



San Elijo Lagoon CONSERVANCY

Connecting communities. Protecting nature.

INLET DREDGING TO BEGIN AT SAN ELIJO LAGOON

The Partially Blocked Inlet Will Be Reconnected With The Ocean June 4-12

CARDIFF-BY-THE-SEA – It's time for spring-cleaning at the mouth of San Elijo Lagoon. Earthmovers will be at the Cardiff State Beach lagoon inlet to dredge and disperse accumulated sand from Thursday, June 4 through Friday, June 12. This annual inlet excavation reconnects San Elijo Lagoon to the Pacific Ocean. San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy is the organization overseeing the process.

“The lagoon’s inlet and channel appears open but is approximately 80% blocked,” said Doug Gibson, Conservancy Executive Director and Principal Scientist. “Tidal circulation is significantly muted as a result of sand buildup under the coast highway bridge and in the main channel.”

The small opening, just south of San Elijo State Beach Campground, is the lagoon's only access to the Pacific Ocean. Left unattended, it could remain closed much of the year from buildup of sand transported by high incoming tides and surf. The cooler winter and spring weather helps keep oxygen levels in the lagoon in the safe zone, but as temperatures rise in late spring and the demand for oxygen increases, an inlet operation is conducted. The inlet excavation is scheduled so as not to interfere with grunion spawning.

Dredging is a visual event, like watching giant beach toys sculpt the lagoon’s opening. The inlet excavation costs approximately \$100,000 and is conducted through the support of California Coastal Conservancy and County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health. Excavation involves the task of relocating approximately 25,000 cubic yards of sand out of the lagoon inlet, and back onto the beach. Sand removed from the tidal channel will be deposited south onto Cardiff State Beach.

It has been decades since San Elijo Lagoon was naturally connected to the Pacific Ocean. The first bridge and berm crossing the lagoon was constructed in 1887 for Santa Fe Railroad, followed by Pacific Coast Highway in 1891, and the completion of Interstate 5 in 1965, which divided the wetland in half. This "partitioning" of the lagoon alters flows for both fresh water and salt water, leading to accelerated sediment deposition, reduced water quality, and a reduction in native estuarine habitats due to increased runoff from development upstream.

Efforts over the past decade have improved tidal circulation and water quality, with significant ecological and recreational benefits. Several fish populations, including halibut, depend on the lagoon as a nursery. Stagnant water also can trigger a rise in mosquito populations, which is why the county covers part of the project’s costs.

News reporters: Please contact Doug Gibson for onsite interviews (parking is at Cardiff State Beach).

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About San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy

Founded in 1987, and headquartered in Solana Beach, the conservancy is the nonprofit land trust for San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve. Its mission is to protect and restore the resources of the lagoon, its watershed, and related ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations.

SanElijo.org

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