



LOS CERRITOS WETLANDS LAND TRUST

# THE RISING TIDE

WINTER 2025

## Restoration Breaks Ground. Work Begins.

*By Heather Altman, Public Engagement Coordinator, Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority*

The Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA) premiered final designs for the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Project last month. In addition to the fantastic designs showing the project overview, renderings from different viewpoints in and around the project were shared. Wow! Everything looked great!

This 103.5 acre project area is located in Seal Beach on properties owned by the LCWA and the California State Lands Commission. It is bordered by the Haynes Cooling Channel, the Hellman Oil Field, the Marina Hill residential community, Gum Grove Park, and Pacific Coast Highway. A relic tidal channel (the Hellman Channel) is present within the project area and drains to the San Gabriel River.

In addition to restoring tidal wetlands and upland habitats, the project also includes installation of a public access trail connecting the San Gabriel River bike path and the City of Seal Beach's Gum Grove Park. From the new trail's overlooks you will be able to look down on and across the newly restored wetlands and see the area alive with wildlife enjoying their new, improved home. The State Lands property will become a hub for the community to enjoy expanded education and stewardship opportunities with new trails, a nature-based play area, and educational facilities. Additionally, the project will

include exclusive tribal access features designed by members of the local tribal community who participated in the LCWA's tribal advisory group.

There are so many impressive features of this restoration project, there's not enough space to list them all! **Fortunately, there will be numerous opportunities to learn about the project and to enjoy yourself in the process! We have a number of community events planned during the construction period: several "mixers" at local establishments, a virtual meeting, and tabling events.** Word on the street is that one of the mixers will be a trivia night, so start brushing up on your Los Cerritos Wetlands and project fun facts now!

The LCWA website ([intoloscerritoswetlands.org](http://intoloscerritoswetlands.org)) will be kept current throughout the project, and email updates will be regularly sent. The LCWA Instagram account (@lcwauthority) will also be a source for project information and upcoming engagement opportunities. And if you don't already receive the LCWA emails, send an email to [LCWA@tidalinfluence.com](mailto:LCWA@tidalinfluence.com) to be added to the distribution list.

**We've waited a long time for restoration of the Los Cerritos Wetlands, and finally, it's time for the tides!**



*Long Beach 3rd District Councilmember Kristina Duggan, California Coastal Conservancy Executive Officer Amy Hutzel, Rivers and Mountains Conservancy Executive Officer Mark Stanley, and partners at the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands restoration groundbreaking ceremony.*

# Cleaning Up Our Water – One Step, One Yard, One Habitat at a Time

By Joe Geever, Energy and Environmental Consultant

Nobody likes polluted water. Whether it's trash along docks and beaches, beach closures from high bacteria levels, or smelly stagnant water that can harm fish, pollution affects us all. At the Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust, our biggest concern is the impact pollution has on wildlife and fragile wetland habitats.

Most of these contaminants come from non-point source (NPS) pollution – runoff from streets, rooftops, parking lots, and even our own yards – that washes into Alamitos Bay. Unlike pollution from a single pipe or drain, NPS comes from everywhere, which makes it particularly tricky to control.

Currently, large pumps at the AES and Haynes power plants draw polluted water from Alamitos Bay and discharge it into the San Gabriel River. While this removes pollution locally, it simply moves the problem downstream – and can even carry young wetland plants and wildlife away from their homes. This is a major concern for us, since our mission is to restore the Los Cerritos Wetlands into a thriving, healthy ecosystem.

**The good news? Solutions exist – and they work. Experts have developed “nature-based” and “multi-benefit” approaches that clean water while also enhancing communities.** These projects can conserve drinking water, replenish groundwater, create green space, beautify neighborhoods, and restore habitat for native plants and wildlife – including birds and pollinators.

Even better, everyone can participate. **Local programs, including rebates from the Long Beach Water Department, help homeowners transform their yards with native plants and capture rain water on-site before it becomes polluted runoff.** These gardens are not only beautiful, they reduce water use and support wildlife right at home.

On a larger scale, the Safe Clean Water Program ([safecleanwaterla.org](http://safecleanwaterla.org)) funds multi-benefit projects throughout the watershed draining into Alamitos Bay. While there have been some learning curves and hiccups along the way, this effort promises to bring meaningful progress – and community feedback is essential as it grows.

