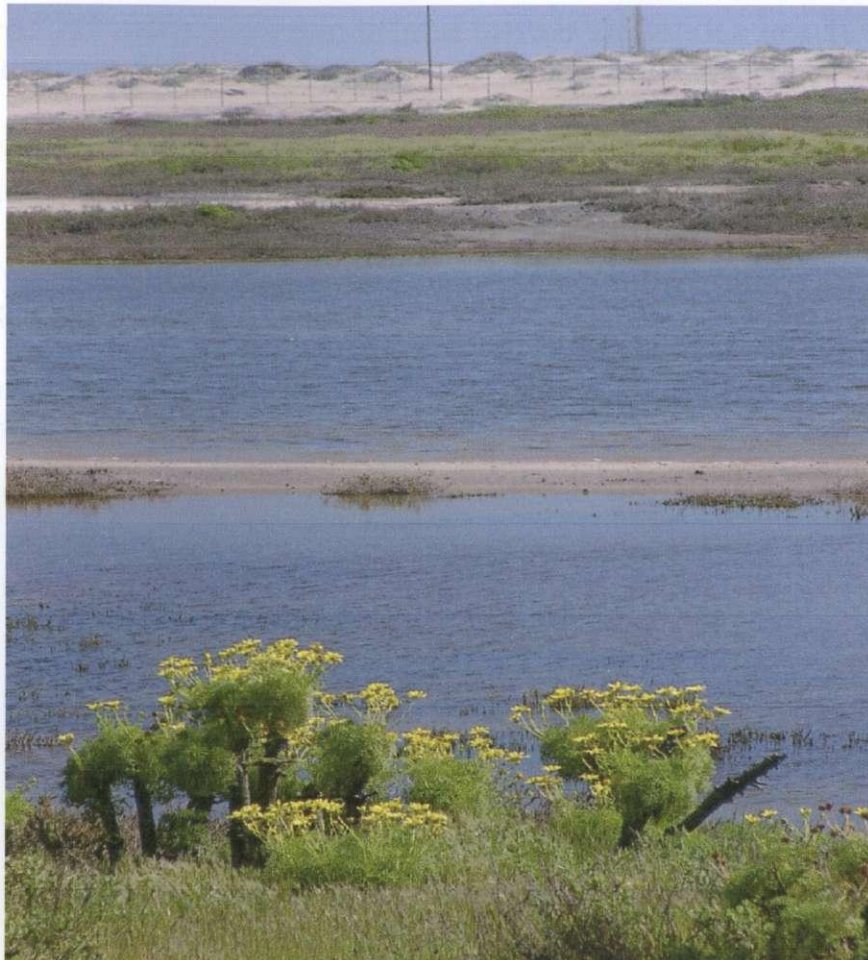


ORMOND BEACH WETLANDS RESTORATION PROJECT

Ventura County, California



Coastal
Conservancy

January 2006

Ormond Beach Wetlands Restoration Project

California State Coastal Conservancy

With the unanimous support of the Oxnard City Council and the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, the State Coastal Conservancy has taken the following steps at Ormond Beach:

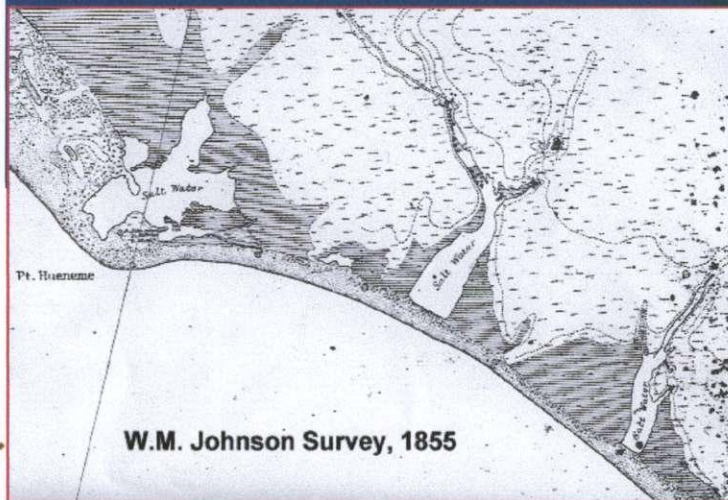
1. Acquired 265 acres of wetlands (and former wetlands), beach, and dunes from Southern California Edison;
2. Acquired 276 acres of wetlands and other open space land from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and the City of Oxnard;
3. Reserved funding for acquisition of an additional 210 acres from another willing seller; and
4. Nearing completion of a study of various wetland restoration options at Ormond Beach and its adjoining wetlands.



