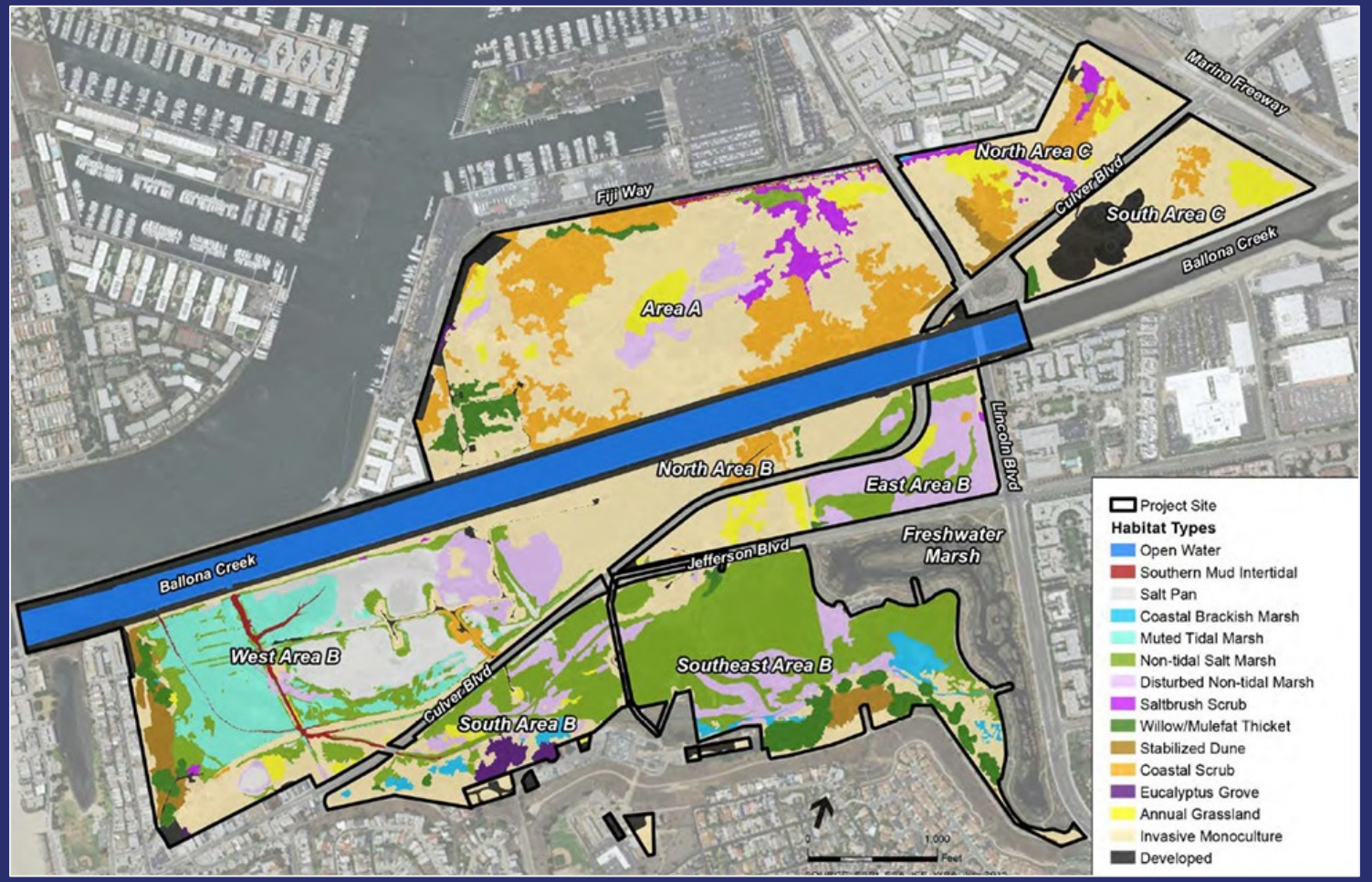


Ballona: A Highly Degraded Ecosystem

- **Areas A and C:** Altered by fill and dredged materials; affected by non-native vegetation, homeless encampments, and trash
- **Area B:** Portions are dominated by non-native vegetation, including eucalyptus, pampas grass, and sea fig
- Restoration can improve wetland functions, wildlife habitat, resilience to flooding and sea-level rise