Non-point source pollution is a complex problem, and solutions take time. **Every action counts – from planting a native garden in your yard to supporting larger restoration projects – and Long Beach residents can make a difference by improving water quality, creating wildlife habitats, and strengthening our community.**

## Make your yard a haven for native birds and butterflies.



The following programs were active at the time of printing. We're not affiliated with them – just sharing helpful resources. Please check directly with each program for the latest info.



Turn your water-thirsty lawn into a drought-resistant, beautiful garden with the Lawn-to-Garden program.



LADWP offers turf replacement rebates to help customers convert lawns into water-saving landscapes.



The Direct Install Gardens Program is designed to help homeowners replace their water-intensive lawns with drought-tolerant vegetation.



# Meet Ray Hiemstra

By Bridget Sramek, Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust

**The Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust is happy to introduce its newest Board Member, Ray Hiemstra.**

Ray is a lifelong Southern California resident, born in Fullerton, raised throughout Orange County, and educated at Cal State Long Beach. He was the first-ever volunteer for Orange County Coastkeeper when it was established in 1999. He would go on to a two-decade career at Coastkeeper, where he currently serves as the Associate Director of Policy and Projects. In this capacity, he wears many hats, working on advocacy, grant writing, and educational programs. He manages numerous water monitoring projects throughout Orange County and the Inland Empire.

In addition to his work with OC Coastkeeper, Ray is an avid outdoorsman. You may see him on the hiking trails in Orange Hills or Lake Forest, or even fishing at Dana Point.

Ray was familiar with the Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust through his work on Coastkeeper projects and he is excited to be part of an environmental organization where so much is happening in the local wetlands, including restoration and educational programming.

**We asked Ray a few questions about his work and hopes for Los Cerritos Wetlands.**



## What inspired you to get involved and join the Board?

I lived in Seal Beach for six years and graduated from Cal State Long Beach, so I have a strong personal connection to the area. I also see the Los Cerritos Wetlands as a big opportunity for future restoration. I have not had an active role in wetlands restoration and I see this as an opportunity to do something new in the environmental field.

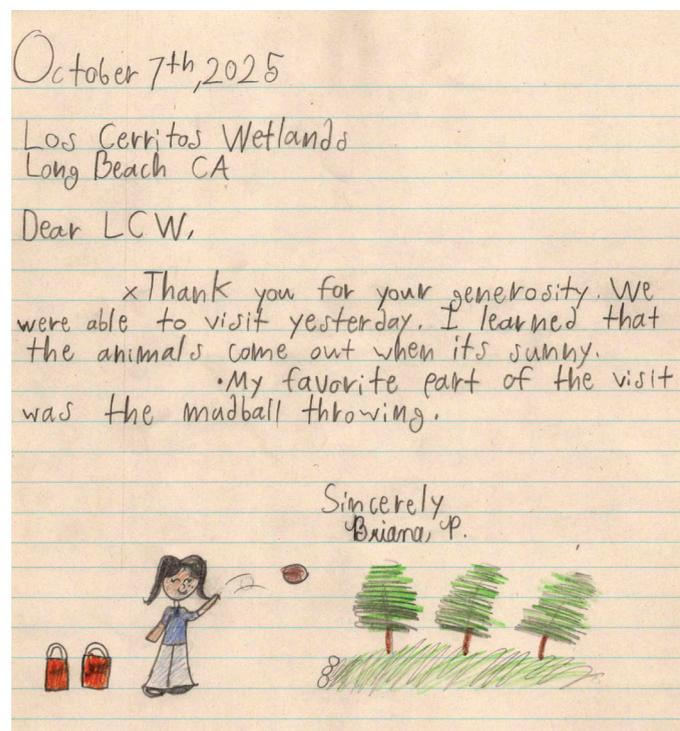
## What do you enjoy doing outside of work and volunteering?

I am a very active outdoors person. My family is my first priority, and after that I like riding my motorcycles, hiking, kayaking, hunting, fishing, and attending a wide variety of events.

## Are you optimistic about the future of Southern California waters and wetlands, and why?

Yes, I am optimistic about Southern California wetlands. I think they are now recognized as an important asset, and money and time are being focused on them.