Ormond Beach Wetlands Restoration Project

SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

Ormond Beach is a 1,500-acre area composed of agriculture, industry, and wetlands. A two-mile-long beach extends from Port Hueneme to the northwestern boundary of Pt. Mugu Naval Air Station, which encompasses Mugu Lagoon.



Prior to development, the coast of Ventura was a vast complex of dunes, lakes, lagoons, and salt and freshwater marshes. From the Santa Clara River estuary to the beginning of Mugu Lagoon, it appears from historic maps that there were seven lagoons. Most have either disappeared, been severely degraded, or been converted to marinas or ports. Nevertheless, this is one of the

few areas in southern California with an intact dune-transition zone-marsh system. Over 200 migratory bird species are reported for the Ormond Beach area, and more shorebird species are known to use Ormond Beach than any other site in Ventura County.

Ormond Beach Wetlands Restoration Project



Six threatened and endangered species and six species of concern have been identified on the former Edison site.

The Ormond Beach wetlands have been drained, filled, and degraded over the past century to accommodate agriculture and industrial uses. The wetlands at Ormond Beach once covered approximately 1,000 acres; approximately 250 acres remain. The lagoons have been used as a city dump, developed with a magnesium smelting plant and with the electrical

generating plant, and drained for agriculture. Drainage and developments, including the naval air station, have left the Ormond Beach wetlands hydrologically isolated and significantly reduced in size. The remaining wetlands on site are degraded from compaction due to human use and dumping, contaminated from runoff, and suffering from hypersalinity due to lack of hydrologic flushing.

For the last three decades, there have been numerous proposals for marinas, resorts, and residences in and adjoining the remnant wetlands. Each of the development proposals for Ormond Beach failed. During the 1990s, the Conservancy worked with the City, the community, and the landowners of Ormond Beach to extinguish lots on the beach, prepare a plan for restoration of the remnant wetlands on the Edison property, and develop a consensus plan for development and wetland restoration on the private lands there.



Ormond Beach Wetlands Restoration Project

PROJECT GOALS

Ormond Beach is considered by wetland experts to be the most important wetland restoration opportunity in southern California. The biological significance of this area has been recognized and its restoration potential endorsed by all of the federal and state resource agencies that participate in the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project. With their support and the support of the County of Ventura and the City of Oxnard, the Conservancy has begun acquisition at Ormond Beach with a goal of acquiring at least 750 acres to accommodate wetland and other habitat needs and at the same time complement the City's goal to complete development of the south Oxnard community. Acquisition and restoration of these properties could at least triple the extent of habitat at Ormond Beach.

A critical mass of 750 acres of restored wetlands and associated habitat at Ormond Beach is expected to create a self-sustaining biological system and enough tidal prism and flushing action to maintain wetland health and hydrologic function. Restoration at Ormond Beach likely would include modifications of the site hydrology to restore tidal action and bring back freshwater flows that had formerly drained across the Oxnard Plain to the coastal



wetlands. When integrated with the adjoining 900 acres of freshwater wetlands and the 1,500 acres at Mugu Lagoon, this could be the largest coastal wetland in southern California, spanning -9 miles of the coast from Pt. Hueneme to Pt. Mugu.



