

Surfers for Wetlands



What's Threatening the Bolsa Chica Wetlands?



Where are the Bolsa Chica Wetlands Located?

The Bolsa Chica wetlands are located in Huntington Beach, California. The wetlands are a part of the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve. It is an approximately 1,300 acre coastal estuary.

Why are the Bolsa Chica Wetlands Important?

The ecological reserve includes many habitats, such as open water, mudflats, salt marsh, coastal dunes, seabird nesting islands, riparian, and freshwater marsh. More than 200 avian species have been identified at Bolsa Chica. It serves as a resting area for migratory birds. In addition, it filters the urban runoff water that collects everything from oil, pet waste, brake dust and other pollutants that wash down the storm drains when it rains. This is vital to keeping the water clean at the world famous Huntington Beach surf spots.

What is Threatening the Bolsa Chica Wetlands?

Before the Pacific Coast Highway was built, the wetlands had a natural outlet that allowed the twice-daily tidal flood of seawater into the wetlands' basin. This stimulates the growth of salt-marsh plants and supports wildlife habitat. In 1899, to facilitate hunting conditions a duck-hunting club sealed off the wetlands from the ocean and it remained that way until 2006, when a \$148 million project to purchase and restore the 600-acre wetland area was completed. The first dredging occurred in 2009 in order to add an inlet. The problem is that over time the sand migrating along the coast constantly fills in the inlet, so continuous dredging is required. The current dredging is a three-month process, will cost about \$1.2 million and will be the sixth time the operation has been performed.

What is the Issue Now?

Money earmarked for dredging at the state reserve in Huntington Beach will be exhausted by 2020, which is approaching rapidly. Without the continuous dredging the inlet would eventually get filled in and prevent the twice-daily tidal flood of seawater into the wetlands' basin to maintain the valuable habitat. The Department of Fish and Wildlife said possibilities are being explored for funding beyond June 2020. One possibility is the Poseidon company, which has proposed dredging the channel regularly as mitigation for a desalination plant it wants to build adjacent to the AES power plant in Huntington Beach. However, the plant still has two key permits to obtain and several other obstacles to clear, with construction of the facility less than certain.



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