

Amigos de Bolsa Chica

THE

TERN TIDE



Since 1976

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THE TERN TIDE

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Maintenance Dredging Scheduled to Occur at Bolsa Chica

By Craig Frampton

Dredging is set to begin this fall inside the Full Tidal Basin (FTB) of the newly restored Bolsa Chica Wetlands. A floating dredge, powered by electricity, will remove approximately 300,000 cubic yards of sand that has accumulated inside the basin since the tidal inlet was opened in 2006. The dredge operator will pump the sandy material to the adjacent beach on the south side of the jetties, building the beach berm seaward some 30-50 meters. The contractor will continue pumping sand on the beach from the south jetty all the way down to the Huntington Beach Cliffs if necessary, until all the accumulated sand is removed from the tidal basin. Post-construction surveys of the basin will be compared to pre-construction surveys to ensure the contractor removed the material from the basin and placed it on the beach. This construction activity is necessary in order to maintain the health and function of the wetlands.

In every natural or man-made embayment that has a connection to the ocean, waves, tidal currents and long-shore currents create both a flood shoal and an ebb shoal. A flood shoal is an accumulation of sand inside a tidal basin or waterway. An ebb shoal is an accumulation of sand offshore - similar to an offshore sand bar or delta. We see this in entrance channels to harbors, marinas, lagoons and other waterways with jetties. You may notice this shoal inside the Bolsa Chica Wetlands as you drive over the PCH Bridge. The shoal looks like a beach forming along the new levee and is especially noticeable at low tide.

Preliminary coastal engineering studies predicted shoaling rates of the wetlands and recommendations were made to maintain the wetlands by dredging the inlet. Engineers predicted that dredging maintenance would be required approximately every two years. The dredging interval could be longer if the basin were dredged to a deeper elevation, or, if shoaling rates decrease such that dredging is not needed as frequently. More time and monitoring are needed to really know how often the basin should be dredged. One thing is certain however, the new ocean inlet will have to be maintained if Bolsa Chica is to continue thriving as a restored wetlands.

Infilling of sediment inside the full tidal basin alters the habitat in the following ways: 1) it reduces the tidal prism and converts an area designed to be aquatic into a mudflat area or beach instead; 2) it gradually chokes off the influence of the ocean tides and changes tidal circulation patterns to become less efficient, and; 3) it mutes the tide range such that the Muted Tidal Basin (MTB) is prevented from draining efficiently.

Left unmanaged, the shoaling that is taking place inside Bolsa Chica would alter the distribution of habitat inside the wetlands. From a biological standpoint, the worst case scenario would be if the inlet channel completely closes. If this happens, the invigorating influence of tidal circulation would (continued on page 2)

Wine Tasting is for the Birds, Saturday, October 18, 4-8 pm

Don't go "sideways" to Santa Barbara, grab some friends and go straight to Los Alamitos! Raise your spirits and help Amigos de Bolsa Chica raise funds to continue its mission to preserve and protect the Bolsa Chica by joining us at a fantastic boutique winery right in our own backyard. This will be an exclusive wine tasting event with hors d'oeuvres. We invite you to purchase one-of-a-kind bottles of wine with the Amigos logo for souvenirs or gifts.

The Winery, owner and winemaker Gary King, www.thewineryllc.com
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\$20.00/Person (\$25.00 at the door)

Please RSVP by October 11 in one of three ways:

1. At our website's JOIN/SHOP/DONATE page (www.amigosdebolsachica.org/join.htm);
2. At our regular free public tour on Saturday, October 4 from 9:00 - 10:30 am;
3. Send a check with your name and the names and number of people in your party to Amigos de Bolsa Chica, PO BOX 1563, Huntington Beach, CA 92647.

Important Change in Ralphs Donation Program


In June, Ralphs launched a new Ralphs Rewards Card which replaced the old Ralphs Club Card. All participants will be required to have a new Ralphs Rewards Card to register/re-register for the new Community Contributions term that begins on September 1, 2008. You must apply for your new Ralphs Rewards Card at any Ralphs store. Applications and the new cards are available at all stores at all times.

After you complete the Ralphs Rewards Card application and have your new card, go online to www.ralphs.com. Then click on Community Contribution and register Amigos de Bolsa Chica as the recipient of your contributions. If you haven't already, be sure you register your new Ralphs Rewards Card before the end of the year to be effective on January 1, 2009. If you have any trouble with or questions about this process, please call Amigos' Office Coordinator Laura Holdenwhite, 714 840 1575, and she will be happy to provide assistance. Thank you for supporting Amigos through shopping at Ralphs.