## More Student Field Trips, More Future Wetland Stewards!



By Elizabeth Lambe, Executive Director, Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust

**We are grateful to the Port of Long Beach, the California Coastal Conservancy, Long Beach Parks, Recreation and Marine, the AES Corporation, the Adams Legacy Foundation, and the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority for partnering with us to provide educational wetlands field trips.**

During the field trips, students from Title 1 schools and Long Beach urban park programs are guided through wetland habitats. They participate in interactive activities, including a walk through the coastal sage scrub, learning about the ethnobotany of plants, and choosing a plant to press. They work with the native vegetation, learn why scientists make plant presses, and make one themselves so they can take a piece of the wetlands home with them! Students learn about habitat capacity, resources, and adaptations certain species have developed to survive in a wetland environment. Lastly, students get their hands dirty making seeded mud balls and throwing them into an active restoration area, which helps habitat restoration.



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## Jingle, Mingle & Ring in Wetlands Restoration

Come enjoy some holiday cheer, connect with fellow supporters, and hear what's in store for the Los Cerritos Wetlands in 2026 and beyond!



**Saturday, December 13, 2025 • 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.**

All are welcome – bring a friend!  
Light refreshments provided.

To RSVP or for further information,  
email [elizabeth@lcwlandtrust.org](mailto:elizabeth@lcwlandtrust.org)

**What:** End-of-Year Holiday Gathering & Member Meeting

**Where:** Private home in Belmont Heights

Please email [elizabeth@lcwlandtrust.org](mailto:elizabeth@lcwlandtrust.org) for the address.

**Special Guest Speakers:**

**James Holmquist**

*Wetlands Ecologist, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center*

James studies how wetlands change over time and help combat climate change by storing carbon. A Loyola Marymount and UCLA alumnus, he has spent his career highlighting why wetlands are essential – for wildlife, for water quality, and for our future.

**Heather Altman**

*Public Engagement Coordinator, Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority*

Heather leads outreach for the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Project, which will expand trails, restore habitat, and create new opportunities to connect people with nature. She has over 20 years of experience in environmental consulting and community education.

*In addition to guest speakers, Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust members will vote on board nominations – but all are welcome to attend.*



## LOS CERRITOS WETLANDS LAND TRUST

November 2025

# DEAR FRIEND OF LOS CERRITOS WETLANDS

**It's been a year of highs and lows in our fight to protect and restore Los Cerritos Wetlands, but mostly highs.** Not only have we engaged in robust advocacy that has resulted in good news for Los Cerritos Wetlands, but we have also stepped up our educational programming, introducing many new constituencies to the Wetlands. Read on to learn more.

### ADVOCACY

#### Pumps for Alamitos Bay Circulation

The City of Long Beach released an Environmental Impact Report (required by law) that outlines the environmental impacts of the pumps for the circulation proposal for Alamitos Bay as well as lays out possible water quality improvement alternatives. We have been eagerly awaiting this step in the pumps' review process. With the help of experts, we are currently reviewing the report to understand the environmental consequences and impacts of the project on the ecosystem of Los Cerritos Wetlands and identify better alternatives. **Our biggest concern is that these proposed pumps, however "fish-friendly" they may appear, will sweep the critical biota (essential for producing robust habitat) out of the wetlands, into the San Gabriel River, and out to sea.** This would leave the wetlands bereft of valuable wildlife and less able to produce important marine life that is foundational to the web of life in our wetlands and beyond. Stay tuned. As we learn more details, we will share them with you.

