



bay restoration commission

STEWARDS OF SANTA MONICA BAY

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Work on the Malibu Lagoon Restoration and Enhancement project continues smoothly!

It's been a couple of weeks since our last update and a lot of good things are happening at the Malibu Lagoon. Hundreds of small mammals and lizards were relocated to safe habitat on site, thanks to the diligent work of our biologists and equipment operators. The vegetation has been largely removed, except for plants around six duck nests that are being protected until the young have fledged and the mothers no longer use the nests. Five other nests that were also protected onsite, where young successfully fledged, have already been abandoned, with no impacts to the birds that were using them.



Photo: Building the earthen dike to block the western channels with fish biologists observing (SMBRF 6/15/2012).

The western channels of the Lagoon have been carefully cleared of fish – most fish swam out of the channels of their own accord with the outgoing tides while the berm at Surfrider Beach was open. Then a temporary dike was built to separate the western lagoon channels from the main estuary at the Malibu Creek mouth. This ensures that no fish will swim into the channels while

our mission: to restore and enhance the santa monica bay through actions and partnerships that improve water quality, conserve and rehabilitate natural resources, and protect the bay's benefits and values



we are working there. The pedestrian bridges that choked the flows to the lagoon channels have been removed – a big step in repairing the habitat! We have started to create the islands that will provide permanent, safe habitats for birds and other wildlife. The next step: assembling dewatering equipment to remove the groundwater that seeps into the western channels, treat it, and discharge it to the ocean. Then the channels can be re-shaped to provide better flow and vastly improved habitat for the fish, birds and other wildlife at the Lagoon.



Photo: The last of the wooden bridges being removed from the Lagoon (SMBRF 7/3/12).

We're on our way to a healthier Lagoon! Keep checking the project website at www.restoremalibulagoon.com for more updates.



Photo: An aerial view of the restoration work underway (6/27/12 by L.Protopapadakis and made possible by the generosity of LightHawk).

Some interesting notes from our project biologists...

- *Thousands of cubic yards of soils have been moved from the lagoon channels, and we have found virtually no life in them. There were very few clams, and no worms, insect larvae, or any of the aquatic invertebrates that we would normally expect to see living in a wetland. As expected, the channel sediments were nearly devoid of fauna due to poor conditions.*
- *Where soils have been removed we are starting to uncover the historic wetlands, i.e. previously buried wetlands habitat, identified by naturally deposited alluvial soils (sand and gravels). It's very exciting to unearth the real Malibu Lagoon and to know that it will be brought back to life and allowed to thrive once again. In the process, lots of trash has been removed: chunks of asphalt and concrete, discarded telephone poles, truck tires, lots of plastic debris, old pipe – all dumped over the last hundred years and burying the original wetlands.*

And some regulatory notes:

- ✓ *The USFWS recently issued a critical habitat designation for the endangered western snowy plover, including a small portion on the southeast corner of Malibu Lagoon State*



Park (see <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2012/06/19/2012-13886/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-revised-designation-of-critical-habitat-for-the>). The Army Corps of Engineers has initiated a new consultation with USFWS to determine whether these areas actually do provide the “constituent elements” of critical snowy plover habitat. Until then no work is occurring within these areas. We very much appreciate the Corps and USFWS working with us in a timely manner, to protect sensitive species while we continue to clean up and repair the damaged habitats at the Lagoon.

- ✓ An Enforcement Supervisor from the California Coastal Commission visited the Lagoon on June 20, 2012 to perform an inspection. The Supervisor provided a detailed account of his inspection and found that State Parks is meeting all permit requirements and conditions. He also stated his opinion that the breach of the sand berm at Surfrider Beach was likely caused by natural conditions including high water levels coupled with tide/wave/wind action. You can read KPCC’s account of the project so far and see the letter from the Coastal Commission here: <http://www.scpr.org/blogs/environment/2012/06/25/6779/coastal-commission-stands-behind-malibu-lagoon-res/>