Ballona Wetlands: Habitat Types



Ballona Creek – Flood Control & Regulatory Framework

- The LA County Department of Public Works – Flood Control District, maintains the Ballona Creek channel and levee system for flood risk management

- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), in cooperation with the County, constructed the channel and levees and has permitting authority over these features

- Restoration activities must maintain flood-protection functions and requires coordination with both entities:
  - Clean Water Act Section 404
  - Rivers and Harbors Act Sections 408 and 10

Restoration Project Overview

CDFW proposes a large-scale effort to restore, enhance, and establish 566 acres of native coastal wetland and upland habitat. These efforts would also require incidental work on adjacent property (4 acres)



GOALS

- Restoring wetlands and wetland functions
- Improving public access
- Maintaining existing levels of flood risk management
- Adaptive management

Restoration Project Overview

Two Phases, 35 Sequences (Table 2-6)

- Site preparation and demolition
- Grading and earthwork
- Hydrologic restoration
- Habitat restoration and revegetation
- Construction of access and support features
- Long-term management and monitoring



Ballona Wetlands: Species Diversity














The Reserve has significant potential to support additional species through restoration of wetland and upland habitats

Revised Environmental Impact Report

Project Timeline/History

- 2003/2004: Properties acquired by CDFW
- 2006 - 2012: Science Advisory Committee meetings
- 2004 - 2009: Public meetings
- 2006 - 2013: The Bay Foundation public presentations
- 2010 - 2013: Four on-site open house meetings
- 2012: Draft EIR scoping meeting
- 2017: Draft EIR public comment meeting
- 2020: Final EIR certified
- 2023 (May): Court Order for Revised EIR
- 2023 (September): CDFW decertified EIR
- 2026 (October): Revised EIR released for comment

California Environmental Quality Act

- The proposed restoration is a "project" under CEQA
- CDFW is the CEQA Lead Agency
- CEQA requires public agencies to:
  - Disclose and evaluate the potential significant environmental impacts of the Project
  - Evaluate alternatives
  - Adopt all feasible measures to avoid or mitigate those impacts

If you want to learn more, visit the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation webpage: https://lci.ca.gov/ceqa/getting-started/

Direction from 2023 Court Order

- Court Order calls for Revised EIR
- Upheld the 2020 EIR on all but two issues
  - Flood Risk and Performance Criteria
- Voided the project approval
- Suspended project activities which affect the environment pending compliance with CEQA

CEQA Guidelines §15234(d): "As to those portions of an environmental document that a court finds to comply with CEQA, additional environmental review shall only be required by the court consistent with principles of *res judicata*. In general, the agency need not expand the scope of analysis on remand beyond that specified by the court."

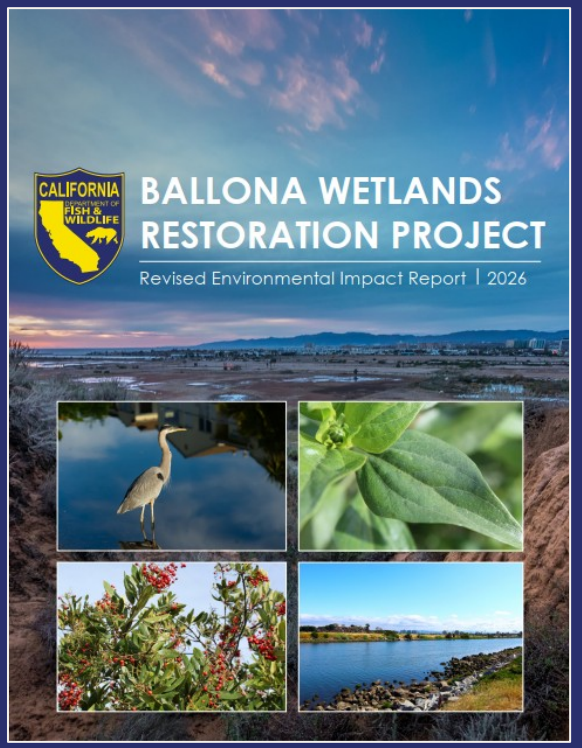
Revised Environmental Impact Report (REIR)

