

H-1  
10-14-08

Patricia Baird, Ph.D.  
4307 Massachusetts St.  
Long Beach CA 90814

Dear Long Beach City Council members and Honorable Mayor:

12 October 2008

I regret that I cannot be at the City Council meeting on 14 October when you are scheduled to approve the Colorado Lagoon Restoration Environmental Impact Report, for I am out of the country at the moment. I usually testify at Council meetings on important environmental issues like this, but since I will not be able to, please consider the following comments for inclusion in your minutes and for your consideration on your final vote.

On record, let it be known that I support the Colorado Lagoon Restoration Plan with the Open Channel option. This is the only ecologically sound solution, and one that has approval from state, federal, and local agencies. I urge the Long Beach City Council to approve the Final EIR for the Restoration of Colorado Lagoon.

My background is as an ecologist. I have conducted research at California State University Long Beach, and at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, and have taught courses in Environmental Science and Ecology. I have commented on various EIRs throughout California, and have written opinions for the California Coastal Commission. I have written chapters in the books The Ecology of the Southern California Bight, The Biology of Marine Birds, and The Birds of North America, and have published numerous scientific articles.

Following is my testimony to be added to the record of the minutes of the City Council meeting on 14 October 2008.

- The Long Beach Planning Commission does not give approval to projects without a tremendous amount of thought and consideration, as well as consultation with a myriad of other agencies. They would not approve lightly something as complex and far-reaching as the restoration of Colorado Lagoon with the Open Channel option.

- The EIR for the restoration of Colorado Lagoon is a multiple-use plan. It does not favor wildlife over the usage and ‘habitat’ of Long Beach residents. It promotes public health, safe recreation in clean waters, and educational opportunities for both youth and adults.
- Colorado Lagoon does need to be restored. This is a fact. Only restoration with the open channel plan will create the long-lasting improved habitat quality that is necessary.
- If the Long Beach City Council approves the Restoration EIR, as stated with the Open Channel option of the Proposed Project, the Long Beach City Council will be seen as a forward-looking body, and as a proactive partner to important agencies like the Port of Long Beach, and other federal agencies like the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, that have pledged money for this project. Long Beach will then be known as a pioneering city, admitting that environmental mistakes were made in the past, but then rectifying these environmental mistakes, and showing the rest of the State, and the country, that with strong leadership, a dedicated group of individuals, public agency officials, and nonprofits, that positive change can be made to create a multiple-use and environmentally positive habitat for the good of all.

**Brief background, listing of supporters of the proposed Restoration EIR and recommendation**

- The filling of the open channel connecting Colorado Lagoon to the Marine Stadium and the ocean occurred in the 1960’s. *This filling would never be allowed with today’s laws, both state and federal.*
- The filling of the open channel has resulted in a steady decrease in water quality of the lagoon, resulting in anaerobic water, water that can present a threat to public health when there is not enough exchange between the Marine Stadium and the Lagoon. *Even a culvert, larger than the current one, or even parallel culverts, bringing water to the Lagoon would not meet the criteria to improve the Lagoon’s quality via this kind of water exchange. An open channel is necessary.*

- There were a number of options in the Lagoon Restoration EIR (Restoration EIR), and the one that had unanimous support from a majority of participants was the Open Channel Option. Following are just some of the participants who reviewed the EIR and the Open Channel Option: the Port of Long Beach, the City Planning Commission, various members of Departments of Long Beach City, such as the Water, Fire, Public Transportation, Public Works, Traffic, Environmental Health, Police, Community Development, Parks Recreation and Marine, various private engineering, health risk assessment, and environmental consulting agencies.
- The creation of the proposed Open Channel restores marine habitat that was lost when the original channel was filled, and may concurrently generate some *mitigation credits* for the City of Long Beach that they can sell at a later date (see as an example: <http://www.coloradowetlandbank.com/pages/purchase.html>).
- *The proposed Restoration EIR project with the open channel is a combined approach, encompassing whole ecosystem restoration and improvement, permanent removal of contaminated material, and improvements in recreation and public health, and will enhance a severely degraded wetland.*
- The Open Channel Proposed Restoration Project has support from, and millions of dollars pledged from (over \$5.6 million dollars), a variety of state and federal agencies, (Rivers and Mountains Conservancy Grant, Clean Beaches Initiative Grant, State Coastal Conservancy Grant, Port of Long Beach Grant, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Grant). These dollars and support will be at risk of disappearing if the proposed Restoration EIR with the Proposed Open Channel is not approved.

