



## **POINT MUGU WILDLIFE CENTER**

**1631 UKIAH STREET, OXNARD, CA 93035-3452**

[danpearson2001@gmail.com](mailto:danpearson2001@gmail.com)

[805] 368-3599

**20 August, 2019**

### **Planning Commission City of Oxnard**

**ATTN:** Project Partners & City of Oxnard Planning Commissioners\*  
215 South "A" Street  
Oxnard, CA 93030

RE: Ormond Beach Restoration and Public Access Plan

Dear Project Partners and City of Oxnard Planning Commissioners:

As a long-time resident of Oxnard and Port Hueneme (since 1954) I consider myself and my organization legitimate stakeholders in the restoration of Ormond Beach to the pristine, natural state it was in when I first encountered it as a 7-year old who joyfully spent hours hiking along the beach where I saw pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis californicus*) sleeping with their heads tucked back underneath a wing, sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*) and harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*) sleeping and resting on the beach and thousands upon thousands of nesting Least terns (*Sternula antillarum*) and Snowy plovers (*Charadrius nivosus*) literally covering the upland side of the dunes with their simple, vulnerable nests consisting of nothing more than a scrape in the sand. Every day on that beach was an adventure for me and my siblings. Sadly, the following decades made me witness to the gradual and sometimes brutal degradation of these precious wetlands. Increased intrusive human foot traffic, usually with unleashed dogs, litter, dirt bikes, sand rail drag races and now homeless encampments with their usual trash and human waste insults. Halaco's toxic, radioactive slag heap didn't help much either. The Least tern's and Snowy plover's attempts to successfully raise chicks and nestlings to full-fledged adults was severely impacted, especially by dirt bikes and dogs. The decreasing populations of these birds made it difficult for them to ward off Western gull (*Larus occidentalis*) and other predator attacks. The increasing human population of Ventura County was methodically turning these unique, beautiful and precious wetlands into a barren wasteland. Endangered plants, like the Salt Marsh Bird's Beak (*Cordylanthus maritimus*) were nearly wiped out.

In the late '80s I joined forces with organizations like the Ormond Beach Observers and the Ormond Beach Task Force and the Western Alliance for Nature whose members and volunteers were passionately dedicated to the protection and restoration of Ormond Beach and its remaining, struggling endangered species. I was fortunate to live in close proximity to the wetlands for 21 years, from 1987 to 2008, before I left to finish my education at Rachel Carson College, UC Santa Cruz (Class of 2012). While living out there, practically on the wetlands, I made myself useful by using my first cell phone to report taggers, vandals, poachers, takers, trash dumpers and thieves to the Oxnard Police Department. I

used my video camera to supply photographic proof of offenders to the District Attorney's office to aid in their prosecution of these scofflaws and criminals. I would also assist Al Sanders in his fence-building and sign-posting efforts to keep trespassers and dogs out of the nesting area. Around this time Mr Walter Fuller took it upon himself to spend a lot of time parked at the end of Arnold Road, armed with his camera and some powerful binoculars he deterred intruders by his presence. I began keeping a journal of all the liars, litterbugs, shooters and despoilers that Al, Walter and I encountered on an almost daily basis. I reported so many crimes that the Oxnard Police Department's dispatcher soon recognized my voice and my number.

After some years of persistent testifying to city council and county supervisor meetings, Al and Walter began receiving more civic support in their efforts to preserve what was left of Ormond Beach's biodiversity. You can imagine my pleasure when I returned from school to find that Walter had been supplied a trailer for living quarters, with electricity, two Port-A-Potties for his and the public's use, with supplies, and brand new signs and display boards explaining the wildlife that can be seen there. The nesting area had been cleaned of old tires and junk and was now completely surrounded by a fence adorned with bilingual No Trespassing signs. None of the signs were scratched or defaced with gang graffiti and all were in pristine condition, very readable. Before Walter's near-constant presence at the end of Arnold Road, all the warning and prohibitive signs had been defaced or thrown into the canal, especially the signs stating no dogs on the beach. They only lasted a day or two. Walter's persistent dedication to Ormond Beach had wrought remarkable and long-desired improvements that made it a popular site for people who would not otherwise visit a remote, crime-ridden, blighted shore.

Now, finally, we're approaching a sea change of permanent improvements to the Ormond Beach wetlands but my anticipation of, and enthusiasm for, these longed-for changes has been marred by my late notification of the restoration plans. I am also dismayed by the fact that several other stakeholders have not been apprised of meetings or public comment opportunities. I only learned about this project when a friend e-mailed me a copy of Wendy Leung's article on the restoration project in the Ventura County Star (Early August). I began calling around and discovered that a number of other stakeholder organizations had also not been alerted to the presentations concerning this project where comments could've been provided. This is inexcusable. How could Sara Wan, former head of the California Coastal Commission, not have been notified of these presentations in time to provide an informed comment?