The REIR **is** intended to:

- Addresses Court Order
- Disclose **changes** to the original EIR related to flood risk and performance criteria

The REIR is **not** intended to:

- Reopen the entire 2020 Final EIR
- Re-litigate issues already resolved by the Court
- Reanalyze environmental impacts that the Court upheld



REIR Contents

Executive Summary
Chapter 1: Introduction
Chapter 2: Project Description
Chapter 3: Hydrology & Water Quality
Appendices



Executive Summary

Provides an overview of the Project and the REIR:

- REIR purpose
- How to participate in the public comment process
- Potential significant impacts & proposed mitigation measures
- Project alternatives
- Known areas of controversy
- Issues to be resolved



Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduces the REIR and CDFW's intentions with the document:

- Scope of the REIR per the Court directives
- Summary of the 2020 EIR






Chapter 2: Project Description

Provides an overview of the Project and identifies revisions to the 2020 EIR:

- Tracked changes to 2020 EIR text to address the Court's directives

  - Deletions from 2020 EIR are ~~struck out~~
  - Additions in REIR are <u>underlined</u>






Chapter 2: Project Description (performance criteria)

- The EIR includes measurable ecological and physical targets used to evaluate whether the restored wetlands are developing as intended

- The proposed restoration performance criteria focus broadly on habitat development, species composition, and ecosystem function

- Results are monitored over time to evaluate restoration success and inform adaptive management



Chapter 2: Project Description (performance criteria)

Important Changes:

- The 2020 EIR committed CDFW to specific performance criteria for evaluating restoration outcomes. The REIR does not change this commitment

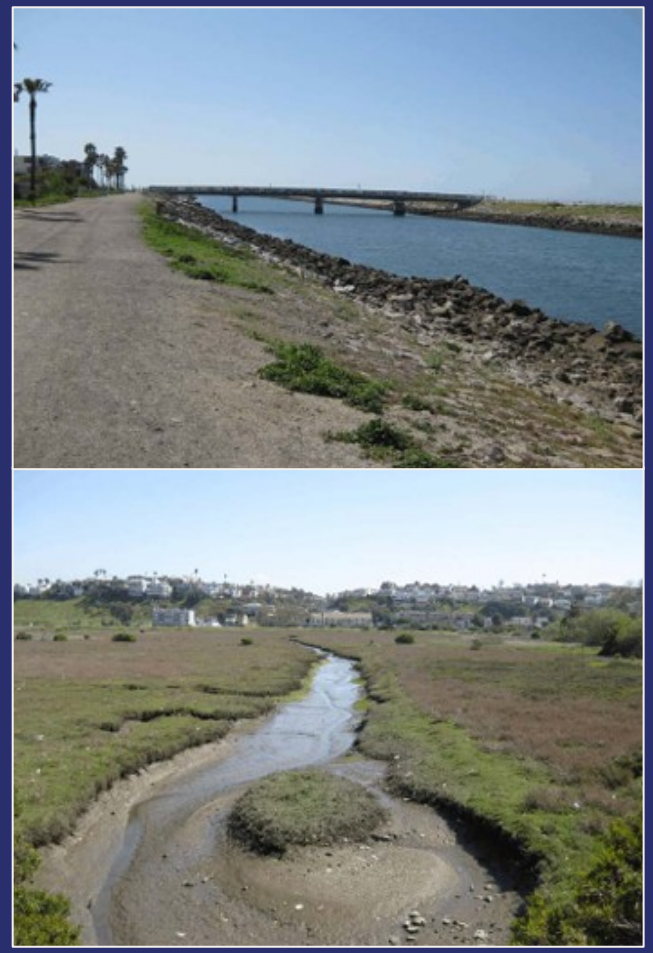
- CDFW retains the ability to conduct adaptive management as conditions change or new information becomes available