#### **Discussion of the Alternatives, excluding Alternative 1, “No action”**

- Alternative 2, cleaning the existing culvert, would not result in the amount of tidal flushing needed to improve water quality in the Lagoon, even with the removal of sediments and addition of upgrades.

- Alternative 3, adding a second culvert to increase tidal flushing still would not result in a long-term solution to the amount of flushing needed, and would probably cost as much as creating an open channel. In the short term, the full tidal flushing would be fine, but in a very short amount of time, this second culvert, along with the first, would become clogged and flow would be reduced, and full tidal flushing would cease.
- Based on laws from simple physics, having two channels leading from the Marine Stadium to Colorado Lagoon now will halve the rate of flow through each culvert, compared to what it is now with the current culvert. This slower flow of water will allow debris to accumulate more rapidly due to less flow to flush it out, and both culverts will begin to clog sooner than either would separately. Thus, creating a second culvert does not support the final goal to restore the Lagoon as stated.
- Alternative 3, with the parallel culvert will simply not work and will create greater expense for the City and might even jeopardize financial support from other agencies that have pledged to restore the Lagoon. Any culvert, no matter what the size, will never be able to be kept clean and will continue to degrade over the years, as has the present culvert degraded.
- The current channel has not been completely cleaned in 50 years. With budget cuts, what is the probability that the new parallel culvert would ever be cleaned?
- Even with costly monthly, semi-annual, or yearly cleanings (\$200,000 per cleaning), this 2nd culvert will not be able to carry the needed volume of water to restore the Lagoon, and the costs of this periodic cleaning will continue to spiral upward each and every year.
- *Likewise, the current funding that is pledged now for Phase I (over \$5.6 million dollars) creates open habitat. Creation of this habitat then paves the way for other agencies who have been interested in funding this project, but only if there an Open Channel, to go ahead with their pledges. They have reiterated that any forthcoming funding would be only for the open channel, and not to fund a parallel underground culver, or any kind of culvert.*

- The more than \$3.8 million dollars awarded the City of Long Beach by the State Clean Water Clean Beaches Initiative must be used before September 2010. These funds are to be used to divert the contaminated low water flows to the sewer from the 4 storm drains that empty in Colorado Lagoon. *If this money is not used, and if this part of the project is not completed, additional grants may not be forthcoming.* Agencies work in partnerships, oftentimes requiring matching funding from other agencies before they release their own funds.
- If the City does not approve this EIR, and its implementation is delayed, all of the pledged funding could evaporate overnight, and the City would be left with a degraded wetland *with public health hazards which will only get worse* as the culvert continues to fill and as the water continues to become anaerobic from lack of tidal flushing.
- How selfish it would be for a small group of people to jeopardize the entire project, which has been over 10 years in the planning, with six serious years of obtaining grants and partners. Loss of ten percent of a city park is nothing, compared to the benefits that will be derived from the approval of this Restoration EIR with the Open Channel concept.
- Alternative 4, alternative channel alignment, would have a curved open channel more towards the center of the park. This alternative would be equally effective at transferring water between the Lagoon and Marine Stadium, with the only difference being a longer residence time of the Lagoon water before being flushed back out (by 0.3 day). This alternative still has the needed Open Channel—a necessary part of the Restoration Plan.
- In addition, under the Alternative Channel Alignment Alternative, none of the existing sports fields in Marina Vista Park would need to be reconfigured, which would result in fewer impacts to recreation resources compared to the proposed project. This alternative would also result in water quality and biological resource improvements that are similar in comparison to those of the proposed project. *I would also support Alternative 4, because it still has the Open Channel.*