Dredging *(Continued from page 1)*

cease, causing stagnation, oxygen depletion and overheating of the basin. The abundance of plankton brought in by ocean currents and tides would be cut-off from entering Bolsa Chica wetlands. Most marine organisms trapped inside the closed basin would eventually die off. Currently there is no plan in place to deal with the inlet if it closes. Consequently, routine maintenance dredging of the ocean inlet is the best measure that can be taken to prevent this scenario from happening.

A maintenance endowment fund was established by the Steering Committee to pay for the maintenance dredging at Bolsa Chica. This fund is anticipated to be available for future maintenance dredging projects, although just how many projects the fund will cover is unclear at this time. That said, funding for this first maintenance dredging project comes by way of the Montrose settlement. Future maintenance funding will likely come from the endowment and/or other sources. This first maintenance dredging project at Bolsa Chica will begin in October 2008 and finish by March 15, 2009.



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State Budget and the Environment

By Mel Nutter

As I write it appears that California may be close to adopting a budget for the fiscal year that began over two and a half months ago. Although the details of the budget bill are still a mystery in many respects and the Governor has not said what he will do, the proposal as it now stands includes over seven billion dollars in spending cuts. That cannot be good news for discretionary spending on things like our environment. State agencies with environmental responsibilities have suffered from the budgetary crisis already. No matter how the State's financial drama plays out, California's environment will continue to take a hit.

The Coastal Commission is but one of the State's environmental guardians in pain, but its situation is illustrative. In the absence of an approved budget, and in the face of the Governor's proposal that most state agencies absorb major "across the board" cuts, the Executive Director of the Commission felt compelled to send out lay-off notices to nearly 40% of his 131 staff members. Depending on what happens with the budget, it is possible that a significant number of those notices may be rescinded. Nevertheless, such a situation means that some valuable staff members are seeking other opportunities. Even under the most optimistic of scenarios staff resources and morale will decline.

If you want to see just how serious the budget failure is, a look at the Coastal Commission's September agenda will give you an indication. One item reads: "Possible Cancellation of Meetings. Discussion and possible Commission action on potential cancellation of October and other future meetings because there is no adopted FY 08-09 state budget." When I read that, and coupled it with the fact that the law imposes deadlines for certain Commission actions and even provides for the automatic approval of some matters in the absence of a Commission vote, I knew that the state's environment was a potential victim of Sacramento's failures.

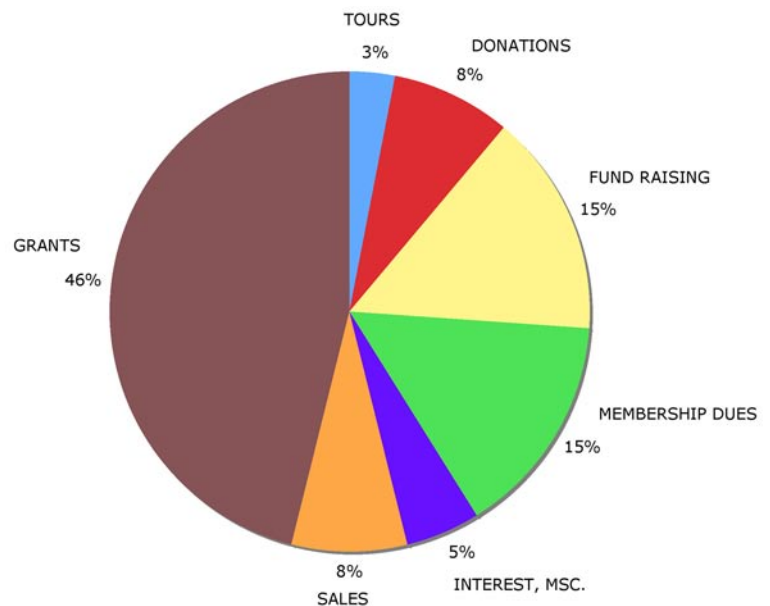
However important it may be, the Coastal Commission is but one small state agency with environmental responsibilities. There are other agencies. Some are larger. Some have multiple responsibilities and may decide that they can best function by substantially reducing or even eliminating their environmental stewardship functions. Public opinion polls tell us that Californians believe environmental protection should be high on the State's list of priorities. Our representatives in Sacramento need to be reminded of that priority once again.