ORMOND BEACH INITIAL RESTORATION CONCEPTS



Aspen

Coastal Conservancy

Ormond Beach Wetlands Restoration Project

PROJECT STATUS

In June 2002, the Conservancy acquired the first property, 265 acres including a former tank farm site, from Southern California Edison. The Conservancy at its October, 2003, meeting reserved funds for acquisition of the additional 500 acres as proposed. The City of Oxnard and the Metropolitan Water District owned 276 acres of degrade wetlands and agricultural land (former wetlands and associated habitat) adjoining the above acquisition. In June 2005, the Conservancy acquired the MWD property through its

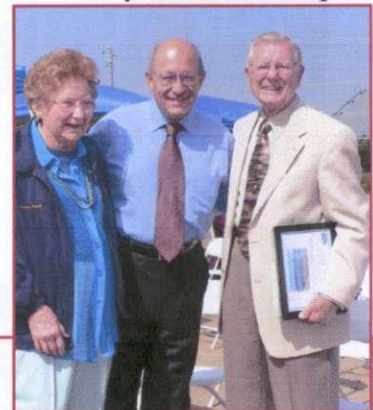


partner, the Nature Conservancy, providing them with a grant of \$13 million to hold the property until restoration plans are complete.

The Conservancy has also reserved funds for the acquisition of the adjoining 210 acres of former wetlands that are currently owned and farmed by Southland Sod. The owner has since offered to sell all of the 340-acre former Edison property to the Conservancy conditioned upon his purchase of other suitable

agricultural land where he can transfer his operations. One option at this time is to acquire 210 acres and an agricultural conservation easement over the balance of the property.

The Conservancy has funded, with the assistance of a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, a restoration feasibility study for Ormond Beach and adjoining wetlands that would show how this area could be restored and linked hydrologically and as an ecosystem. The consultant team hired by the Coastal Conservancy includes Aspen Environmental, Philip Williams Associates, Wetland Research Associates, and Everest Consultants, a consortium of the most experienced wetland restoration experts in California. The study will develop recommendations that address habitat needs of the coastal landscape ecosystem, habitat needs of special status species, water supply and quality issues, mitigation of contaminants, wetland restoration alternatives, priority and timing of restoration activities, public access and interpretive center opportunities, and costs for restoration and management. The study will be complete in the Spring of 2006 when a final design phase will begin.



Peter S. Brand, Project Manager

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Partly cloudy
Highs around 70.
C10

Friday

Dec. 9, 2005

VENTURA COUNTY

STAR

Ventura
Edition

HOME & GARDEN

Wreaths, trees, lights, spirits are the stuff of a well-crafted, homespun holiday. **G1**



SPORTS

St. Bonaventure, Moorpark battle for the Division IV football title tonight. **C1**



NATION

Mariah Carey, Kanye West and John Legend all get 8 Grammy nominations. **A9**



WWW.VENTURACOUNTYSTAR.COM

Coastal Conservancy grant to help protect county seabirds



Snowy plover

By Zeke Barlow

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Come springtime, when Western snowy plovers hollow out dimples in the sand along Ventura County's beaches to hatch their chicks, a volunteer will be sitting nearby, giving mini-lectures on habitat destruction and the value of keeping dogs on leashes.

And maybe, with gentle reminders of the birds' status, along with signs and fences keeping the

curious away from nesting grounds, the plover as well as the California least tern will return to the beaches en masse, as they were long before the fate of the birds was in jeopardy.

On Thursday, the California Coastal Conservancy approved a first-of-a-kind grant to coordinate efforts in Ventura County to help protect the plover and tern, a federally endangered bird. Though a handful of groups has been doing

similar work in the area for years, this would be the first time a countywide, orchestrated effort would be made to protect the birds that were once thick along the Pacific Coast. The new program must work with existing groups already doing similar work.

The conservancy voted to give the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Photos courtesy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Least tern

See GRANT on A14



Snowy plover

Threatened birds

Snowy plover

Description: Small, 6- to 7-inch-long bird with sand-colored back and white chest, with two brown or black stripes at the neck; plumage can vary during breeding season.

Habitat: Dry mud flats, sandy areas around rivers and lakes; rarely found at freshwater sites; lives on the West Coast from Baja California in Mexico to Washington.