## **Proposed Open Channel of the Restoration EIR**

- The Open Channel proposed in the Restoration EIR will only remove about 10% of the surface use of Marina Vista Park. What this channel will give back to the community more than offsets any surface loss.
- Under the Proposed Restoration EIR, loss of sports fields will be minimal. The baseball field and youth soccer fields will have a new location, and the adult soccer field will remain intact. Thus, the sports fields will not be impacted by the Open Channel concept, and loss of space for other uses will certainly be minimized with only a net loss of 10% of the park.
- The Open Channel will be a wonderful addition to the educational community, and students ranging from preschool to university will be able to use this man-made stream as a viewing and study area.
- *Because the Open Channel Project and the proposed Restoration EIR will be such a forward-thinking project, it might attract other city planners as a model to follow.*

## **Answers to those who oppose to the Open Channel**

- These opponents' stated worries about the loss of use and of playing fields is unfounded. The 'removal of land use' is minimal (10%), and the playing fields, e.g. the baseball diamond and the two soccer fields, will be vastly improved under the Restoration Plan.
- *There are many open channels in southern California that have been in existence for a long time, adjacent to footpaths or where children play, with no safety or "attractive nuisance" problems for children or adults. Examples are the open channels in El Dorado Park, Fern Dell in the Los Feliz area of Hollywood, the Arroyo Seco in Pasadena, and the Ormond Beach channel, as well as newly created wetlands in Orange County such as Irvine Meadows, and the Huntington Beach wetlands.*

- The Open Channel will have native vegetation on both sides of the bank to block children and balls from entering the water. It will look like a stream, and will be safe.
- The maximum velocity of the water in the channel will be 0.5 knots and is not considered dangerous. *Ormond Beach channel flows are much stronger.*
- *The open channel, engineered to be completely stable and safe, with a walking trail adjacent to it, is no more of a safety issue than is the Marine Stadium adjacent to foot paths and play areas. This point thrown out at the last minute by a small cadre of dissidents is a non-issue and should not even be considered.*
- Funding has been promised for the Open Channel restoration only. *If any of the funding agencies thought that there was a possible “attractive nuisance” or a safety problem, they never would have pledged funds for the Open Channel project.*
- The open channel concept is the key to securing funding from outside the city of Long Beach to complete the restoration. After some discussion with the funding agencies, it is apparent that this money would not be available for any of the restoration if the Open Channel concept were not implemented.
- This would mean that the City of Long Beach would have to fund the entire restoration, which it cannot.
- The Open Channel restoration concept was suggested more than four years ago, and has been through many public reviews, a Restoration Feasibility Study and a detailed Environmental Assessment, as well as summarized in the proposed EIR before the City Council, (which had a public comment period).
- The public thus has had four years to state their opposition to this project, during many times and in many places and in many ways. *Any last-minute opposition is coming from a*

*very small group of people who have not done good background research on other open channel projects, and who have their own private agenda.*

- Any and all opposition should have been voiced long before this final hour for approval. *This last-minute opposition is a cheap shot to delay approval so that all funding will be lost.*

### **Concluding remarks**

- **The entire Restoration will be at risk if the City Council does not approve the Restoration EIR, with the Open Channel construction as stated in the Proposed Project. Over \$5.6 million dollars pledged will be lost.**
- **Which option will the City Council of Long Beach vote for —**
  - **Will they choose a multiple-use, educational, proactive and progressive Restoration plan proposed in the EIR, building partnerships locally, statewide and federally, by approving the proposed Restoration EIR with the open channel, or**
  - **will they default to no action, or worse, to action that gives only lip service to a well thought-out plan that has been refined and improved over four years, backed by a myriad of partners and approved by the Long Beach Planning Commission, thereby losing a pledged \$5.6 million dollars with state and federal partners?**
- **How does the Long Beach City Council want to be remembered in the years to come-- do they want to be perceived by other cities in California and in other states as progressive leaders in urban ecology and restoration, and as proactive partners with numerous public and private agencies?**
- **Will other planners cite the City of Long Beach as a prime example of how city government can work in solving a difficult environmental problem, by bridging differences and uniting various factions for capacity building to reach the best solution**



**in a complex environmental situation that will ultimately provide stellar urban restoration, while meeting the needs of recreation, safety and public health?**

**The decision is up to you, the members of the City Council. I urge you to vote wisely, and for the Restoration of Colorado Lagoon with the Open Channel, as proposed in the EIR and passed by the Long Beach Planning Commission, taking into account my statements in this testimony.**

Respectfully submitted,

***Patricia Baird***

Patricia Baird, Ph.D.