The Amigos Committee You Want To Compliment

by Al Vari

The Amigos de Bolsa Chica Grant Writing committee works hard to procure grants from a variety of sources. They continually do research to develop proposals for various educational projects. Some grants that were funded recently are for bus transportation for students to attend Amigos de Bolsa Chica wetland tours, website enhancements, printing of informational brochures and The Educator's Guide (which is sent to all teachers before they bring their students to the wetlands for a tour), and gardening tools for wetland cleanups.

Funds from a specified grant cannot be transferred to cover an expense not mentioned in the grant. In 2007, a surprising 46% of the Amigos' income was comprised of grants. Still, grants cannot cover all of Amigos overhead expenses; grants for operational expenses are increasingly difficult to come by. So in addition to the grant funding Amigos pursues, we hold fundraising events, encourage donations and solicit new memberships.



We are very fortunate to have this grant committee. Its members are: Thomas Anderson, Dave Carlberg, Ron Davis, Jennifer Robins, Julia Tafel, Heather Wantuch and Brian Westcott. The committee always welcomes new members. My compliments and thanks to the Grant Writing committee!

Amigos Town Hall Meeting Report

Bolsa Chica Restoration Two Years Later

By Dave Carlberg and Thomas Anderson

The restoration of 600 acres of Bolsa Chica wetland was essentially completed on August 24, 2006, with the opening of the ocean inlet, allowing tidal action to enter the wetland for the first time in over a century. Now, after two years, the question is being asked, "Is the restoration working?" The answer came on September 3 when the Amigos de Bolsa Chica sponsored a town hall meeting at the Wetlands & Wildlife Care Center in which a panel of eminent scientists reported on studies they have been conducting in the newly restored Bolsa Chica wetland over the last two years.

The first speaker was Bob Hoffman from the National Marine Fisheries Service who, as a member of the restoration steering committee, has devoted much of his career towards the project at Bolsa Chica. He gave an overview of the entire restoration project, and spoke about the need for periodic dredging of the inlet (see article on page 1 for details on this upcoming project) to keep the new embayment healthy.

Rachel Woodfield, a biologist from Merkel and Associates, described two years of biological and physical monitoring her company is under contract to carry out in the newly restored wetland. The monitoring is scheduled to occur 1, 2, 3, 5 and 10 years following the opening of the inlet.

Bird surveys were conducted every month over the past two years and total populations went as high as 10,000 on a single day. Total species counted was 136, the peak occurring in February, corresponding to the beginning of spring migration. Not surprisingly, over half of the species were shorebirds such as dowitchers and willets, with western sandpipers being the most numerous.

In surveying the fish populations in the full tidal wetland, Woodfield's crew used a variety of nets to assure getting representative samples. A total of 41 species were identified, many of which were popular game fish, such as halibut, turbot, kelp bass and spotted sand bass, as well as large numbers of their prey, top smelt, grunion and anchovies. Probably the most significant observation made during the fish surveys was that juveniles were seen for all 41 species, showing that the wetland is providing a much needed nursery for our struggling local fishery.

Crabs, shrimp, mussels, oysters and scallops were found thriving, with again, juvenile forms present. Mud samples revealed a healthy population of invertebrates, which are a critical link near the bottom



of the wetland's food chain. Eel grass is abundant and spreading. Cordgrass in the intertidal mudflats is showing some limited growth. In spite of shoaling near the inlet that is slightly retarding tidal flow, oxygen levels and salinity remain normal. The conclusion is that after two years, the newly restored wetland system at Bolsa Chica is "healthy and developing nicely."

Ms. Woodfield was followed by Dr. Christopher Lowe from CSU Long Beach. He has been monitoring the movements of stingrays. Stingrays have been highly concentrated in Seal Beach near the San Gabriel River mouth for several decades. His team has tagged individual rays to get a better understanding of their breeding habits and movements when not at Seal Beach. Water temperature plays a large role in what they do, when they do it and where they go. The new tidal basin at Bolsa Chica appears to be the right temperature and is luring rays away from Seal Beach.

Dr. Lowe's graduate student, Thomas Farrugia, reported on his and fellow graduate student Mario Espinoza's efforts to measure and track the movements shovelnose guitar fish, gray smoothhound sharks and leopard sharks. Already at Bolsa Chica there are a wide range of sizes of these top predators which are known scientifically as bottom-dwelling elasmobranchs. This is another sign that the new tidal basin is meeting the goal of providing a good nursery for a variety of fish, stingrays and small sharks.