Food: Small crustaceans and insects

Nests: Birds will scratch out shallow nest in sand, lay eggs in late spring and early summer; both males and females incubate eggs

Status: Listed as threatened by U.S. Wildlife Service; before 1970, birds nested at 53 locations in California; today, only about 33 of those sites are home to snowy plovers.

Least tern

Description: It is the smallest of the gull family; 9 inches long with wingspan of 19 inches; Plumage is black, gray and white with a black head.

Habitat: Coastal beaches and estuaries from central California to Baja California. It migrates, spending winter in the south.

Food: Small fish, such as anchovies

Nests: Birds nest in colonies on beach; males court females by bringing fish

Status: Federally endangered

Sources: Cornell University; Monterey Bay Aquarium; U.S. Geological Survey; Audubon Society

Star staff

Program will link volunteers to help guard nesting sites

GRANT

From A1

\$150,000 to hire a project coordinator, who will organize volunteers to monitor sensitive habitat on all of the county's publicly owned beaches. A similar program at Santa Barbara's Coal Oil Point Reserve resulted in a sharp increase in the number of birds on the beach, as well as an increased public awareness of the birds. The project was funded by a patchwork of donations and grants.

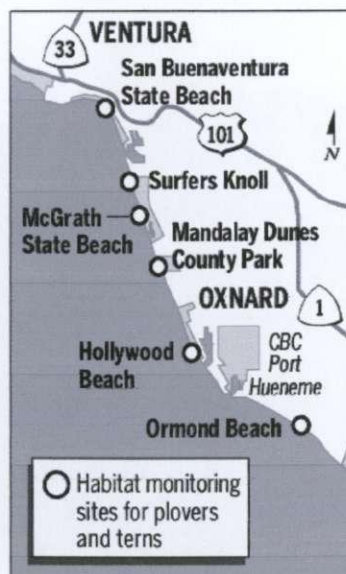
The Ventura County program, which officials are hoping will start as soon as the spring nesting season, will have docents posted at public beaches, where they will monitor nesting sites, keep people from stepping on eggs and educate the public. Predator cages will be placed over nests, temporary fencing put up, and information signs posted.

After Santa Barbara's program for plovers started on a single beach, populations in the winter went from 100 in 2000 to 400 last year, said Cristina Sandoval, director of the reserve. An added benefit came when the number of terns, which were not part of the project, also increased, she said. When the program started, only 2 percent of beachgoers knew what a plover is; now 98 percent know, she said.

"The idea for a coordinator for Ventura County would be great," Sandoval said. "I wish we had one in Santa Barbara as well."

Reed Smith, science chairman for the Ventura Audubon Society, said that, although local efforts by individual groups are good, a coordinator is needed. The person will help make sure the most sensitive areas in the region are getting the most attention.

"There is not enough of a unified effort," said Smith, a retired game warden. "We need a position to coordinate the efforts to get the landowners on board."



Star staff

Habitat for Hollywood Beach, a conservation group, wrote a letter of support for the new program, saying, "there is a great need for increased on-the-ground education and habitat restoration and protection efforts."

The efforts to protect the coastal birds have not been without controversy. Environmentalists successfully fought to have paragliders banned from Ormond Beach because they contended the flights harmed birds. In October, the Oxnard City Council unanimously approved a ban prohibiting ultralight flying vehicles from taking off from anywhere but local airports.

Residents near Channel Islands Harbor protested the location of a proposed boating and safety center in part because of the plover habitat, but that site was ultimately selected.

The grant will last three years, at which time the project coordinator will be responsible for finding additional money to keep the project going, said Chris Dellith, senior biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