Adjunct Professor CSULB, Biological Sciences and Research Associate Simon Fraser University,  
Centre for Wildlife Ecology



"Reed, Mike D."  
<MReed@tsocorp.com>

10/13/2008 01:53 PM

To <District3@LongBeach.gov>

cc

Subject Colorado Lagoon Open Channel

H-1  
10-14-08

Dear Councilman DeLong:

I am writing you, my representative on the Long Beach City Council, to tell you of my support for the open channel from Colorado Lagoon to Marine Stadium. I and my family probably utilize the park more than most local residents for baseball, soccer, picnics and lots of other uses and fully support the open channel. At the local meeting held at Lowell there were a number of options presented and I believe that the best option is for the open channel to run contiguous to E Eliot St., on the outside of the East end of

the park. This allows for uninterrupted open space for the park and what sounds like the optimal plan to make Colorado Lagoon a viable wetland again.

I look forward to your support on this issue and will be at the council meeting to see how you vote on this issue.

Mike Reed  
511 Los Altos Ave  
LB, CA 90814

H-1  
10-14-08



Irma Heinrichs/CH/CLB  
Executive Assistant  
City Clerk Department  
(562) 570-6228

10/13/2008 02:14 PM

To "Ken Hamilton" <KAHamilton@lbusd.k12.ca.us>

cc

bcc Nancy Muth/CH/CLB

Subject Re: Colorado Lagoon 

Speaker cards are available to the public 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the Council Meeting.  
Council meets at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday.

Irma Heinrichs  
(562) 570-6228  
(562) 570-6789 (FAX)  
irma\_heinrichs@longbeach.gov

"Ken Hamilton" <KAHamilton@lbusd.k12.ca.us>



"Ken Hamilton"  
<KAHamilton@lbusd.k12.c  
a.us>

To <cityclerk@longbeach.gov>

cc

10/13/2008 08:02 AM

Subject Colorado Lagoon

I would like to be scheduled to speak at the Oct 14th meeting in regards to the Colorado Lagoon.  
As a Marine Biology Teacher and Science Dept Chair here at Wilson High, I have used the Colorado Lagoon for many years to teach students about the wetlands. I would like to present the importance of the Colorado Lagoon as a learning facility to hundreds of LB students

thank you

Ken Hamilton



"Connie D."  
<cdelgado@ix.netcom.com>

To District3@LongBeach.gov

cc

10/12/2008 08:41 PM

Please respond to  
"Connie D."  
<cdelgado@ix.netcom.com  
>

Subject Colorado Lagoon Restoration

H-1  
10-14-08

Dear Mr. DeLong,

I am writing to show my support for the restoration as planned for the Colorado Lagoon. I am hoping that you will support the current EIR and help to bring to completion a project that has been a labor of unselfish love for Long Beach and pride in our neighborhood. This project is for the greater good and could make Long Beach an example of how to do it right. Please don't let a group of latecomers ruin an enormous amount of work.

Sincerely,

Connie Delgado  
3rd district resident



SCollins@morningstarfood  
s.com

To district3@longbeach.gov

cc

10/11/2008 05:56 PM

Subject Colorado Lagoon Restoration Support

H-1  
10-14-08

Councilman Gary DeLong  
District 3  
Long Beach, CA

Councilman DeLong,

**Re: Colorado Lagoon Restoration EIR and the Open Channel**

I am unable to attend the Monday meeting but I want to express my support for the Colorado Lagoon Restoration. As a local resident who cares about our environment and our local community, I am writing to express my desire to see the Colorado Lagoon restoration become a reality.

One of the key elements of the Colorado Lagoon Restoration is rebuilding the original open channel connecting Colorado Lagoon to Marine Stadium and to the Pacific Ocean. The channel was filled in and replaced with a 1000-foot underground culvert almost 50 years ago when the state was planning a freeway through this part of town. Though the freeway was never built, the culvert remained and has significantly restricted tidal flushing to Colorado Lagoon ever since, resulting in unsafe water quality for people and marine life.