Next was Dr. Michael Horn from CSU Fullerton and his graduate student Jeannette Hendricks. They are monitoring the foraging habits and dietary makeup of terns and skimmers. There were some surprises with the habits of elegant terns, who breed in only several concentrated colonies in California and Mexico. While they are taking advantage of the newly created nesting sites, the elegant terns still prefer to fly back and forth across PCH many times a day to find fish instead of frequenting the new tidal (continued on next page)

Another Great Anniversary Picnic

by Margaret Carlberg

On the balmy Sunday afternoon of August 24, 2008 in Lake Park, Huntington Beach the Amigos celebrated the second anniversary of the opening of the ocean Inlet, and the maturing of the restored Bolsa Chica Wetland. All of the 15 Amigos Board members were present, who provided delicious desserts for the 65 attendees of the picnic. Assorted gourmet sandwiches and salads were provided by Suzanne's Catering.

People enjoyed messages and photos that were pinned on a 'Memories of Bolsa Chica' board from dozens of members about experiences in the Bolsa Chica or with the Amigos over the last 35 years. Twenty feet of Photo albums and assorted newspaper clippings were on display, enjoyed by old timers, newer members and visitors alike. Most of the 25 T-shirts from the Amigos 'Running for the Birds' 10K races were displayed on a line which served as a backdrop to the speakers' stage

Amigos President Dave Carlberg reported on a variety of current and future activities and projects. Vic Leipzig repeated the 'Toast' which he had given at 6:00 am August 24, 2006 as the backhoes removed the last sand bar from the Ocean Inlet into the recreated wetlands.

Kelly O'Reilly, the Department of Fish and Game manager of The Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve gave a report on some of the wildlife. It was good hearing about the greater success for the California least tern and the snowy plovers in this second season after restoration. Hearing of the influx of scallops and fiddler crab, and pregnant sharks was even more exciting because they are truly new species moving in as a result of the daily exchange of ocean water.

We were pleased that many of those who attended the picnic were a mixture of old and new Amigos members, some currently active and some not, as well as some out of town visitors. Hearing the good news from Kelly O'Reilly, Vic Leipzig and Dave Carlberg re-emphasized the importance of continuing to work together for the environmental treasure we have here in the Bolsa Chica.

Many thanks to the committee organizing this Second Inlet Anniversary Picnic which included Jennifer and Jim Robins, Shirley and Bob Dettloff, Alma and Gene Bowman, and Margaret and Dave Carlberg. Others helping with the setup included Tom and Dianne Livengood, Jamie Pavlat, Tom Anderson, Brian Westcott, Julia Tafel and Ron Davis, Heather and Mark Rivera, Bob and Nancy Harrison, Kim Nguyen, and visitors Char and Jim Bruzenak. Others helping the committee with cleanup were Jim and Sirkka Aldridge, Vic Leipzig, Lou Murray, Craig Frampton, Patty Overley and Marvin Carlberg.

Restoration Town Hall *(continued from previous page)*

basin. Climate change is altering the species of fish available for feeding their young. The largest part of their diet is a species of pipefish which the terns had not been known to eat in such great quantities before. Horn and Hendricks described how they were able to determine what comprised the terns diet, one method being a "tern camera" which gave an up close and personal effect of life in an elegant tern colony.

Kelly O'Reilly, Biologist with California Fish & Game closed the evening with details on the monitoring of Snowy Plovers and Least Terns. Largely through the efforts of her team, there has been an increase in the number of fledglings from both species. The details of her report can be found on the page 6 of this issue of the Tern Tide.



A Successful Breeding Season for California Least Terns and Western Snowy Plovers at Bolsa Chica

By Kelly O'Reilly, Associate Marine Fisheries Biologist, California Department of Fish and Game

Thanks to the dedication and hard work of Fish and Game staff, fledgling success for two listed species, California least tern (CLT) and western snowy plover (WSP), increased significantly at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve (BCER) during 2008.

This season, CLT produced a total of 242 nests at BCER and 184 of these were on Nest Site 1 (NS1) which was created during the restoration and is visible through the fence just past the footbridge. Of the 67 WSP nests at BCER, 37 were on NS1. In addition to CLT and WSP, Caspian tern, elegant tern, royal tern, and black skimmers also nested on NS1 this year. Because this nest site is so large and is used by multiple species, determining a total count of CLT and WSP fledglings poses quite a challenge to our threatened/endangered species monitor, Peter Knapp. This explains why the range of estimated fledglings for 2008 is so wide.

Out of a total of 371 CLT chicks, as many as 100-150 fledged this year; compared to only 15 chicks during 2007. WSP only had 15 chicks fledge during 2007 as well, yet out of 159 chicks born at BCER during 2008, 42-144 survived to fledge. Compared to 2007, the total number of CLT nests at BCER increased by 7% and WSP nests increased by 25%, this year.

