

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL CONSERVANCY  
and  
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**Notice of Availability  
of a  
Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration  
and  
Draft Environmental Assessment/Initial Study**

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that a draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) and Joint draft Environmental Assessment (EA)/Initial Study (IS) have been prepared and provided for public review by the California Coastal Conservancy, the Lead Agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lead Agency pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), with assistance from the Port of San Diego, a Responsible Agency under CEQA, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)/National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), a Cooperating Agency under NEPA. The 30-day public review period begins on September 17, 2009 and ends on October 16, 2009. A public hearing to consider the MND and proposed project, which is summarized below, will be held by the State Coastal Conservancy on October 29, 2009 in Mendocino, California.

**Project Title:** South San Diego Bay Coastal Wetland Restoration and Enhancement Project

**Lead Agencies:**

California Coastal Conservancy (CEQA Lead Agency)  
1330 Broadway, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor, Oakland, CA 94612  
Contact: Mary Small, Regional Manager, (510-286-4181)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (NEPA Lead Agency)  
San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex  
6010 Hidden Valley Road, Suite 101, Carlsbad, CA 92011  
Contact: Andrew Yuen, Project Leader, (760-930-0168)

**Project Location:** The proposed action involves the restoration and enhancement of approximately 280 acres of coastal wetland and upland habitats in three locations within south San Diego Bay. The three sites include: 1) 230 acres of salt ponds on the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge – South San Diego Bay Unit, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and located at the southwest corner of San Diego Bay; 2) the 60-acre Chula Vista Wildlife Reserve, managed by the Port of San Diego, and located in San Diego Bay to the west of the South Bay Power Plant; and 3) the 25-acre Emory Cove site, also managed by the Port of San Diego, and located along the western edge of San Diego Bay to the south of the Coronado Cays.

**Project Description:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service San Diego National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex and the Port of San Diego propose to implement the South San Diego Bay Coastal Wetland Restoration and Enhancement Project with funding support from the California Coastal Conservancy, NOAA/NMFS Restoration Center through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and the Service’s Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program and Coastal Program. The project included the following components:

1. **San Diego Bay NWR, South San Diego Bay Unit.** This component involves the restoration of the three salt ponds located on the west side of the Otay River channel at the southwest corner of San Diego Bay to restore approximately 35 acres of shallow subtidal habitat, 20 acres of intertidal mudflats, 123 acres of low salt marsh habitat (cordgrass-dominated salt marsh), 22 acres of mid salt marsh habitat, and 14 acres of high salt marsh habitat. The salt ponds would be removed from the existing commercial solar salt operation and 150,000 cubic yards of sediments would be redistributed within the ponds to achieve elevations suitable for supporting the desired native coastal wetlands. An additional 50,000 cubic yards of material (that would be used to optimize cordgrass habitat) could be transported from the Chula Vista Wildlife Reserve to these ponds via a pipeline across the bay or trucks traveling along public roadways. A new tide gate would also be constructed on the west side of Pond 12, to the east of the Otay River channel.
2. **Chula Vista Wildlife Reserve.** To improve the habitat quality within the two basins on this project site, the higher tidal and supertidal areas at the south ends of the basins would be excavated to elevations appropriate for supporting low and mid salt marsh habitat. A system of tidal channels would also be created. The proposed excavation would generate approximately 50,000 cubic yards of material and would provide appropriate elevations to support 2.3 acres of shallow subtidal habitat, 5.6 acres of intertidal mudflats, 32 acres of low salt marsh habitat, 4.7 acres of mid salt marsh habitat, and 4.4 acres of high salt marsh habitat. The 6.5 acres of California least tern nesting site would be retained.
3. **Emory Cove.** Restoration and enhancement of coastal wetlands and uplands at this site will involve the removal of debris throughout the site and the eradication of ice plant that covers about 3.8 acres of the site. It is anticipated that an estimated 25 tons of debris and non-native vegetation will be removed following project completion. After removal of the debris and invasive plants, native plants in container stock and native plant seeds collected from the surrounding area will be planted or distributed throughout the disturbed portions of the site.

The basis for proposing a draft MND is the finding that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because measures have been incorporated into the project design to mitigate the effect to below a level of significance.

The environmental review process led to conclusion that this action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, pursuant to NEPA, an environmental impact statement (EIS) will not be prepared.

**Review and Comment Period:** Comments on the adequacy of the draft MND and accompanying draft EA/Initial Study must be provided in writing to Victoria Touchstone, San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex (via mail to 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Suite 101, Carlsbad, CA 92011, or via email to [Victoria\\_Touchstone@fws.gov](mailto:Victoria_Touchstone@fws.gov), or via fax to 760-930-0256) no later than 5:00 PM on **October 16, 2009**. Questions regarding this document or the proposed project can be directed to Victoria Touchstone at 760-431-9440 ex. 349.

**Report Availability:** Copies of the Draft MND and draft EA/Initial Study are available for public review at the following locations:

Tijuana Estuary Visitor Center  
301 Caspian Way  
Imperial Beach, CA 91932

Imperial Beach Library  
810 Imperial Beach Blvd.  
Imperial Beach, CA 91932

These documents can also be viewed electronically at the following websites:

State Coastal Conservancy Website, go to: [www.scc.ca.gov](http://www.scc.ca.gov), then click Public Notices (not Public Meeting Notices) under the Quick Links box in the upper left hand corner of the home page.

Port of San Diego Website, go to: [www.portofsandiego.org](http://www.portofsandiego.org)

San Diego National Wildlife Complex Website, go to:  
<http://www.fws.gov/sandiegorefuges/>, under Site Navigation click on “What’s New.”