- If it appears necessary to relax the performance criteria/restoration goals through the adaptive management process, that change could potentially require additional environmental review. CDFW will conduct additional environmental review should CEQA require it

This provides greater certainty about the process by which any relaxation of performance criteria would occur

Chapter 2: Project Description (flood risk)

- The EIR needs to evaluate whether the project would maintain the existing flood-protection function of the channel and levee system
- The 2020 EIR evaluated flood risk using a 100 - year flood of 46,000 cubic feet per second (cfs)
- A later USACE flood-control parameter of 68,000 cfs established a higher flood-flow benchmark (Standard Project Flood; SPF) for evaluating channel conveyance and levee containment

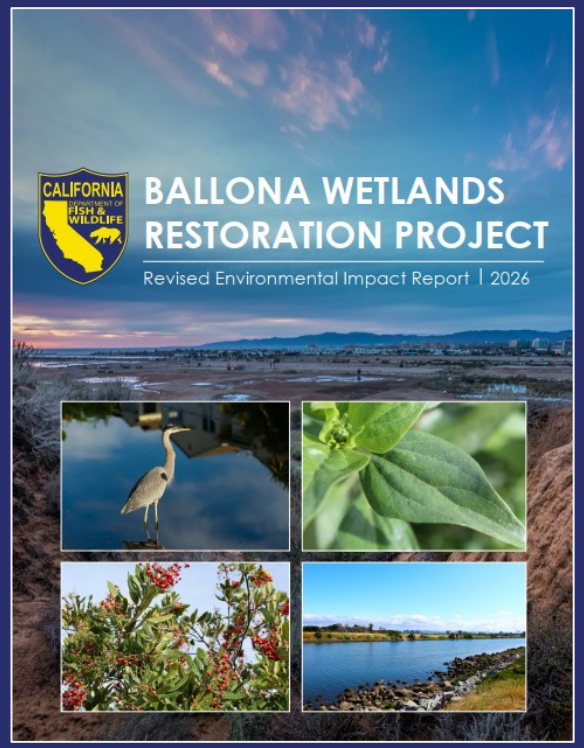


Chapter 2: Project Description (flood risk)

Important Changes:

- The REIR disclosed and analyzed flood risk using the flood control design parameter of 68,000 cfs

- The updated analysis does not identify new significant impacts relative to those disclosed in the 2020 EIR
  - 68,000 cfs SPF can be contained within the levees as originally designed
  - The Reserve's expanded floodplain provides temporary storage of storm flows, which can attenuate flows and reduce downstream water levels



Chapter 3: Hydrology and Water Quality

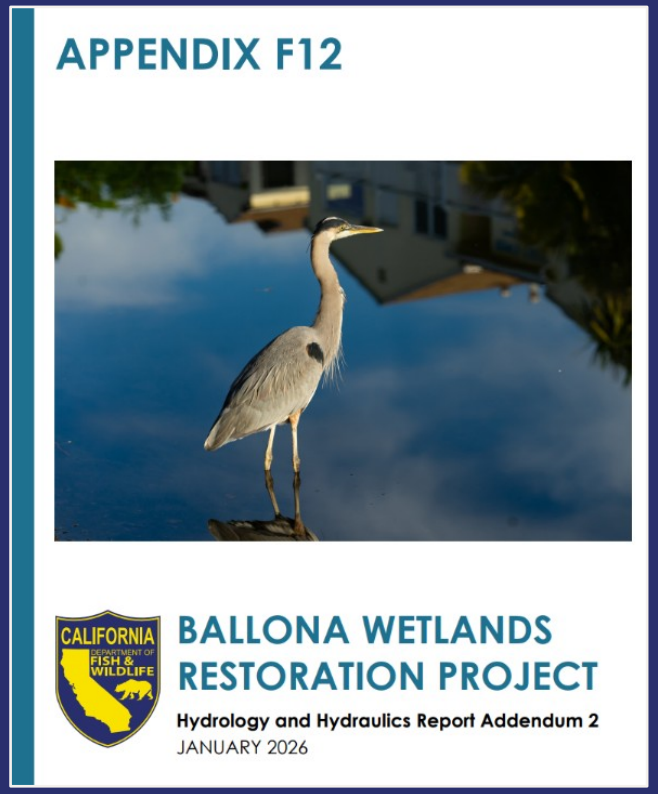
Important Changes:

- The analysis was updated to disclose and evaluate a Standard Project Flood of 68,000 cfs
- Considers details of a new hydrology hydraulic modeling report (Appendix F12)
- Evaluates changes in release of contaminated sediment with erosion and flood risk
- Discloses upstream and downstream impacts of proposed alterations

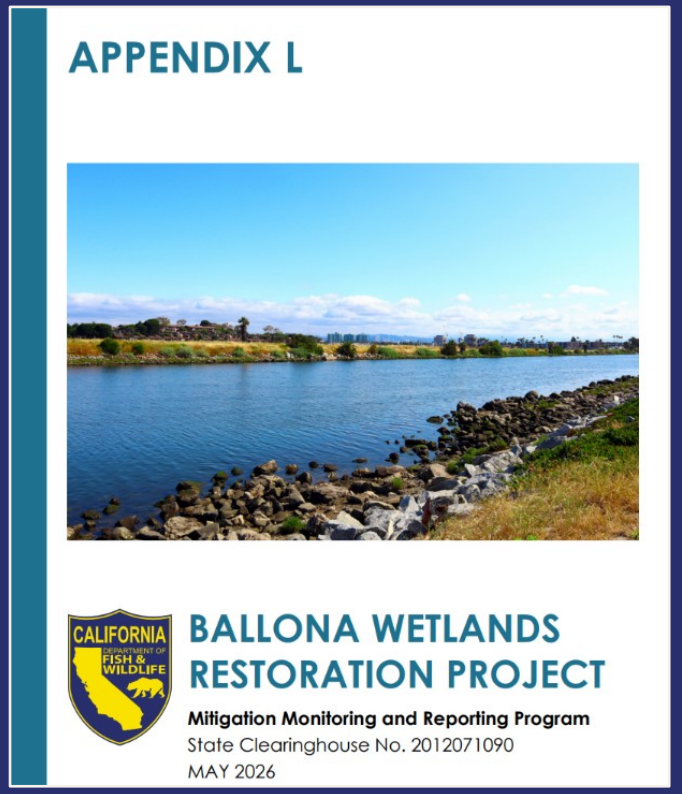


Appendices

Attachments to the REIR:







How to Submit Comments

Today:

- Fill out our paper comment card and drop it in the box
- Fill out our electronic comment card

Scan Here:

By email: BWERcomments@wildlife.ca.gov - please do not email staff directly.

By mail: ATTN: Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project REIR
3883 Ruffin Road, San Diego, CA 91942

The public comment period is open until 5:00pm on December 7, 2026

CDFW Resources

Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project Webpage:

- Access Project-related documents, FAQs
- https://wildlife.ca.gov/Regions/5/Ballona-EIR

Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve Webpage:

- Learn more about the property
- https://wildlife.ca.gov/Lands/Places-to-Visit/Ballona-Wetlands-ER





Looking Ahead, Next Steps

- This presentation will be made available on our website
- The draft REIR will be updated in response to comments
- A final REIR will be compiled and posted to CDFW's website
- CDFW will then make a decision regarding the project



Thank you for participating in the public review process.