I find it difficult to find the words to express my frustration and disappointment at learning about the 21 August deadline for comments on this seminal project at such a late date. Someone supplied me with the website address of the Final ORMOND BEACH RESTORATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS PLAN. I downloaded this 300+ page report and I can assure you I do not have enough time available to me to absorb all the information in it that would allow me to make informed comments about its provisions. In light of this, I demand that the comment period be extended for another 90 days to allow me and other very interested stakeholders to acquaint ourselves with the proposed developments therein.

My stakeholder status is well known to many Ventura County citizens. My experience of the wetlands in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, when it was a fully-functioning, relatively undisturbed habitat for wildlife, my evolved enlightenment of its critical importance to several species of resident and migratory birds, my several testimonies to city council and county supervisor meetings, as well as two appearances at California Coastal Commission hearings, my dozens of published Letters To The Editor regarding the deteriorating condition of the Ormond Beach wetlands in the Los Angeles Times and the Ventura County Star, my Op-Ed piece in the Santa Barbara News-Press, my years of voluntary enforcement of Federal and state wildlife protection laws and reporting of violations of those laws by scofflaws, poachers and takers at Ormond Beach all go to convincing me and others of my stakeholder *bona fides*. I think, at the very least, the Point Mugu Wildlife Center should have been notified in time to allow me to better understand

what is involved in the Final Plan so I could make intelligent, fully-informed suggestions or criticisms. Again, I insist the comment period be extended to allow me and others to get a better understanding of what is planned for Ormond Beach.

My desire for more time to acquaint myself with the “Plan” is motivated by my learning of some assertions I take issue with and changes I strenuously object to. For instance,

- In the second sentence of the third paragraph of the Plan’s Executive Summary I do not agree that “Preparation of the Plan included a ... [sufficient] stakehold outreach.”
- I, and others, strenuously object to the placement of “Elevated Overlook Platforms” anywhere near the nesting or wetland areas. A Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) has already been photographed perching on a very tall tower on the Navy’s side of the base fence. Elevated Overlook Platforms will simply provide handy perches for that skillful predator as well as other falcons, buteos, accipiters and harriers who could delay the growth of nesting bird populations. Bad idea. A surrounding boardwalk, which I and others endorse, should be sufficient for excellent birding.
- Minimizing or de-emphasizing the Arnold Road entrance is a very bad idea. Eliminating the presence of a wetland steward, like Walter Fuller, would guarantee the return of the very same scofflaws, gangbangers and vandals who blighted the area with graffiti and vehicular vandalism before his on-site presence prevented those activities. Leaving the Arnold Road Eastern Access to itself, unmonitored, is a very, very bad idea. It won’t work and, at the very least, would be counter-productive to the Restoration Plan’s stated goals.

The few points above are the result of contacting other stakeholders and a preliminary excursion into the voluminous Plan. As I stated before, several stakeholders and other concerned members of the public need more time to study this Plan in detail. I cannot emphasize this strongly enough. A project of this importance and expense, significant to future generations of Americans deserves every consideration, and more time for a more thorough study of the Plan’s proposals by more stakeholders would be a good start. If done correctly now, at the beginning, Ormond Beach could eventually become the Crown Jewel of Ventura County, attracting visitors from all over, especially if it can be restored to its 1950 status. I would very much like future 7-year old boys and girls to marvel at the abundant wildlife I saw so long ago and that is only a distant memory to me now. Please consider allowing more time for informed comment. Thank you for consideration of this urgent request.

## **Daniel Hayes Pearson**

President, Point Mugu Wildlife Center

cc: Please distribute my letter to each and every one of the following -

- \*Ms Dierdre Frank – Chair, Oxnard Planning Commission
- \*Mr Wilfredo Chua – Vice-Chair, Oxnard Planning Commission
- \*Mr Jeremy Meyer – Planning Commissioner
- \*Mr Orlando Dozier – Planning Commissioner
- \*Mr Robert V. Sanchez – Planning Commissioner
- \*Mr Jim Fuhring – Planning Commissioner
- \*Mr Daniel Chavez, Jr. – Planning Commissioner
- \*Mr Chris Kroll, Coastal Conservancy
- \*Ms Laura Riege, The Nature Conservancy
- \*Mr Peter Dixon, The Nature Conservancy
- \*Mr Isidro Figueroa, City of Oxnard

\*Ms Karen Krause, City of Oxnard

I will personally cc:

Mr Alan Sanders, Ormond Beach Observers

Mr John McMullen

Ms Sara Wan, Western Alliance for Nature, Former Chair of the California Coastal Commission

Ms Janet Bridgers, Ormond Beach Observers

Mr David M. Kanter, Former President, Surfside III Condominium Owners Association