

# **BLUE FOLDER ITEM**

*Blue folder items are additional back up material to administrative reports and/or public comments received after the printing and distribution of the agenda packet for receive and file.*

## **CITY COUNCIL SEPTEMBER 7, 2021**

**H.23 APPROVE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE CITY OF REDONDO BEACH AND THE SOUTH BAY PARKLAND CONSERVANCY REGARDING HABITAT RESTORATION AT HOPKINS WILDERNESS PARK**

**CONTACT: CAMERON HARDING, COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR**

**EMAIL COMMUNICATION, PICTURES, AND ARTICLE**

Dear City Leaders

Thank you for considering this agreement to improve Wilderness Park.

I am very honored to work with the South Bay Parkland Conservancy whose ideals of preserving and creating open space has been important to me all of my adult life.

It is rare to find such brilliant and honorable visionaries all in one place.

My hope is to restore Wilderness Park even more in the coming year, extending summer hours from April to October, restoring the natural history learning center, restoring the Lower Pond and stream bed, and supporting learning in the park.

Thank You

Barbara Epstein  
SBPC Board  
RBCG Committee

Sent from my iPad



ATTN: Email is from an external source; **Stop, Look, and Think** before opening attachments or links.

Dear City Clerk,

I would like to submit for tonight's agenda item H23 the photos taken of Wilderness Park on 7.24.21. Please share them for public discussion.

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/tgwta9v24pidbp0/AAC1Zoi2mo8XjcC9qrWuQRoOa?dl=0>

Easy Reader article 7.19.21 interview with President, Jacob Varvarigos.

<https://easyreadernews.com/conservancy-plans-to-create-urban-wildernesses-throughout-south-bay/>

EASY READER

# Conservancy hopes to create urban wildernesses throughout South Bay

[NADIA](#) | JULY 19, 2021

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Expectant parents Shaun and Jennifer Wild, of Torrance.



Redondo Beach resident Ray Awad, 47, his son Athan Awad, 7, and Toronto, Canada resident Dimitri Mamais, 67



Redondo Beach resident Bethann Ulloa, 37, and her son Levi, 2.



A turtle welcomes visitors at the entrance to Wilderness Park.

## **Story and photos by Nadia Bidarian**

A brush fire in 2007 and California's drought left Wilderness Park's 11 acres overgrown with weeds and invasive species. Beginning in 2017, the South Bay Parkland Conservancy (SBPC) has been working with

community volunteers and the City of Redondo Beach to restore the Redondo Beach park to its natural state.

“Urbanization is constantly encroaching upon us. We are losing more and more open space to development,” SBPC president Jacob Varvarigos said. “That’s why maintaining Wilderness Park is so important.”

An L.A. County needs assessment found there are only 1.4 park acres per 1,000 residents in Redondo Beach, compared with the national average of 9.9 park acres per 1,000 residents.

“When people think of wilderness in the South Bay, they only think of the beach. We’ve really become detached from our local wilderness,” Varvarigos said. “Our goal is to create a connected urban wilderness throughout the South Bay with trails, parks, and native habitat for wildlife.”

The Conservancy has taken on four major projects in the South Bay: removal of the AES power plant, establishment of Redondo’s first community garden, transformation of the Esplanade Bluff Garden, and restoration of Wilderness Park. Since the project began, Wilderness Park volunteers have planted over 5,000 native plants, representing over 100 different species. “Wilderness Park has always had a wild feel to it, and that’s what people love about it. They love that they can take their kids there and the kids just go running wild,” Varvarigos said. “The difference is now, when you walk through the park, you’ll find very rare plants that are local to our community.”

Among these native plants are California sagebrush and encelia, which replaced invasive species that included wild radish and black mustard.

“The park smells fresh,” Varvarigos added. “It’s colorful. You have wildflowers growing throughout the park, and

you have native plants attracting birds and pollinators.” Volunteering requires getting your hands dirty, according to Varvarigos. Most volunteers are digging through dirt to remove weeds, and then working in watery mud to insert new plants into the soil.

“If I can’t get my hands dirty in the process, then that’s not something I want to do,” Varvarigos said. “It is work, but it’s very gratifying. No matter how young or old people are, there is always something they can do.”

SBPC is getting more volunteers now than ever before. South Redondo Girl Scout Daisy Troop #05795 came into the park on April 12. Varvarigos taught the five- to seven-year-old girls about weeds and performed demonstrations.

“When most of the world was under lockdown, this work was still considered essential,” Varvarigos said. “People were really craving the wilderness, so now the interest is huge. Most of all, people just want to get out, serve their community, and make a difference.”

Caleb Rod of Torrance, a volunteer with the Conservancy since July 2019, has history with Wilderness Park. His mother was married there in 1993, and he camped in the park often in his childhood.

“Once I saw the direction the park was going, I jumped on what the Conservancy was doing,” Rod said about the restoration work. “I said, ‘This is where I need to be.’”

Colored flags throughout Wilderness Park mark areas where native habitats are being restored.

“I’m so stoked. I feel like I have the best garden in the South Bay right now,” Rod said.

While the Wilderness Park restoration is city-funded, other projects have required the Conservancy to crowdsource. A GoFundMe campaign created in Oct. 2020 raised over

\$5,000 to restore the Esplanade Bluff Garden. Community members can contribute financially by purchasing SBPC merchandise on its website, such as hats. As Rod said, "Every little contribution counts."

"I was an activist, and I used to be a lone voice speaking. Now, I'm part of a large organization with many talented people. It's enabled me to get involved and learn in ways that I wouldn't have been able to do if it was all by myself," Varvarigos said. "For people who are passionate but feel like they're all alone, the South Bay Parkland Conservancy can be their home."

