

SOUTH SAN DIEGO WETLAND MITIGATION BANK AT POND 20

POSITION: The Chamber's Sustainability & Industry Committee voted to SUPPORT the Port of San Diego's effort to establish a wetland mitigation bank within a portion of Port-owned property in south San Diego Bay on April 1, 2021. The Chamber's Public Policy Committee voted to SUPPORT this proposed project on April 13, 2021. The Board of Directors voted to SUPPORT the project on April 22, 2021.

RATIONALE: The establishment of a wetland mitigation bank at Pond 20 will be a catalyst supporting valuable ecosystem services such as protection from storm surges, increased biodiversity, water quality improvements, increased carbon sequestration capacity, and providing pathways for additional mitigation banks.

STATUS: On April 13, the Board of Supervisors certified the Environmental Impact Report for the project and granted a Port Master Plan Amendment.

SUMMARY

The area commonly referred to as Pond 20 is an 83.5-acre vacant parcel that is currently isolated from tidal influence and holds minimal habitat value. Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems in the world; however, they are among some of the most threatened ecosystems due to dredging, filling, and over-development. In Southern California, an estimated 62 percent of coastal wetlands have been lost, and much of the remaining wetlands are significantly degraded. Furthermore, tidal wetland mitigation opportunities are limited within Southern California, and on-site mitigation is not always feasible or can lead to reduced ecosystem services.

Wetland mitigation banks have increasingly become preferred over project-specific mitigation requirements because mitigation banks create larger wetlands with greater ecological functions and sustainability. Compensatory credits generated through the proposed wetland mitigation bank at Pond 20 are anticipated to be available to mitigate for impacts to coastal areas and related watersheds within Southern California. Sold credits would be used to recover the cost of development for the wetland mitigation bank.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Port, designated as the "lead agency" under the California Environmental Quality Act, prepared an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Wetland Mitigation Bank at Pond 20 and the associated Port Master Plan Amendment (PMPA). The EIR analyzed the environmental impacts associated with establishing the wetland mitigation bank and the PMPA would add the Pond 20 parcel and surrounding commercial parcels into the Port's coastal permitting jurisdiction.

INDUSTRY/IES IMPACTED

The project will impact the adjacent communities of San Diego Council District 8 and Imperial Beach.

SUPPORTERS

- Otay Mesa-Nestor Community Planning Group
- San Diego Audubon Society

OPPONENTS

- None known

- Living Coast Discovery Center
- Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service - San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex
- Wildcoast
- Industrial Environmental Association
- San Diego Port Tenants Association
- South County EDC
- Poseidon Water

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR

- Mitigates impacts in coastal areas and related watersheds
- Generates funds to support economic development and community investment in adjacent communities

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

- Off-site banks cannot match the ecological value compared to on-site mitigation projects
- Releasing some credits before wetland restoration is complete may be unavoidable in order to incentivize investment