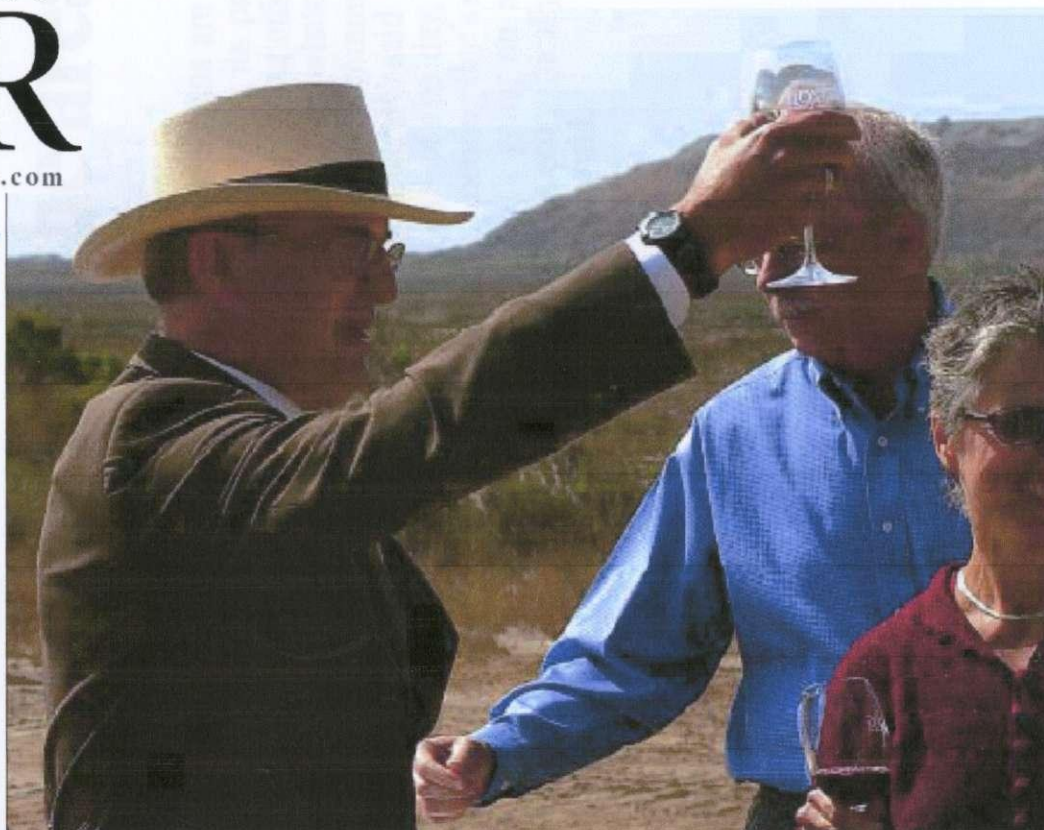
"I think this is extremely important," Dellith said. "It'll benefit the species and be able to give more attention to the species and lead to its recovery."

VENTURA COUNTY STAR

www.VenturaCountyStar.com

Thursday

Oct. 13, 2005



Chuck Kirman / Star staff

At a celebration Wednesday, Peter Brand of the California Coastal Conservancy toasts environmentalists whose efforts contributed to the agency's recent purchase for \$12.9 million of 276 acres of wetlands in the Ormond Beach area.

Group celebrates Ormond Beach land purchase

By Charles Levin

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Oxnard Mayor Tom Holden took the walk on Ormond Beach. So did council members Andres Herrera, Dean Maulhardt and John Zaragoza.

They viewed the wetlands at Ormond Beach at the behest of Jean Harris, who was lobbying to protect the sensitive habitat from numerous development proposals.

Harris was persuasive. She gave hundreds of walks — and won over everyone who took them.

"That walk really helped changed the destiny of Ormond Beach," Holden said Wednesday to a crowd of more

