



# bay restoration commission

STEWARDS OF SANTA MONICA BAY

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November 16, 2015

Agenda Item #3 a i

To: Executive Committee, SMBRC

From: Tom Ford, Executive Director

Re: LAWA/SMBRA MOU and Partnership

**Action Requested of the Executive Committee:**

- Review and recommend Governing Board consideration of approval of LAWA/SMBRA MOU and work plan

**Background**

The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Authority (SMBRA) has been approached by the Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) to consider entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (with an accompanying work plan) to engage in coastal dune habitat restoration on a certain portion of Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) property.

At the west end of LAX, an ecological success story is unfolding on more than 300 acres of sand dunes voluntarily set aside by LAX as a natural wildlife preserve. Native animals and plants that once seemed destined for extinction – including the El Segundo Blue Butterfly – are recovering as part of a long-term restoration project by LAWA. LAWA began the LAX Dunes Restoration Project in 1986. Today, the preserve restoration area is a remaining fragment of the larger historic El Segundo Dunes complex and is the largest remaining contiguous coastal dune habitat area in Southern California. The preserve provides habitat for more than 900 species, some of which are not found anywhere else.

The Coastal Dunes Improvement Project (Project) is an approximately 48-acre restoration project site located in the northernmost portion of the LAX preserve west of Pershing Drive; south of Waterview Street, Rindge Avenue, and Napoleon Streets; and north of Sandpiper Street. Vista Del Mar forms the site's western boundary. The goals of the Project are to create self-sustaining dune habitats dominated by native species, and to reduce non-native species and their propagules. The restoration and enhancement of southern foredunes, dune scrub, and coastal prairie ecotone habitats will increase functions and values as results of the project.

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Under the terms of the proposed MOU and work plan, SMBRA and its partners' role would be to provide monitoring of the site, and to direct and implement the maintenance of the dune habitat restoration project to restore ecosystem functions, provide habitat for rare species, provide opportunities for community engagement, and improve the viewshed from adjacent communities while maintaining airport safety. SMBRA and its partners would follow guidelines and priorities identified in approved restoration plans such as the 2013 "LAX Coastal Dunes Improvement Project: Ecological Landscape Plan" and Coastal Development Permit No. 5-12-263 issued to LAWA. Additionally, restoration would adhere to wildlife-management and security guidelines set forth by LAWA and with approval from LAWA and the Los Angeles International Airport El Segundo Dunes Conservancy Committee. Specific restoration tasks may include: invasive and non-native tree and plant removal; anthropogenic infrastructure removal such as concrete, asphalt, trash, etc; native dune scrub and grassland seed collection, propagation, and planting; voucher specimen and conservation data collection; professional and citizen ecological monitoring; GIS database development and mapping; and volunteer recruitment, training, and support.

Additionally, SMBRA and its partners would recruit, train, and manage volunteers to assist in restoration activities in the LAX El Segundo Dunes, with an emphasis on fostering increased ecological awareness, connectivity, and environmental stewardship of the LAX El Segundo Dunes in the local community.

### **Connection to SMBNEP Work Plan and Bay Restoration Plan**

This Project directly addresses the Bay Restoration Plan (BRP) Goal 8: Restore Coastal Bluffs, Dunes, and Sandy Beaches, specifically, Milestone 8.1b: Enhance and expand restoration of LAX El Segundo Dunes.

As laid out in the Master Plan, the objective of the Santa Monica Bay National Estuary Program (SMBNEP)'s restoration effort is to increase the ecological values of the bluffs and dunes, such that the restored areas 1) contribute to the recovery of the El Segundo blue butterfly, 2) provide habitat for unique and rare plants of the El Segundo dunes, 3) increase biological connectivity between remnant populations of dune species, and 4) support more diverse bird, reptile, and arthropod communities. The coastal dunes, bluffs, and sandy beaches are important habitats that support a variety of plant and animal species, including several rare native plants that are uniquely adapted to this environment. As a vital part of our coastline, dunes and sandy beaches also offer our homes, roads, and infrastructure a protective buffer from sea level rise, as well as from tidal and wave action from the ocean. By restoring natural processes to our impacted beach systems, we will improve these functions while creating a diverse native ecosystem that manages sand transport in a way that will help to combat the impacts of climate change.



This Project also directly addresses the Fiscal Year 2016 SMBNEP Work Plan goal 3.4-- Restore Coastal Dune and Bluff Habitats--through implementing active restoration strategies and coordinating volunteer non-native vegetation removal events. The SMBNEP has a long history of supporting and engaging in the restoration of coastal dune and bluff habitats, including restoration of coastal dunes in the Ballona Wetlands, beach bluff at Redondo Beach, and three coastal bluff sites on the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

### **Procedural Considerations**

The purpose of the MOU is to establish a framework within which the Parties may accomplish their respective organizational missions through the cooperative sharing of costs and resources for the benefit of the provision of effective long-term habitat management of the LAX Dunes Preserve.

The services provided by the SMBRA would be critical in supporting and ensuring the City of Los Angeles Department of Airports' compliance with Coastal Development Permit requirements including the implementation of the Long-Term Habitat Management Plan for the Los Angeles International Airport El Segundo Dunes, the Coastal Act, and the Endangered Species Act; and in supporting LAWA's fulfillment of General Plan Conservation Element species and habitat protection and restoration responsibilities described above.

Procedurally, adoption of the proposed MOU and work plan would be an amendment to the SMBRA Fiscal Year 2015-2016 budget. According to the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement, the document that created the SMBRA, its budget must first be approved by the SMBRA Governing Board, then by both the SMBRC and the Board of Supervisors of the Flood Control District (the SMBRA's partners; see Section 10.2 of the Agreement). The proposed MOU and work plan, as an amendment to the existing budget, must follow the same procedures. Thus, assuming approval by the SMBRA Governing Board prior to the December SMBRC Governing Board, the MOU and work plan would then be considered by the SMBRC Governing Board and the Flood Control District before the full scope of work could begin.

### **Budget Impact**

The proposed MOU and work plan (seven tasks of the project) would be implemented by the following subcontractors of the SMBRA: The Bay Foundation, Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Gardens, Los Angeles Conservation Corps, a professional ornithologist and an entomologist. The proposed budget summary is below.





## Santa Monica Bay Restoration Authority (SMBRA)

# PROPOSED BUDGET SUMMARY

TASK NO.	TASK DESCRIPTION	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	TOTAL
1	LAWA-Approved Activities for the Ongoing Removal of Invasive Plant Species, Planting of Native Species, and Habitat Maintenance for the LAX Coastal Dunes Improvement Project (CDIP)	45,150	35,400	28,600	<b>109,150</b>
2	Annual Management Plans and Quarterly Progress Reports Prepared for LAWA	4,900	4,400	3,600	<b>12,900</b>
3	Recruitment, Training, and Management of Volunteer Workers	2,450	2,200	1,800	<b>6,450</b>
4	Data Collection and Monitoring of Restoration Efforts and Preparation of Landscaping Monitoring Report(s)	39,500	35,000	30,000	<b>104,500</b>
5	Revised or Supplemental Ecological Landscaping Plan(s)	-	-	-	-
6	Public Relations, Media, and Community Engagement	2,000	2,000	-	<b>4,000</b>
7	Identification of Additional Funding for Ecological Habitat Restoration	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 94,000</b>	<b>\$ 79,000</b>	<b>\$ 64,000</b>	<b>\$237,000.00</b>

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