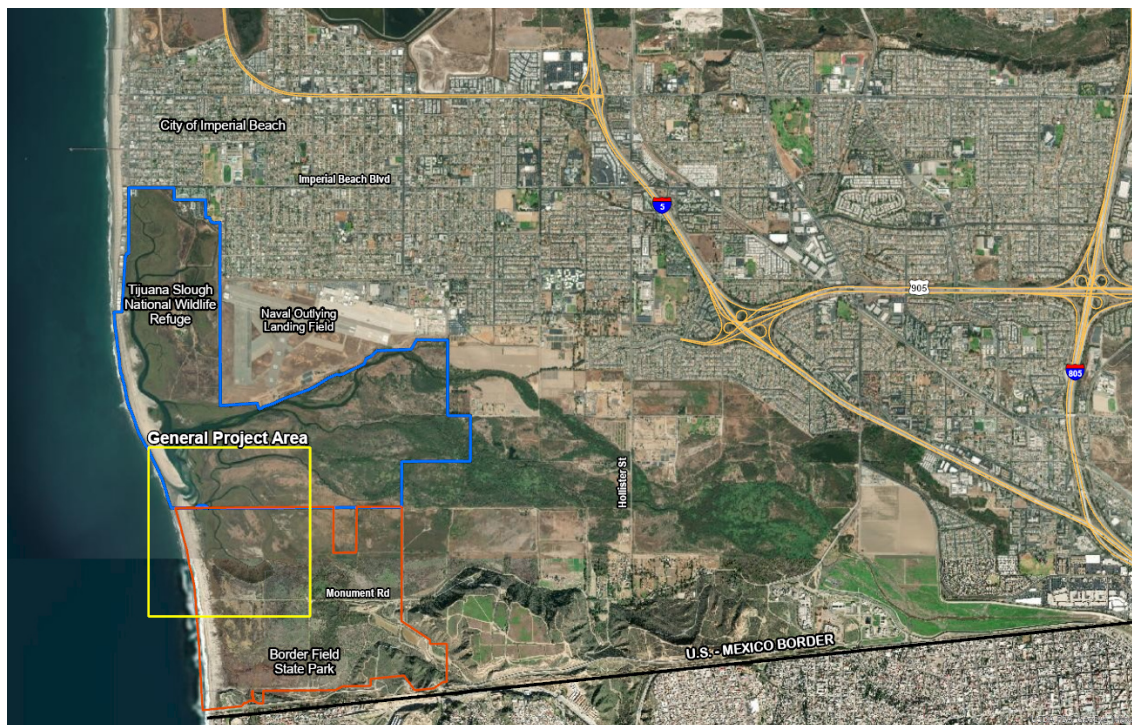




Restoration Update

Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program II Phase I (TETRP II Phase I)

May 2021



General Location of the TETRP II Phase I Project within the Tijuana River Valley

The California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve (TRNERR), and Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association (SWIA) have developed a restoration plan for the first phase of a multi-phase restoration program intended to ultimately restore 250 acres of coastal wetlands in the southern arm of the Tijuana Estuary. The first phase, the Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program II Phase I (TETRP II Phase I) project, involves the restoration of 80 to 85 acres of salt marsh, mudflat, tidal channel, transitional/upland habitats on portions of both Border Field State Park and the Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge or NWR). The restoration site is located to the north of Monument Road within the western end of the Tijuana River Valley in southwestern San Diego County, California.

What is the Tijuana Estuary and Why is it Important? The Tijuana Estuary is a coastal wetland where freshwater from the Tijuana River mixes with the saltwater from the ocean, creating a large wetland habitat dominated by low lying salt marsh vegetation. The estuary supports a wide range of birds, fish, invertebrates, and mammals, several of which are solely dependent on coastal wetlands for their survival. Historically, the estuary was also able to filter out the sediments and pollutants from upstream before they flowed into the ocean. Of the coastal wetlands in San Diego County, the Tijuana Estuary is the only estuarine system remaining that has not been divided by a railway or highway.

Why is Restoration Necessary? Prior to the 1800s, the Tijuana Estuary included over 2,500 acres wetland and high marsh habitat, and tidal influence extended over 1.5 miles inland. Since that time, there have been extensive changes to this estuarine system, including a significant reduction in the estuary's tidal prism (the amount of water coming and going with the tides). The changes are the result of historical land uses in the southern end of the estuary, including farming and military activities, that resulted in direct filling and loss of wetland habitats, and more recently by modifications to the estuary's watershed. Erosion and sedimentation associated with trans-border canyons, untreated sewage discharges, unseasonal discharges from Rodriguez Reservoir in Mexico, and inland migration of the barrier beach that separates the estuary from the ocean have all contributed to the degradation of the estuary. Restoration of the estuary is necessary to restore natural site elevations and increase the estuary's tidal prism, which will in turn increase tidal circulation to support tidal wetland habitat and the species that depend on this habitat for their survival.