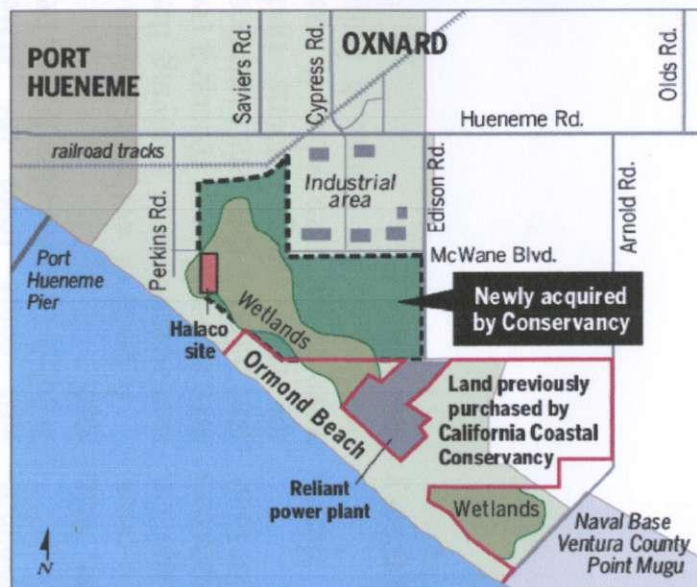
On the Web

For more on the Ormond Beach project, see the link at www.VenturaCountyStar.com

than 100 dignitaries, including Harris, state and local elected officials, environmentalists and community activists.

The crowd gathered near the beach to celebrate the recent purchase of 276 acres of wetlands; laud Harris and her late friend and partner in protecting the area, Roma Armbrust; and view tentative plans to restore the sensitive habitat.

The city of Oxnard and the



Steve Greenberg / Star staff

Metropolitan Water District sold the land for \$12.9 million. The state Coastal Conservancy supplied the cash. The Nature Conservancy holds the title and will direct a restoration plan.

This land joins an additional 265 acres that the Coastal Conservancy purchased earlier for

\$9.7 million from Southern California Edison. Officials hope to buy about 200 more acres.

The purchases will protect a large portion of the wetlands there, provide needed habitat for threatened species and mi-

See WETLANDS on B2

VENTURA COUNTY STAR

www.VenturaCountyStar.com

Plans being drawn to restore lagoons to the area

WETLANDS

From B1

gratory birds, and boost efforts to create a healthy coastal environment, officials said Wednesday.

Harris and Armbrust, who died in 2003, took up the cause more than two decades ago. On Wednesday, a score of speakers praised the two women for their dogged pursuit.

"I'm very moved," Harris said.

The Coastal Conservancy

now must raise money to buy more land and finance the restoration project, said Peter Brand, project manager with the agency. Some of that money will come from the state Wildlife Conservation Board, he said.

A team of wetlands restoration specialists is studying the area and will soon release a report offering different scenarios for re-creating lagoons that were in the area when it was used solely by Chumash Indians, Brand said.

Plans might also include a visitor center and several interpretative stations in the area.

The conservancy also wants to clean up the nearby Halaco site. In 2002, state water regulators ordered the metal recycling company to clean up a slag heap on its 26-acre parcel. Four months later, the company declared bankruptcy.

An affiliate of The Welk Group has offered \$2.5 million for the property and is waiting to close escrow. The company operates music, real estate and

resort operations.

The company's plans are unclear, Marc Luzzatto, its president and chief operating officer, said Wednesday. But whatever it decides, it will seek community input first, Luzzatto said.

"At the end of the day, we want to do something that's sensitive to what's going on next door and that's economically viable," Luzzatto said.

VENTURA COUNTY STAR

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Friday

Oct. 14, 2005

Opinion

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Opinion Page Editor:

EDITORIALS

Good times for Ormond Beach

Purchase gives wetlands a boost

Purchase gives wetlands a boost

The Ormond Beach crusaders, who are working to save Oxnard's wetlands from development, were out in force Wednesday celebrating the completed purchase of 277 acres of beach property by the California Coastal Conservancy. (The Nature Conservancy bought one acre.)

The newly acquired land was once jointly owned by Metropolitan Water District and the city of Oxnard. However, since a wetlands wildlife preserve would be a crowning environmental jewel for Oxnard, city officials showed no hesitation earlier this year in voting to sell its portion to the conservancy. The water district voted to sell its share in 2004.

This \$12.9 million purchase, along with 265 acres the conservancy purchased in 2002 from Southern California Edison for \$9.7 million, puts the preservation organization very close to the amount of acreage needed to make the wetlands, once fully restored, a self-sustaining habitat for threatened species and migratory birds.