For more information, visit [southbayparks.org](http://southbayparks.org). **ER**





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## **CITY COUNCIL MEETING September 7, 2021**

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**CONTACT:**

CAMERON HARDING, COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

ATTACHED IS SOUTH BAY PARKLANDS CONSERVANCY OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES PRESENTATION REGARDING ITEM H.23.



SOUTH BAY

# PARKLAND CONSERVANCY

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

# Serving Redondo Beach and the South Bay since 2004

- ▶ Supported SeaLab and LACC on bluff restoration
- ▶ Desalination Pow-Wow
- ▶ Wilderness Park rewilding
- ▶ AES Wetland Bird Cataloging
- ▶ Grant inputs to City for AES and SCE future parkland/wetlands
- ▶ Founding member of the El Segundo Blue Butterfly Coalition
- ▶ Natural habitat restoration at Esplanade Bluff Garden
- ▶ Working with City to establish Community Garden(s)
- ▶ California Native Habitat Certification Program

# Wilderness Park rewilding – Year 4



November 19, 2017



January 2021

# Wilderness Park Coastal Dune



November 2018



November 2020





# Esplanade Bluff Garden

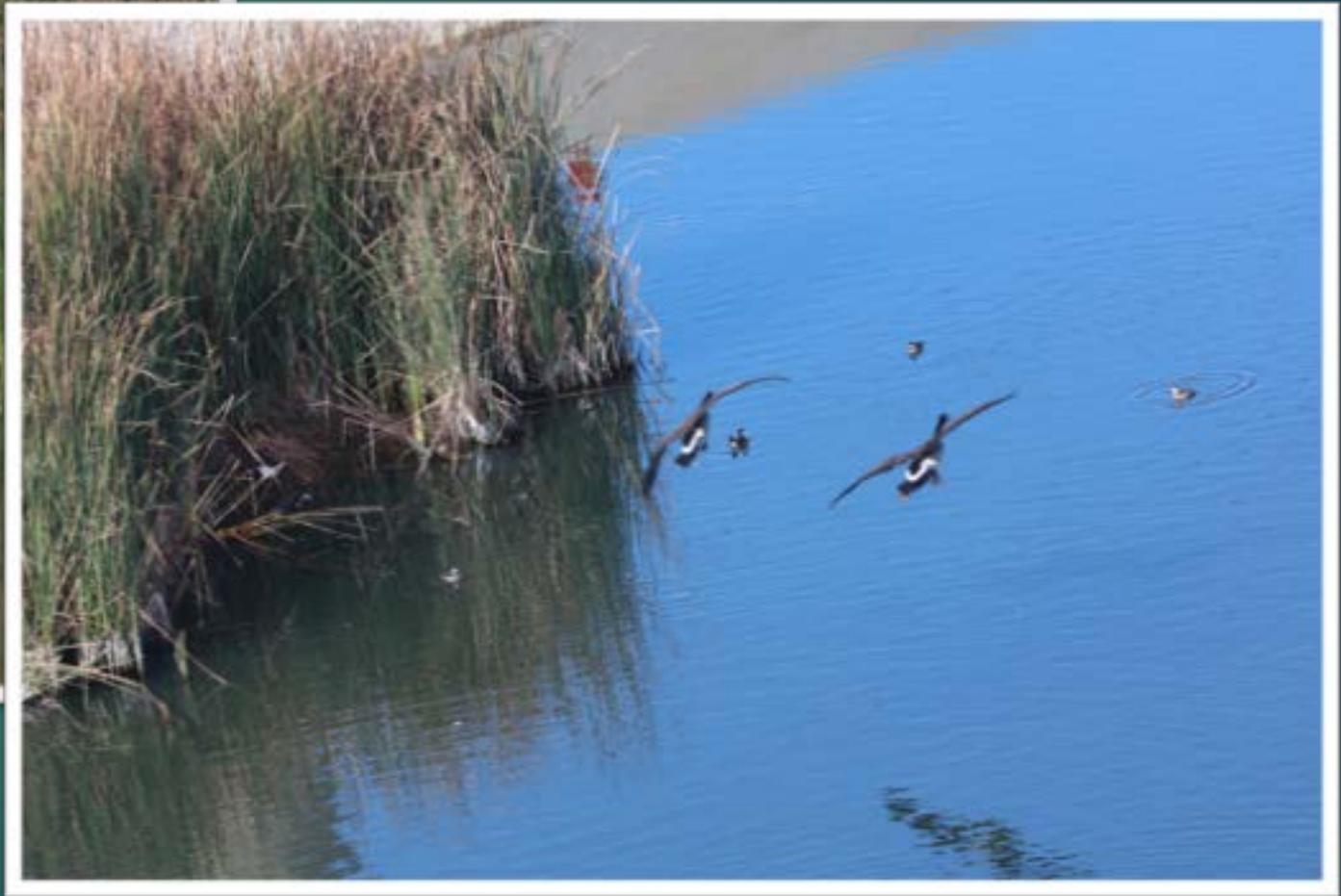


June 2021



August 2021

# Documenting Birds at AES Wetlands



# CA Native Habitat Certification



The Future



SOUTH BAY

**PARKLAND**

CONSERVANCY

- ▶ Supporting North Redondo ROW weeding and planting
- ▶ Expand Wilderness Park Rewilding
- ▶ Establish Redondo Community Gardens
- ▶ Esplanade Bluff Extension
- ▶ Alondra Park Native Habitat Expansion
- ▶ Discussions with Manhattan Beach Parks and Rec Commission

**SBPC appreciates the partnership with the City of Redondo Beach, the community, local schools and organizations such as the Boy Scouts**