Restoration of the southern arm of the Tijuana Estuary was first evaluated in the overall Restoration Project component of the 1991 Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program. Of the project components discussed in the 1991 program, the Model Marsh, which involved the restoration of approximately 20 acres of coastal salt marsh, was completed in 2000. In 2008, updated restoration proposals were evaluated for approximately 250 acres of the estuary in the Tijuana Estuary – Friendship Marsh Restoration Feasibility and Design Study. This study also envisions restoration of the Tijuana Estuary occurring in multi-phases, with the currently proposed TETRP II Phase I project included within the study area.

What are the First Steps in the Current Restoration Process? Border Field State Park and the Tijuana Slough NWR propose to prepare a joint Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) to evaluate the potential effects of restoring up to 85 acres of coastal wetlands within the project site. State Parks is the Lead Agency under the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and USFWS is the Lead Agency for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is participating as a Cooperating Agency under NEPA.

How Can You Participate? State Parks and USFWS have prepared this Restoration Update to inform the public, responsible agencies, and other interested parties about the CEQA/NEPA scoping process and to provide you with opportunities to comment on the content of the draft EIR/EIS. We are seeking input on issues such as the nature and extent of potential environmental impacts associated with the implementation and long-term management of the restoration site. Two public scoping meeting will be held to provide information about the project and to receive comments related to the proposal. In addition, a Notice of Preparation has been prepared by State Parks and a Notice of Intent has been published in the Federal Register by the USFWS to seek your written comments related to the proposal and the issues to be addressed in the draft EIR/EIS.

When Are Comments Due? Written comments must be received by **July 12, 2021**, and can be submitted by one of the following two methods:

U.S. Mail: Brian Collins, USFWS, San Diego NWR Complex, 1080 Gunpowder Point Drive, Chula Vista, CA 91910.

Email: fw8plancomments@fws.gov; include "TETRP NOI" in the email subject line.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

State Parks and USFWS will host two virtual public scoping meetings to provide information about the project and to receive comments on the issues and concerns you feel should be addressed in the draft EIR/EIS for TETRP II Phase I. These virtual scoping meetings will be held on Wednesday, June 16, 2021 with an afternoon meeting scheduled for 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM and an evening meeting scheduled for 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM. The links to the virtual scoping meeting are: <http://trnerr.org/about/public-notices/>.

Where Can You Get More Information? As the project progresses, the following websites will provide digital files of materials available for public review, including all project notices; a recording of the public scoping meeting, draft and final EIR/EIS, and updates regarding project progress:

For an overview of the project, links to relevant documents, and other project information, go to:

https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Tijuana_Slough/what_we_do/resource_management.html

Additional noticing and other information is available at:

<http://trnerr.org/about/public-notices/> and https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=983

In addition, the draft and final TETRP II Phase I EIR/EIS documents, the 1991 Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program EIR/EIS, and related documents will be available for review at:

California Department of Parks and Recreation, San Diego Coast District Office

4477 Pacific Highway, San Diego, CA 92110

Phone (619) 688-3260; Hours: M-F, 8:30AM – 4:30PM *

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

Phone (619) 575-3613; Hours: W-Su, 10:00AM – 5:00PM *

** Hours may differ due to COVID19 restrictions. Call to verify.*

Need More Information? Contact Brian Collins, Refuge Manager, Tijuana Slough NWR, at brian_collins@fws.gov or 760-431-9440 extension 273. Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) can call the Federal Relay Service at 1–800–877–8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

TETRP II Phase I Project EIR/EIS Project Schedule

May 27, 2021: Issue Notice of Preparation and Notice of Intent for the draft EIR/EIS

June 16, 2021: Conduct Virtual Public Scoping Meetings (2-4 PM and 6-8 PM)

July 12, 2021: Public Scoping Period Closes, Comments Due by 5:00 PM

Oct. 2021: Release Draft EIR/EIS for 45-day Comment Period

March 2022: Issue Final EIR/Final EIS w/ Responses to Comments

April 2022: Issue Record of Decision

The TETRP II Phase I project is a multiple agency restoration proposal that includes the following partners:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

California Department of Parks and Recreation

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Tijuana River Estuarine Research Reserve

