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R-28

1340 East Florida Street  
Long Beach, CA 90802

May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010

City Clerk  
Lobby Level  
333 W. Ocean Blvd.  
Long Beach, CA 90802

Re: Wetlands Land Swap

Dear Mayor Foster and Members of The City Council,  
Of course it is a great day for a wetlands ecologist when wetlands are protected, but it is also a great day for a community when its leaders work towards conserving its natural resources for everyone to enjoy.

I am writing this letter in support of the City of Long Beach acquiring all of Los Cerritos Wetlands for the purposes of conservation and restoration. Freeing wetlands from private ownership is not easy, but it's the first step. The first individual to privately own this land was a Manuel Nieto a Spanish foot soldier who received 300,000 acres of land in 1790 as part of his retirement. After 220 years the rights to this land can be owned again by the people through the City of Long Beach and eventually through the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority, a public entity that will restore the land to a wildlife sanctuary with endless beneficial uses.

I am grateful to the city staff who were creative during challenging and highly scrutinized negotiations to develop a final proposal for acquiring title to a portion of Los Cerritos Wetlands that has been sought for by conservationists for nearly 4 decades. This particular parcel of land in SEADIP subarea 25 is of extreme ecological value. On this parcel there are over 20 unstudied acres freshwater marsh and alkali meadow that are found nowhere else in Los Cerritos Wetlands and are very uncommon in southern California. The diversity and richness of rare wildlife that exists out there is any ecologist's guess.

With the support of the City Council the surface rights to this precious land can now be attained. With the council's support now and through future partnerships with the city, my colleagues and I will get a chance to do our work. We will be able to research these wetlands and interpret them for the community through nature walks and tours. We will be able to build programs and eventually restore these wetlands with the public's help. We will bring together neighborhoods from throughout the City and build a prideful southeastern gateway to Long Beach. None of this will possible without the first step, acquiring the land.

This is just the beginning of a new movement towards a culture of conservation that is building at the mouth of the San Gabriel River. Places like El Dorado Nature Center, Colorado Lagoon, Zedler Marsh, Sims' Pond and Jack Dunster Marine Reserve are transforming the City and its citizens. A public awareness is being built and this land acquisition will be a catalyst for momentum. This land has been altered dramatically since Sr. Nieto started his rancho. I am excited to watch the land continue to transform as its greatness is restored for the benefit of not only wildlife and wetlands ecologists, but for everyone.

Sincerely,



Eric Zahn  
Co-Principal and Coastal Ecologist  
Tidal Influence  
&  
Part-Time Faculty  
California State University Long Beach