The conservancy still hopes to buy 200 more acres, now in private ownership, to complete the protection and preservation of this spectacular strip of Ventura County coast.

Although the recent purchases involved the efforts of many, any celebratory toasts must recognize the work of Jean Harris and the late environmentalist Roma Armbrust. The two, both schoolteachers, were the motivating force behind the Ormond Beach Observers and the Ormond Beach Task Force, which sought to acquire, restore and preserve the wetlands for posterity.

Ms. Armbrust died in 2003, just days before one of her final wishes was realized — the conservancy board unanimously approved setting aside \$23 million to buy Ormond Beach property for the massive wetlands restoration project.

But, before her dream can become a reality, the huge slag heap that sits within the restorable habitat, must be dealt with. As long as this toxic waste pile remains, the wetlands cannot be restored to optimal condition. The Welk Group, which is in the process of buying the former Halaco site where the slag heap sits, has offered to do the cleanup. We hope they deliver.

Ormond Beach is a treasure because not only is it one of the last undeveloped fragments of coastline in a heavily urbanized area, but also a place a host of rare and endangered plants and wildlife call home.

Preserving California's natural beauty for future generations to enjoy is essential. That's why it's so heartening to see more of the Ormond Beach wetlands being permanently preserved.

VENTURA COUNTY



Ormond Beach wetlands renewal project advances



STAR
Oxnard
and Port Hueneme
www.VenturaCountyStar.com

Friday, Jan. 28, 2005

Coastal Conservancy OKs giving \$13 million to buy land

By Sylvia Moore

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The Coastal Conservancy on Thursday unanimously approved giving the Nature Conservancy \$13 million to buy 276 acres at Ormond Beach for wetlands restoration.

The Coastal Conservancy's decision, made at a board meet-

ing Thursday in San Diego, along with a prior purchase means the agencies will soon have 541 of the 750 acres experts say is needed to create a healthy, self-sustaining wetlands area at Ormond.

Ventura resident Jean Harris, a member of Oxnard's

Saviors Road Design Team, traveled to San Diego with other members to lend support for the grant. The Design Team and local environmentalists have been trying for years to restore Ormond Beach back to its original wetlands state.

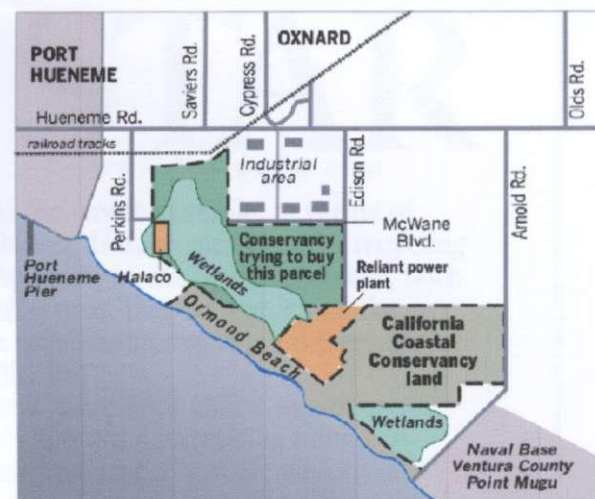
Harris said she wore her green, gold and purple Mardi Gras beads to the meeting for luck. "They're my celebration beads, and they worked," Harris said. "It's a great, great day."

The 276 acres are part of a

larger, 309-acre parcel the city of Oxnard and the Metropolitan Water District bought in 1998. On Tuesday, Oxnard city officials voted to sell most of the city's share of the property to the conservancies. The water district had earlier agreed to sell most of its share.

The \$13 million approved Thursday is part of \$23 million the Coastal Conservancy, a state agency, set aside in 2003

See ORMOND on B2



B2

COUNTY

Friday, Jan. 28, 2005

0

Star staff
The Star

When completed, wetlands would stretch 9 miles

ORMOND

From B1

to help acquire property owned by Oxnard, the water district and Southland Sod for the restoration of wetlands, dunes and surrounding uplands at Ormond Beach. The Coastal Conservancy is still negotiating with Southland Sod over the agricultural company's 220 acres.

