

Seal Beach NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Comments Received During the Scoping Period March 2007 – May 2007

Expand the Current Refuge Boundary

Expand the Refuge boundary to incorporate the nearby Los Cerritos wetlands.

Expand the Refuge boundary to include property outside the Naval Weapons Station in order to accommodate less restrictive public access around a native habitat area and provide a nature/visitor center in this less restrictive area.

Expand the Refuge boundary within the Naval Weapons Station and provide a new dedicated nature center, native plant garden, and public restrooms.

Review the status of Oil Island and recommend the inclusion of this area into the Refuge once oil production ends. Once included in the Refuge, Oil Island could serve as a potential location for public access from outside the base, or as a future nesting site for ground nesting seabirds (snowy plovers would not nest here unless the rip rap that surrounds the island is removed and access to adjacent foraging areas is provided).

Manage for Listed and Sensitive Species Not Currently Present on the Refuge

Develop and evaluate actions that could be implemented on the Refuge to benefit snowy plovers, particularly during the nesting season, such as creating additional nesting habitat with appropriate substrate conditions and unobstructed access between nesting and adjacent foraging areas. (Snowy plovers currently winter at Surfside and throughout the Refuge, the draft Recovery Plan is expected to address the need to provide nesting habitat on the Seal Beach NWR.)

Develop a program to reestablish one or more populations of salt marsh bird's beak on the Refuge. Review the species recovery plan and implement actions to address the proposals, recommendations, and goals of the plan for this species, it may be necessary to consider reintroducing native pollinators as well – so study those locations where it currently occurs to gain knowledge of what the plant may need to survive at Seal Beach.

Consider actions that could benefit other listed and sensitive species that do not currently occur on the site, or occur only in small numbers. Examples include providing suitable nesting habitat for elegant terns and western snowy plovers.

Prepare and implement a tiger beetle plan for the Refuge that identifies measures for protecting, maintaining, and where necessary, enhancing habitat in order to maintain current tiger beetle species abundance and diversity.

Construct hummocks or small islands in the marsh to provide high tide refuge for rails.

Increase Native Habitat Diversity and Improve Overall Habitat Quality

Expand the diversity of native habitats on the Refuge; identify actions that would achieve increase biodiversity.

Expand nesting opportunities for California least terns within the Refuge by increasing the number of suitable nesting sites from one (NASA Island) to three.

Explore the idea of providing a barge within the open water area of the Refuge to accommodate nesting seabirds, particularly terns (e.g., elegant terns). Such a facility would not however accommodate snowy plovers and could impact eelgrass near NASA Island.

Enhance and increase the elevation of the islands in the Case Street Ponds to provide better nesting habitat for terns, skimmers, and waterfowl. Most of these islands are underwater at extreme high tides and the loss of egg and nests have been observed during these extreme high tide events.

The area available for ground nesting birds on the Refuge is currently limited, providing more nesting sites could encourage nesting by other species of ground nesting birds including the western snowy plover.

Evaluate the opportunities for restoring freshwater flows into the marsh to improve habitat quality, particularly for cordgrass-dominated salt marsh habitat, while also considering the constraints associated with potential water quality issues.

Evaluate the habitat needs in the Case Road Pond and determine if the existing islands should be removed to increase intertidal wetlands or built up to create true nesting islands.

Study the current conditions in the 7th Street Pond area, document the organisms currently using this area, and attempt to determine why clapper rails are not using the area. Identify habitat improvements that could be made in the area, including removal or enhancement of the “island-like” features in the pond, to accommodate rails, ground nesting seabirds, and/or foraging shorebirds.

Restore the 20 acres north of the Case Road Pond to native upland, freshwater marsh, cordgrass, or upland transition habitat (1/2 cordgrass/1/2 upland transition). Currently the area supports primarily invasive weeds, but also includes some bunchgrass.

Evaluate potential restoration alternatives for “The Triangle Area” (Site 6, a former burn site). Alternatives could include establishing a new least tern nesting site at this location (involving fencing the perimeter of the site and importing clean white sand to provide appropriate nesting substrate), or excavate the area down to create open water and marsh habitat similar to that existing in the rest of the 7th Street Pond area.

