



June 1, 2012

Mr. Dan P. Swenson
Regulatory Program
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District
P.O. Box 532711
Los Angeles, CA 90053-2325

Subject: Supplemental Information for Section 404 of the Clean Water Act – Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project

Dear Mr. Swenson:

This cover letter introduces the California Department of Fish & Game's application for a Section 404 permit for the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project. The letter provides an overall description of the project along with some supplemental information to accompany the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) ENG Form 4345 (Sept. 2009 format) for the proposed project, which is enclosed with this letter.

The following information is provided as required by the applicable regulations:

1. Name, address, and telephone number of the prospective permittee:

California Department of Fish and Game
4949 Viewridge Avenue
San Diego, CA 92123
Contact: David Lawhead
Phone: (856) 627-3997

CDFG Representative: Donna McCormick, Project Manager
ICF International
1 Ada, Suite 100
Irvine, CA 92618
Phone: (949) 333-6611

2. Location of the proposed project:

USGS Quad: Venice Quadrangle, 7.5 Minute
Township 2S, Range 15W, Unsectioned
Lat/Long: 33° 58'01.14" N, 118° 26'22.21" W

The proposed project is located at approximately 400 Culver Boulevard (roughly the intersection of Culver Boulevard and West Jefferson Boulevard), and is partially within the City of Los Angeles and partially within unincorporated County of Los Angeles land just south of Marina del Rey. The proposed

project will be within California Department of Fish and Game property as well as property within the holdings of the State Lands Commission. The project area is approximately 605 acres.

3. Brief description of the proposed project and the project's purpose:

The project entails enhancing and creating native coastal wetland and upland habitats in the approximately 600-acre ecological reserve. The reserve comprises previously filled coastal wetland and upland habitat that would be restored by increasing tidal flow throughout the project area, removing invasive species, and planting native vegetation.

The purpose of the Ballona Wetlands Restoration is to restore one of the last remaining coastal wetlands in Los Angeles County. Its ecological integrity and habitat value has been compromised by decades of neglect. The Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project is intended to restore the function of a healthy ecosystem on the site by returning the daily ebb and flow of tidal waters, maintaining freshwater circulation, and supporting a more natural habitat area and enhanced habitat for a diversity of local plant and wildlife species, including several threatened and endangered native species.

The main components of the project are:

- Creation and enhancement of estuarine wetland and upland habitats connected to a realigned Ballona Creek.
- Removal of existing Ballona Creek levees and realignment of Ballona Creek to restore a more meandering channel.
- Construction of new levees to replace the existing Ballona Creek levees and to allow restoration of tidally influenced wetlands while providing flood protection for Culver Boulevard and surrounding areas.
- Installation of water control structures, including culverts with self-regulating tide gates or similar structures, to provide a full range of tides up to an elevation acceptable for flood management and storm drainage, while protecting against some storm events.
- Multiple-stage earthwork and construction using an adaptive management approach to ensure continual flood protection and habitat availability during the construction period.
- Maintenance of existing levels of flood protection for areas surrounding the Ballona Wetlands site, and inclusion of flood hazard management measures into the restored wetlands.
- Provision of erosion protection as an integral part of flood management and the restoration design.
- Modification of infrastructure and utilities as necessary to implement the restoration project.
- Improving public access by realigning existing trails, creating new trails, modifying fencing, constructing overlook platforms, and providing other visitor-oriented facilities.
- Long-term operations and management activities including inspections, repairs, clean-up, vegetation maintenance, and related activities, as needed.

Discharge will occur with dredging and filling necessary to realign Ballona Creek, creating new tidal channels, improving existing tidal channels, and re-contouring parts of the site to enable establishment of marsh habitat and other wetlands and uplands habitat as shown in the attached figures. Preliminary conservative estimates indicate that the project would result in a balanced total of 1,782,000 cubic

yards of excavation and 1,782,000 cubic yards of fill placement, not all of which would affect jurisdictional areas. Based on these preliminary estimates, the volume and area of fill in wetlands and non-wetland waters are estimated as follows:

Table 1: Estimated Volume and Area of Project Fill in Jurisdictional Waters

	Volume (cubic yards)		Area (acres)	
	Non-wetland Waters	Wetlands	Non-wetland Waters	Wetlands
Permanent	380,000	570,000	35	58
Temporary	30,000	0	3	0

REQUIRED PERMITS AND GOVERNMENT APPROVALS

- 404 Authorization (USCAE)
- 408 Authorization (USACE)
- Water Quality Certification (401 Permit) (Santa Ana RWQCB)
- Encroachment Permit (Caltrans)
- Road right-of-way and utility easement coordination (City of Los Angeles)
- Right of Entry Permit (Los Angeles County Department of Beaches & Harbors)

Additional permits and government approvals will likely be identified as the project's environmental review process progresses.

4. Statement that the prospective permittee has contacted:

- a. The USFWS/National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regarding the presence of any federally listed (or proposed for listing) endangered or threatened species or critical habitat in the permit area that may be affected by the proposed project, and any available information provided by those agencies.**

The project has for several years been the subject of ongoing coordination with USFWS and NMFS regarding the on-site presence of and potential impacts on sensitive species. Coordination will continue during the CEQA/NEPA environmental and permitting processes. According to a California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) query conducted in 2006, 13 special-status plant species have the potential to occur on the site, though seven are considered extirpated from the area. The CNDDB search identified three special-status mammal species and no special status fish, amphibian, or reptile species. Special-status bird surveys with potential to occur in the vicinity of the site include Belding's savannah sparrow, light-footed clapper rail, brown pelican, California least tern, and

burrowing owl. Rare-plant surveys and special-status bird surveys are being conducted as part of the ongoing environmental review for the project, and the results will be incorporated into the EIR/EIS for consideration during the permitting process.

b. The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) regarding the presence of any historic properties in the permit area that may be affected by the proposed project, and the available information, if any, provided by that agency.

The project site is in an area of known cultural significance to the Tongva people and, based on preliminary consultation with a tribal representative, is likely to contain subsurface artifacts. A comprehensive cultural resources investigation of the project site is ongoing, and CDFG has been in contact with tribal representatives to identify preliminary concerns with project implementation. The cultural resources report will be incorporated into the EIR/EIS for the project and made available for consultation with SHPO during the permitting process.

If any other information would be helpful in processing this application, or if you have any questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to contact me at (949) 333-6611.

Sincerely,



Donna McCormick
Principal/Project Manager

Attachments

Project figures (3)

Department of the Army Permit Application, Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project

List of adjoining property owners and lessees

Map depicting adjoining properties

cc: Aaron Allen, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Josephine Axt, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Theresa Stewart, California Department of Fish & Game
David Lawhead, California Department of Fish & Game
Mary Small, California Coastal Conservancy
Diana Hurlbert, Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission
Shelley Luce, Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission
Pamela Griggs, State Lands Commission