#### New Wetlands-Adjacent Construction Within Southeast Long Beach

A major concern for us is what all the now-approved development in southeast Long Beach will mean for the health and future of Los Cerritos Wetlands. With many hundreds of new units, including retail and parking structures, approved for the land near the corner of 2nd Street and PCH, there have already been calls to extend Studebaker Road through our fragile wetlands. We can't let that happen for many reasons, especially because of the immense damage it would cause to this fragile wetland ecosystem. Roads are terribly damaging to sensitive habitats, causing noise, pollution, and direct hits to wildlife. Los Cerritos Wetlands is already heavily degraded by years of drilling, oil roads that crisscross the area, homeless encampments that leave trash and debris, and invasive non-native plants that crowd out the natives. **We must all work together to keep Los Cerritos Wetlands protectively buffered and restored with no more roads in the area than already exist. Furthermore, there is no evidence that a new road or road extension would even help with traffic, because roads generally facilitate more traffic, not less, when they are constructed.**

#### Private Solar Panels Adjacent to a Sensitive Habitat

We recently got word of a proposal to install solar panels adjacent to some of the Los Cerritos Wetlands' most biologically sensitive areas. These panels would very likely have an impact on the fragile and threatened species that rely on Los Cerritos Wetlands to survive. **The proposed project would include three separate solar arrays totaling 56 solar tables and 3,100 solar panels. While we all agree that alternative energy is critical to solving the planet's climate crisis, some areas are too fragile and ecologically sensitive for that purpose.** The full impacts must be considered before deciding where to place such infrastructure. In this case, the harm might well outweigh the benefits, and the placement of these solar panels (with their disruptive noise, lights, glint, and glare) adjacent to sensitive, soon-to-be-restored wetlands seems ill-advised. We are requesting that the City of Seal Beach do a comprehensive review of the project in the form of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to assess the environmental impacts of the proposed development and offer alternatives. The proposed project is headed to the Seal Beach City Council and then the Coastal Commission. We will keep you in the loop!

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## EDUCATION

Thanks to our partnerships with the AES Corporation, the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority, Long Beach Parks, Recreation and Marine, the California Coastal Conservancy, the Adams Legacy Foundation, and the Port of Long Beach, we have been able to host an unprecedented number of kids from under-resourced communities at the Los Cerritos Wetlands for fun and educational field trips. It has long been our goal that Los Cerritos Wetlands be an inviting open space area for all of Long Beach, not just those fortunate enough to live near coastal and open space areas. And we are well on our way to realizing that goal. **Did you know, studies have shown that urban youth have more health problems and suffer from “nature-deficit disorder” due to lack of access to natural open space? Nature-deficit disorder is the idea that humans, especially children, spend less time outside than previous generations. Our field trip program for urban youth helps to address that deficiency.**

A lack of access to the natural world can lead to behavioral issues, including diminished use of the senses, difficulty paying attention, and higher levels of aggression, depression, and obesity. Our curated field trips are an antidote to some of these concerning issues. We are so proud to host field trips for students and youth attending Title 1 schools or participating in the City of Long Beach’s BeSAFE summer program, and we look forward to offering even more field trips in the coming school year. We love doing our part in building a more equitable society while also cultivating the next generation of environmental stewards.

## RESTORATION

It’s been years in the making, but I am so pleased to share that the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority broke ground on the restoration of the Southern Wetlands area and the hands-on work has begun. I can remember when that land was still privately owned, and we thought the day would never come when the state (which means you and I) would own and begin restoring the area. **In just a few short years, there will be robust wetlands habitat, a gathering area, and trails where the public can walk around the wetlands and learn more through guided tours and educational signage.** It is inspiring that we can turn back old, exploitative development such as oil drilling and other extractions and restore our rare coastal wetlands to their original state (or at least close to it).

You are an essential part of protecting the Los Cerritos Wetlands. Your support enables us to be effective advocates for this precious and fragile open space, and we are truly grateful. **Please consider supporting the Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust this season. You can make your gift by returning the enclosed envelope, giving online at [lcwlandtrust.org/membership](http://lcwlandtrust.org/membership), or donating via Zelle at [elizabeth@lcwlandtrust.org](mailto:elizabeth@lcwlandtrust.org).** You count on us to defend the wetlands – and we count on your support to help us remain strong and effective.

John Fries, President, Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust



## ‘Tis the season to give the gift of wetlands protection!

Make a secure donation at [lcwlandtrust.org/membership](http://lcwlandtrust.org/membership) or return this form using the enclosed envelope.

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- Check enclosed for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ *Make payable to: Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust*

### DONATE BY ZELLE

- Save the stamp and donate via Zelle at [elizabeth@lcwlandtrust.org](mailto:elizabeth@lcwlandtrust.org)

Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the tax code. Your contribution is tax deductible as allowed by law.