Evaluate potential restoration alternatives for the area located to the east of the drop tower. Alternatives could include restoring the area to uplands, or restoring the area to intertidal wetlands and should incorporate the removal of the tower and palm tree, as well as all other non-native vegetation.

Ensure that the wetlands on the Refuge continue to serve their purpose and function as ecosystems, water filters, and tidal protection.

Provide Additional Funding and Staff to Manage the Refuge

A good management plan is not enough, funding and staffing must also be provided in order to achieve Refuge goals and objectives.

Provide additional staff for implementing refuge activities (even a part-time position would help).

Develop Partnerships to Assist in Refuge Management

Encourage outside participation, such as working with the Orange County Conservation Corps.

Coordinate with land managers and volunteer organizations responsible for or working at other wetland areas in the region to better understand regional wetland needs and regional wetland issues, as well as to share information related to habitat and wildlife management.

Address On-going Erosion Problems

Study the effects of wind and waves on clapper rail platforms and develop solutions to address any adverse effects to the rails using these platforms.

Evaluate and address ongoing erosion on the south side of NASA Island.

Study the effects of sediment generated by ongoing erosion along the edges of the restored mitigation ponds on the fish populations within the Refuge.

Identify and implement measures to address the current erosion problems in the Refuge that takes into account impact to water quality and protection of marsh edges for shorebird foraging and refuge from high tides.

Reduce Avian Predators

Evaluate the potential for removing the power lines and support poles along Bolsa Avenue; removing these poles will remove predator perches and benefit clapper rails.

Control Invasive Plant Species

Remove the invasive fountain grass growing along the west side of the Case Road Ponds.

Analyze the Effect of Sea Level Rise on Refuge Resources

Explore possible actions that could be taken to address sea level rise and/or subsidence within the Refuge.

Provide a Comprehensive and Coordinated CCP

Provide a map in the CCP that shows tidal inundation areas, elevations, and habitats.

Coordinate the CCP and Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach INRMP.

Provide a comprehensive list of the species on the Refuge, there is existing information that needs to be updated.

Improve Tidal Flow within the Marsh

Evaluate the culverts on the Refuge to determine if mussels are affecting flow capacity, if so; include recommendations for addressing this issue.

Remove the north end of Signal Road as there is other access to Oil Island (there may be a pipeline in the road).

Address Current and Future Research on the Refuge

Describe in the CCP past and current research projects and recommend additional research that would benefit the Refuge and its resources.

A goal of the INRMP that should be extended to the CCP is to redevelop the research projects that occurred in the past and encourage research that would benefit the Refuge and Refuge management.

The CCP should include recommendations for conducting studies that compare baseline information with current conditions on the Refuge.

Implement General Clean Up Actions

Remove concrete from the Refuge.

Demolish the abandoned building located near Hog Island.

Improve Public Access and Enhance Existing Public Use Facilities

Install a boardwalk to provide access into the marsh somewhere on the Refuge.

Construct observation blinds near the marsh to improve opportunities for wildlife observation and photography.

Construct a two-level 20-foot-high observation tower near Bolsa Avenue.

Evaluate the potential for controlled public access from the Sunset Aquatic Park into the Refuge along the southern border of the Refuge for docent-lead tours. The area would have to be secured when docents are not present.

Improve conditions at the Native Plant Garden by encourage herons to nest near the garden to eat where they can help control the gopher and squirrel population.

Construct a visitor center on Oil Island when oil production ceases.

Written Comments Received During the Public Scoping

1. Orange County Sanitation District – A sewage pump station is located on NWS Seal Beach at the north east corner of Seal Beach Boulevard and Westminster Avenue. The NWS is not annexed into the Orange County Sanitation District service area; if plans to add water fixtures facilities are proposed, OCSD will ask for the area to be annexed.
2. Individual – Hunting and trapping should be prohibited on the Refuge and no new roads should be constructed.
3. Individual – The great blue heron nesting habitat lost when several towers were removed from the NWS should be replaced within the Refuge. Access to the Refuge should be minimized to protect the wildlife.