



Center for Urban Resilience  
Academic Affairs

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Neighborhood Council of Westchester/Playa del Rey  
President Paula Gerez, PLUC Chair Julie Ross, and Government Affairs Chair Ted Grose

*Via Email*

Dear Council President, PLUC Chairwoman, and Government Affairs Chairman:

On behalf of the distinguished professors signing onto this document, we at our Center felt the need to submit this letter regarding the proposed restoration of the Ballona Wetlands. We were unable to attend the Planning Committee meeting on August 18, but believe it is necessary to re-iterate that the proposed restoration is based on scientific facts. Further, these facts are not disputable and there is no "alternate science" when it comes to restoring wetlands. Specifically, our Center supports the following statements:

- Some animals will be relocated throughout the project. Small animals like rabbits, lizards and snakes are sometimes trapped during construction and moved to another part of the reserve. They will not be kept in cages. No animals died in trap relocation during Malibu Lagoon restoration. The work will proceed cautiously, in phases, and will be strictly monitored by scientists and biologists.
- Changing geography and climate, and human activities have dramatically altered Ballona over centuries, but Ballona has never been freshwater only. Ballona is a diverse ecosystem made primarily of salt and brackish marsh, but also with riparian, dune, coastal sage scrub, and other habitat types. The big picture goal is to improve the site's hydrology and restore diversity of habitats and native species in the face of climate change and urbanization, rather than returning to a point in history.
- The current status of the wetlands is not healthy. It has been drilled, filled, farmed, trashed, and more. Years of monitoring demonstrates that the wetlands are degraded and conditions are worsening. Invasive plants are spreading fast, out-competing native plants that provide the habitats local wildlife require to thrive.
- Wetlands need water, but most of Ballona is cut off from its natural water source, Ballona Creek. The salt marsh now receives only a tiny fraction of the water that once flowed through its channels during tidal exchanges. Only restoration can heal a century's worth of damage done at Ballona. Restoration is vital for the wetlands to survive; the current plan accounts for sea level rise. Without restoration, the wetlands will become a stagnant mudflat with no access to the Creek.

We all have taken students through the Ballona Wetlands over the years as part of our education programs and research projects conducted at Loyola Marymount University. Most of us knew and respected the late LMU Biology professor Dr. Howard Towner, who was an original Board Member of the Friends of Ballona Wetlands when Founder Ruth Lansford put that group together to save the Wetlands

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from development some 40 years ago. We have seen the Wetlands deteriorate and the time is now to do something to change the direction we are headed in with sea level rise and other threats. If nothing is done what's left will be lost, and countless generations will be deprived of accessing their Wetlands after paying for it to be restored - especially the indigenous people of California and under-served communities.

We fully support the restoration of the Ballona Wetlands and believe the restoration will benefit - not only LMU and the surrounding community - but the entire Southern California region as well. It's time.

Sincerely,



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