The Coastal Conservancy already has 265 acres at Ormond,

"Along with benefiting wildlife, this restoration will add to the beauty of the Ventura County coast and provide recreational and educational opportunities for residents and visitors."

Fran Pavley, Assemblywoman who represents Ormond Beach area

purchased in 2002 from Southern California Edison.

The ultimate goal is to integrate the Ormond wetlands with neighboring coastal wetlands, including 1,500 acres at Mugu

Lagoon. This would make the area Southern California's largest coastal wetlands, stretching nine miles from Point Hueneme to Point Mugu.

Peter Brand, project manag-

er for the Coastal Conservancy, said the board of the Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit group, now has to approve the purchase.

"Then we're on our way," Brand said. "This is extremely important for the coast of California, but also really important for the city of Oxnard. We hope (Ormond) will be a rich asset for the city."

Harris said the 276-acre parcel is a crucial area for the

restoration effort. "It has the estuary, the large salt marsh and the dunes where the (California) least terns nest," Harris said.

Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, who represents the Ormond Beach area, said in a statement, "Along with benefiting wildlife, this restoration will add to the beauty of the Ventura County coast and provide recreational and educational opportunities for residents and visitors."

The Coastal Conservancy's funding comes through Proposition 40, a parks and resources bond act approved by California voters in 2002.

The Nature Conservancy, an international organization that has worked with the Coastal Conservancy on other restorations, has preserved more than 80 million acres of habitat worldwide and about 12 million acres in the United States and Canada.

Editorials

Good news for Ormond Beach

Past desecrations won't be repeated

To the coastal crusaders who have been trying to save Ormond Beach from more developmental desecration, there was a double helping of good news this week.

— The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California has agreed to sell its share of 270 acres of beach property to the California Coastal Conservancy.

— The Ventura County District Attorney's Office has filed criminal charges against Halaco Engineering, the prime polluter in the Ormond Beach area.

Of the two events, the MWD decision to make that property available to the Coastal Conservancy is of far greater impact. When added to the 265 acres the conservancy has already purchased from Southern California Edison, the acquisition of another 270 acres would almost complete the plans to preserve a total of 700 acres at Ormond Beach.

The property involved is jointly owned by MWD and the city of Oxnard. Since a wetlands wildlife preserve would be the crowning environmental jewel for Oxnard, city officials should have no hesitation about joining in the decision to sell the property to the Coastal Commission. That would leave another 200 acres, now in private ownership, that the conservancy hopes to acquire, to complete the protection and preservation of that spectacular strip of Ventura County coast.

The Coastal Conservancy's involvement has saved Ormond Beach from more of the kind of industrial desecration that occurred in past decades. Some existing operations have left visible scars at Ormond Beach, scars that are proving almost impossible to remove.

Opinion

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Opinion Page

Friday, April 11, 2003

VENTURA COUNTY
STAR

WWW.INSIDEVC.COM

The Halaco operation is the worst example, in terms of visual and respiratory pollution. Halaco runs a metal recycling plant that has been sued by government agencies before, both to clean up a huge, toxic slag heap that contaminates the beach and to comply with regulations regarding the release of illegal contaminants into the air.

The action by the District Attorney's Office was over violations of the company's operating permit, in failing to comply with required conditions to prevent air pollution. Resulting from a surprise inspection at the plant, these are the first criminal charges against Halaco. As misdemeanors, the charges carry a maximum penalty of \$25,000.

Halaco has managed to delay other official attempts to make the company comply with various regulations, even in court, but criminal charges are something different.

As is so often the case with beach preservation in Oxnard, what's happening at Ormond Beach is a tribute to the tenacity of Jean Harris, who fought development at Oxnard Shores until it included a public park, and has crusaded to save Ormond Beach from a variety of development schemes.

Coupled with the trend toward land acquisition by the Coastal Conservancy, the criminal charges against Halaco offer a doubly welcome prospect — not only that Ormond Beach will be preserved from further industrial scars for future generations, but also that some of the most visible existing scars may someday be removed.