

San Elijo Lagoon
RESTORATION
Reviving Your Wetlands

Major Plan to Restore San Elijo Lagoon Nears Public Comment Period
The Conservancy Presents to Community and Environmental Groups This Spring

Solana Beach—Community and environmental organizations with a vested interest in the all-encompassing restoration of San Elijo Lagoon are receiving presentations by conservancy directors. These focused meetings are under way in advance of the release of the environmental documents for San Elijo Lagoon Restoration—anticipated this summer.

Ninety percent of California’s coastal wetlands have been replaced by urban development and agriculture. San Elijo Lagoon is a valuable part of what remains, but we are losing mudflat and salt marsh habitat. San Elijo Lagoon’s mudflat ecosystem will vanish unless we act. After 17 years of research and planning, it is time for the large-scale restoration of San Elijo Lagoon.

San Elijo Lagoon Restoration will restore disappearing salt marsh and mudflat habitats while improving tidal circulation in the reserve and coastal water quality. The restoration team is preparing for the release of the environmental documents that will outline the different restoration alternatives. Community input is an essential part of this process.

“We encourage an open and transparent dialogue with neighbors, citizens and environmental groups who are interested in learning more about what it means to restore this wetland,” said Doug Gibson, executive director and principal scientist for San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy.

One of few remaining wetlands in California, San Elijo Lagoon is known as a hot spot for biodiversity. Like vanishing rain forests and coral reefs, wetlands are one of the most productive habitats in the world. The 979-acre reserve hosts more than 700 species of plants and animals, many rare and endangered. Although birds are the lagoon’s most photographed species, mammals, fishes, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates depend on the lagoon, as do rare coastal dune and coastal sage scrub plants; even diverse life forms from mushrooms to algae.

Seven miles of trails for running, hiking and dog walking, world-renowned bird watching, and wildlife photography offer visitors a natural environment for solace and inspiration.

What appears healthy from the outside requires a deeper look within. San Elijo Lagoon is losing its mudflat and salt marsh habitats as a result of urban pressures. Highways, a railroad, and nearby infrastructure all contribute to restricted tidal flushing and degraded water quality in the reserve. As population expands in Southern California, the health of the wetland will continue to be degraded by both historical and future development.

PRESS RELEASE

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Mudflats are the primary source of food for many reserve animals, especially waterfowl that spend the winter here and other birds that use the reserve as a resting/refueling area during fall and spring migrations. At present, there are only 30 acres of mudflats, which is 24% of the historical 125 acres. It is estimated that without restoration all mudflats will be functionally gone in 5 years.

CEQA, the California Environmental Quality Act, and NEPA, the National Environmental Protection Act, are state and federal regulations that help ensure that large projects have negligible environmental damage, or that that damage is mitigated. Although CEQA and NEPA are separate acts, their requirements are similar and the two processes often proceed together. The final environmental document will meet the requirements of both CEQA and NEPA.

Several public meetings will be held during the CEQA/NEPA process—anticipated in summer—to encourage members of the public to share thoughts and concerns about the project. The final restoration decision is a collective one involving San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy, the lead agencies San Diego County of Parks and Recreation and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and 11 stakeholder groups (listed online at www.SanElijo.org/stakeholders).

More information is online, including frequently asked questions, facts, and maps of the restoration alternatives: www.SanElijo.org/Restoration

Organizations wishing presentations can contact the conservancy by email at info@sanelijo.org or call (760) 436-3944 x 704.

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San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve

The 979-acre reserve is located between Encinitas and Solana Beach, extending inland to Rancho Santa Fe. The reserve is owned and managed by California Department of Fish and Wildlife, County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation, and San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy.

San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy

Founded in 1987, and headquartered in Solana Beach, the conservancy is a nonprofit land trust and the premier stewardship organization for San Elijo Lagoon. The mission is to protect and restore the resources of San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve, its watershed, and related ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations. Through membership and foundation support, the conservancy provides environmental education and scientific monitoring, conserves cultural and natural resources, and acquires and protects additional acreage.

SanElijo.org

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San Elijo Lagoon CONSERVANCY
Connecting communities. Protecting nature.