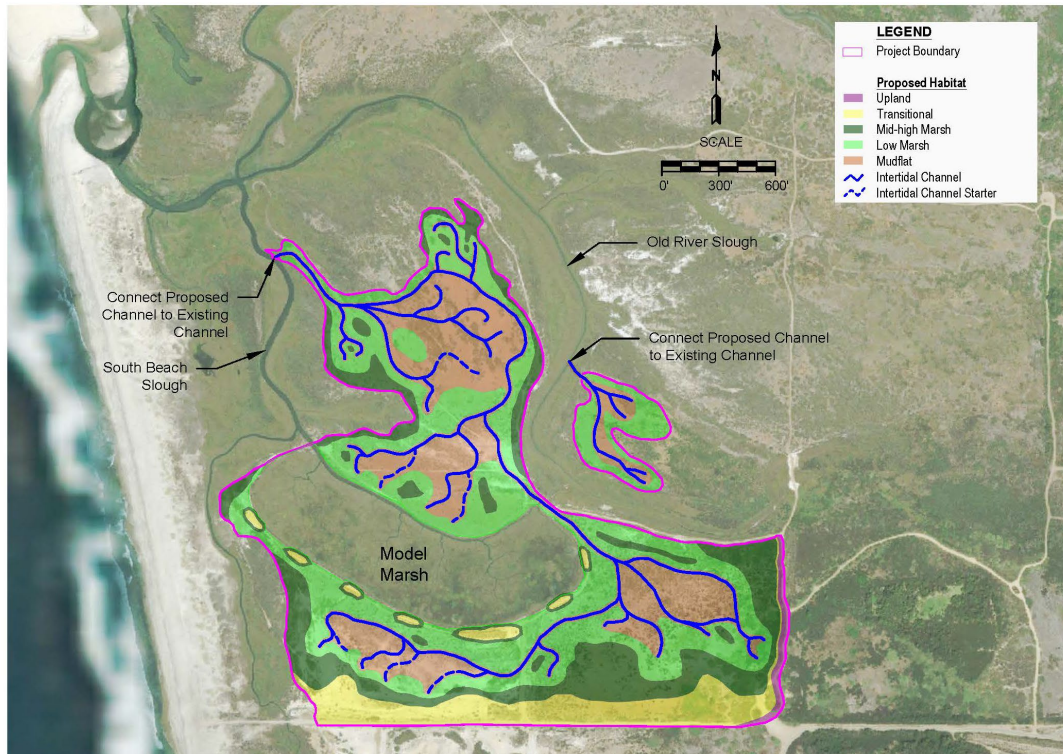
Southwest Wetlands Interpretative Association

Funding partners in the development of this restoration proposal include:

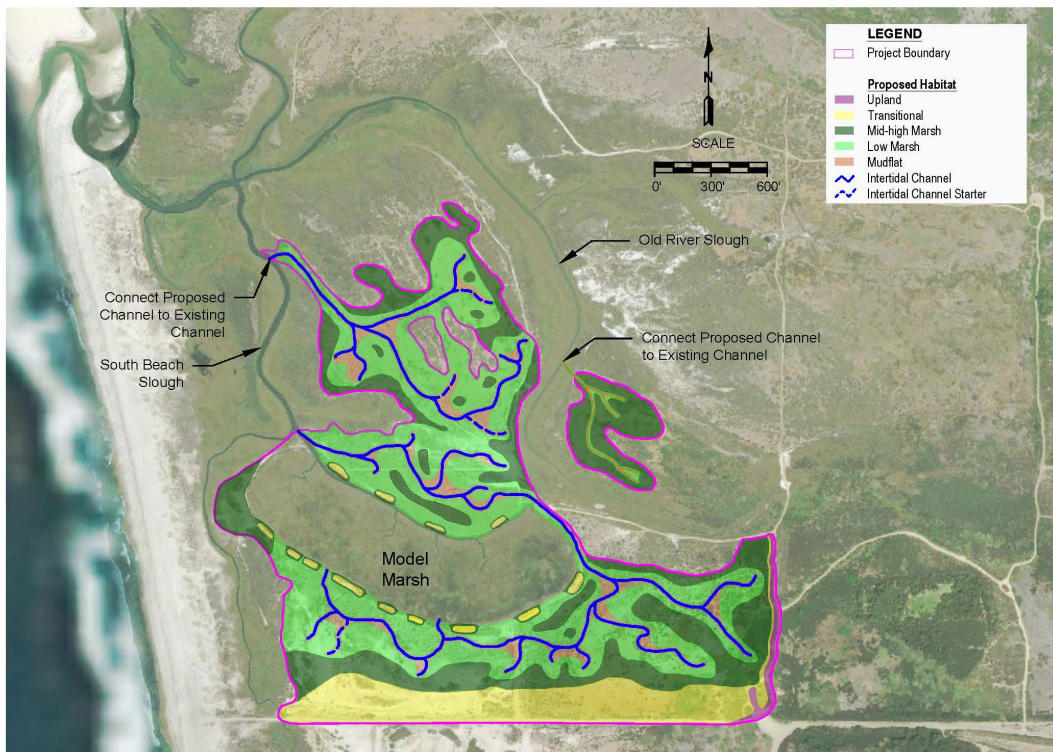
California Wildlife Conservation Board

California State Coastal Conservancy

Two restoration alternatives are proposed for consideration in the draft IR/EIS. They are the Maximum Tidal Prism Alternative and the Reduced Impact Alternative.



Maximum Tidal Prism Alternative



Reduced Impact Alternative