The open channel will significantly enhance water quality and restore marine habitat. This fact has enabled the City to secure millions of dollars in grant funding with promises of millions more. It is the restoration of marine habitat through reconnecting the open channel that dramatically increases our chances of securing funding to complete the work. An alternative to the open channel would be the construction a parallel underground culvert; however, checking with funding agencies reveals a very high improbability of funding this option. The lack of funds would effectively negate any chance of restoring tidal flushing to Colorado Lagoon and jeopardize the entire restoration effort.

Additionally, the \$3.8M awarded the City of Long Beach from State Water Clean Beaches Initiative (CBI) must be used before September 2010, when the fund is scheduled to sunset. These funds are to be used to divert to the sewer the contaminated low water flows from four major storm drains emptying into Colorado Lagoon. These funds also serve as matching funds for pursuing other grants. If approval of the EIR is delayed, we could lose all of that money, which would kill the project.

**Benefits of restoring the open channel between the Colorado Lagoon and Marine Stadium:**

- Restoration of full tidal flushing for Colorado Lagoon will yield safe and clean water.
- The project includes significant improvements to Marina Vista Park:
  - o New Sports Facilities - The existing sports fields will be reconfigured and new facilities installed (no loss of established fields), providing an opportunity to address long-standing issues with poor soil/grass conditions, which are a safety hazard.
  - o New and Safer Bathrooms for Marina Vista Park - the project will provide funding for badly needed new bathroom facilities that are safer and preferred by the LB Police.
  - o New Recreational Opportunities - to include walking paths, bird watching, observing marine life, and possibly kayaking.

· Environmental Education Opportunities - With more than 5,000 school children attending schools within walking distance of the Lagoon and Marina Vista Park, the restoration of an open channel will be used as an environmental education classroom, helping our local schools meet their curriculum requirements.

· Increased Property Values in our Community - As designed, the open channel will beautify the park and enhance a unique urban wetland that is currently degraded and unsafe.

· Restoration of Marine Habitat - The open channel will restore marine habitat that was lost when the original channel was filled. It will enhance the biological diversity and health of organisms, such as eelgrass and juvenile halibut, by delivering needed nutrients and larvae (or young animals) from the ocean.

The open channel, like other aspects of the Colorado Lagoon Restoration, was first suggested at a public meeting held more than four years ago. Since then, it has been through many public reviews, a Restoration Feasibility Study, and a detailed Environmental Assessment, which culminated in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that is now before the City Council. This EIR has taken into account all impacts associated with the project and is recommending that the open channel be a part of the project.

Again, I would like to reiterate my full support for the project as envisioned by the public many years ago and now expressed in the EIR.

Sincerely,

Scot Collins  
391 Orlena Ave  
Long Beach, CA 90814  
562-961-1141 Tele/FAX

H-1  
10-14-08



Irma Heinrichs/CH/CLB  
Executive Assistant  
City Clerk Department  
(562) 570-6228

10/13/2008 02:10 PM

To Nancy Muth/CH/CLB@CLB  
cc  
bcc

Subject Fw: Marina Vista Park / Colorado Lagoon

Irma Heinrichs  
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(562) 570-6789 (FAX)  
irma\_heinrichs@longbeach.gov

----- Forwarded by Irma Heinrichs/CH/CLB on 10/13/2008 02:10 PM -----



"Robert Hickey"  
<bhickey@farmersagent.com>

10/10/2008 12:14 PM

To <cityclerk@longbeach.gov>  
cc <district3@longbeach.gov>

Subject Marina Vista Park / Colorado Lagoon

As a resident of Alamitos Heights for thirty years and a business owner in Naples for thirty-four years I feel compelled to voice an opinion about the proposed work being contemplated in Marina Vista Park. I wish to go on record as supporting the open channel. This decision does not come easy or with out conversation with some of my long time neighbors. Those in my age group who have raised our families are predominately for the open Chanel and those with children are largely for a culvert, Many have no opinion and I shared that view until this week. But since Marina Vista Park is a park and not a Sports Complex I feel that opening the park space to nature will improve the quality for people like myself.

Respectfully,  
Robert D Hickey