The decline in chick mortality during 2008 is likely due to several management measures taken by Fish and Game prior to nesting season. For example, palm trees along PCH that harbored American kestrels that had preyed upon chicks during 2007 were felled by Ecological Reserve Botanist, John Ekhooff. In addition, John treated non-native plants on both nesting islands and NS1 with herbicides. This was an efficient means of removing non-native vegetation to provide more nesting space on the islands and facilitate the growth of native plants on NS1 to provide refuge for chicks. Another strategy to provide refuge for chicks on Nest Sites 1 and 3 was the addition of curved clay roofing tiles. Finally, in order to protect CLT eggs from being trampled by larger birds on NS1, Peter encircled CLT nests with circular wire fences.

The combination of these measures along with the watchful eye of Peter Knapp and those who assisted him, paved the way for a significant increase in the breeding success of these two listed species.

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President's Tern

by Dave Carlberg

I've occasionally written about the realities of how much money it takes to run an organization like the Amigos de Bolsa Chica. And while we no longer have an office (I really miss being able to say we have an office on Bolsa Chica Street), we still have many of the usual expenses that come with an office, even if it's in Office Coordinator Laura Holdenwhite's home. There's the telephone, internet connection (for website and email), insurance, office equipment and supplies and of course Laura's meager compensation. If you've ever run an office, you know what I mean. But the bulk of our expenses comes from pursuing our educational programs to inform the public of the pleasures and benefits of the Bolsa Chica Wetland. We do that by offering walking tours for school children and adults, and off-site programs for organizations and school groups. With increased interest in Bolsa Chica due to the restoration, we are giving more tours and programs than ever. These activities are conducted by a team of outstanding docents who go through a 12 hour training program before they get to put on their familiar vests that identify them as Amigos de Bolsa Chica docents. The docents hand out brochures and booklets that detail various aspects of Bolsa Chica. The cost of printing these has become a major but necessary expense. Other printing costs come from the publication of educators' guides and docent training materials.

We must derive our income from a number of sources, since no one source is enough to keep us going. A separate article in this Tern Tide, written by one of our veteran docents, Al Vari, highlights the efforts of our busy grant committee to solicit support from the many private foundations that provide funds to non-profit organizations such as the Amigos. We have been fortunate this last year that in spite of the enormous competition for funds, we have been able to secure two or three grants out of perhaps six or eight tries, which as Al's article shows, amount to slightly under half of our income, a significant piece of the pie. However, since many foundations are tied to regular businesses, the foundations' assets are tuned to the economic climate and thus are highly unpredictable. It is impossible to know what we can expect in the way of grants for the coming year.

The rest of our operating expenses must come from other sources such as donations, fund raising events and membership dues. We are especially proud of the unsolicited donations we receive each year since we feel they reflect a vote of confidence by our members and the general public. As every non-profit organization knows, fund raising events are real gambles in which large amounts of organization funds and volunteer time are spent with the hope of receiving a reasonable return. Our most popular fundraiser had been the "Running is for the Birds" 10K run, which we organized for 27 consecutive years. But unfortunately it became too expensive to continue it. We do, however, have another fundraiser coming up in October, a "Wine Tasting is for the Birds" at a local winery, which is described on page 2 in this Tern Tide

That leaves membership dues, which represent 15 percent of our income. While important, I don't consider membership dues ever to be a major source of income for the simple reason members of an organization are its lifeblood. It's from the membership that we get our event volunteers, our docents, our board members and officers. And our donors. I'd almost be willing to give free membership to anyone who shows a sincere interest in the organization, but to be fiscally responsible, minimal dues must be charged to cover at least the costs of the newsletter and other mailings and services to the members. By the way, if you haven't already done so, please renew your membership. Get your friends, relatives and neighbors to join one of the oldest and most successful environmental organizations in California. To encourage younger generations to join, we've added a student category to our dues schedule.

And so at a time of increasing public interest in Bolsa Chica coupled with increasing operating costs, we are hoping that a recovering economy will improve the grant situation and our loyal members will continue to support our mission.

Amigos de Bolsa Chica Board of Directors

Dave Carlberg, President; Jennifer Robins, Vice President; Alma Bowman, Secretary; Brian Westcott, Treasurer; Thomas Anderson, Margaret Carlberg, Shirley Dettloff, Craig Frampton, Bob Harrison, Vic Leipzig, Tom Livengood, Mel Nutter, Patty Overley, Jamie Pavlat and Jim Robins, Directors.

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