

**REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN DIEGO REGION**

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT
NOVEMBER 18, 2020**

ITEM 10

SUBJECT

Update on ReWild Project and Planning for De Anza Cove in Mission Bay (*Jill Harris*)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

This is an informational item only and the Board will not take an action.

KEY ISSUE

Wetlands provide numerous beneficial uses such as water quality, wildlife habitat, and recreation. However, Southern California has lost more than 62% of its wetlands over the past 150 years, and many of the remaining wetlands are significantly degraded. One way the San Diego Water Board is addressing this issue is through Board Resolution No. R9-2015-0041, *Resolution to Support Restoration of Aquatic Ecosystems in the San Diego Region (Wetland Resolution)*¹ affirming the need to actively promote projects that restore the chemical, physical and biological integrity of aquatic ecosystems. The Wetland Resolution identifies three priority restoration projects in the San Diego Region, one of which is the San Diego Audubon Society's ReWild Project. The ReWild Project is a plan to restore wetlands in De Anza Cove in the northeast corner of Mission Bay. The Board's Wetland Resolution directs staff to follow this project and report back on ways in which the Board could be supportive.

PRACTICAL VISION

The San Diego Water Board's support of the ReWild Project stems from Chapter 3 of the Practical Vision, *Recovery of Streams, Wetlands, and Riparian Systems*. That chapter includes five aspirational goals, two of which are related to wetland protection and restoration: increasing the *extent* and the *physical and biological integrity* of wetlands in the region by supporting and participating in regulatory and non-regulatory approaches.

Specifically, Chapter 3 includes three initiatives relevant to supporting ReWild:

- ***More Incentives and Better Outreach:*** encourage, support, and assist in protection and restoration of stream, wetlands, and riparian systems;
- ***Earlier Input:*** actively participate in early planning and environmental review processes; and
- ***Improved Collaboration:*** collaborate with governmental agencies, non-governmental agencies, and the scientific community working on wetland research and protection.

This agenda item provides an opportunity for the San Diego Audubon Society to update

¹ Resolution No. R9-2015-0041, *Resolution to Support Restoration of Aquatic Ecosystems in the San Diego Region*, adopted by San Diego Water Board on June 24, 2015, available on San Diego Water Board website at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/board_decisions/adopted_orders/2015/R9-2015-0041_ADA.pdf

the Board on the development of the ReWild Project and discuss future possibilities for wetlands in Mission Bay.

DISCUSSION

ReWild Mission Bay is a San Diego Audubon Society project that proposes to restore wetlands in the northeast corner of Mission Bay, at De Anza Cove and De Anza Point (**Supporting Document No. 1**). In 2018, ReWild released a feasibility study that included three alternatives for wetland restoration, and today a coalition of community, non-profit groups, and government agencies is working with the City of San Diego to implement one of those alternatives. Restoring wetlands in Mission Bay would lead to a significant gain in the extent and physical and biological integrity of aquatic ecosystems in the San Diego region and the subsequent restoration of numerous beneficial uses.

The San Diego Water Board staff are proactively supporting the ReWild Project: Senior Environmental Scientist Nicole Gergans assisted with the preparation of the feasibility study as a member of the technical advisory committee, and Senior Environmental Scientist Jill Harris collaborates with the ReWild coalition and other regulatory agencies to support further development and implementation of the project. Further, in October 2020, the San Diego Water Board voted unanimously to allow the City of San Diego to include an expanded wetland restoration alternative into their planning process for De Anza Cove as part of the settlement agreement for a sanitary sewer overflow to Tecolote Creek and Mission Bay.² The expanded alternative will reflect the wetland restoration in the ReWild feasibility study and would maximize implementable restoration in Mission Bay. The approval of the settlement agreement demonstrated the San Diego Water Board's continued support for wetland restoration in the San Diego region and its commitment to the restoration priorities of the Wetland Resolution.

LEGAL CONCERNS

None.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The agenda notice for today's meeting was posted on the San Diego Water Board's website and sent to subscribers to the email list for Board meetings.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

1. Map of the ReWild study area in De Anza Cove, Mission Bay.

² Resolution No. R9-2020-0150, *Settlement Agreement and Stipulated ACL Order to the City of San Diego for a January 2016 Sanitary Sewer Overflow to Tecolote Creek and Mission Bay*, adopted by the San Diego Water Board on October 21, 2020, available on San Diego Water Board website at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/board_decisions/adopted_orders/2020/R9-2020-0150.pdf