

5.11 PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND PUBLIC RESOURCES

This section of the EIR includes a description of the existing recreational facilities and public resources in the proposed Project area. Thresholds to determine if the proposed Project could result in significant adverse impacts to recreational facilities and public resources are provided. An analysis of anticipated recreation impacts (project and cumulative), mitigation measures and level of significance after mitigation is provided.

The potential for significant impacts to recreation due to the proposed Project was evaluated in accordance with the methodologies and information provided by the CEQA Guidelines².

5.11.1 Environmental Setting

REGULATORY SETTING

The CCC maintains jurisdiction for development in the coastal zone. California coastal act policies promote and protect recreational and visitor serving uses in the coastal zone.

The CDFG maintains stewardship for the state over those open space portions of the Ballona Wetlands lying generally southwest of the Marina Expressway to the developed areas of Marina Del Rey and Playa Del Rey. These areas are designated as Areas A, B and C, with the exception of two portions of Area B – the Freshwater Marsh located southwest of the Lincoln and Jefferson Boulevard intersection, and the Expanded Wetlands parcel – under the jurisdiction of the State Lands Commission (SLC). Additionally, the Area B Freshwater Marsh is held by the non-profit Ballona Wetlands Conservancy (BWC) in a conservation easement. The CDFG conducts its stewardship mission, in part, through a network of access agreements with authorized users/co-stewards.

A wide range of access agreements are in place with the following organizations for a variety of highly specific recreational activities:

1. Security Patrols & Trash Removal: Ballona Wetlands Land Trust and Trust for Public Land;
2. Water and Sediment Sampling: Loyola Marymount University (LMU);
3. Workdays, Maintenance and Land Management: Ballona Wetlands Land Trust, Friends of Ballona Wetlands, and Center for National Lands Management (CNLM);
4. Environmental Monitoring: BWC, CNLM and City of Los Angeles Environmental Monitoring Division;
5. Invasive Species Removal: Ballona Wetlands Land Trust and Friends of Ballona Wetlands;
6. Dune Restoration: Friends of Ballona Wetlands;
7. Scientific Symposia: Ballona Wetlands Foundation and Friends of Ballona Wetlands;
8. Environmental Education, Tours and School Field Trips (K-12): Audubon Society, Ballona Wetlands Land Trust and Friends of Ballona Wetlands;
9. Special Projects and Events: Audubon Society, Ballona Wetlands Land Trust and Friends of Ballona Wetlands; and

² California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Sections 15000 – 15387. Available at: http://ceres.ca.gov/topic/env_law/ceqa/guidelines/

10. Recreation:

- a. Birding & Bird Counts: Audubon Society and Wetlands Action Network.
- b. Natural History & Site Tours: Ballona Wetlands Land Trust, Fiends of Ballona Wetlands and Wetlands Action Network.
- c. Organized Sports Recreation: Playa Vista Little League Program.
- d. Free-form Recreation - Walking, Biking, Boating and Fishing: General Public.

Interim stewardship and access management is shared and coordinated by the following three State agencies in and around the vicinity of the project: State Coastal Conservancy (SCC), CDFG and SLC. These agencies have drafted the Ballona Wetlands Interim Stewardship and Access Management Plan (Draft) dated March 28, 2005. A Ballona Wetlands Restoration Plan is being developed by them and will guide all future restoration efforts.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The natural and developed recreation resources in the Project area make it highly desirable for residents, visitors, and tourists who all share and enjoy the local beachfront, parks and recreational facilities in the vicinity of the proposed project. Recreational facilities and resources in the vicinity of the proposed project are described below.

Venice, Including Ballona Lagoon Marine Reserve – This area provides year-round recreational activities including walking, biking, birding, sightseeing, and volley ball.

Venice Municipal and Dockweiler State Beach from Hurricane Street to Waterview and Napoleon Streets, Playa Del Rey – Year-round recreational activities include ocean-based swimming, surfing, boating and fishing (resident species); and beach-based walking, cycling, roller-blading, frisbee-tossing, and sightseeing. Seasonal recreational activities include ocean-based whale watching excursions, fishing (transient species); and beach-based volleyball and special-interest birding (Venice California least tern colony located north of Ballona Creek).

Marina Del Rey and Marina Del Rey Channel, Including Aubrey E. Austin Park and North Jetty Promenade – Marina Del Rey is the world's largest developed yacht/small-craft marina. Famous beaches make it a favored destination for local residents and domestic and international tourists. Year-round recreational activities in Marina Del Rey include yachting, boating, sailing, biking, walking, sightseeing, dining and shopping. Special events such as whale watching excursions, swimming, wading, and sunbathing at Mother's Beach. Year-round recreational activities in the Marina Del Rey Channel include yachting, boating, sailing, fishing, biking, walking and sightseeing.

Ballona Wetlands and Ballona Creek – The Ballona Wetlands is the largest remaining coastal estuary/wetlands habitat within the Los Angeles Basin (State Coastal Conservancy, 2005). The Ballona Wetlands serves migrating avian populations using the Pacific Flyway that extends from Alaska to Central America (Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission, 2005). Shore birds use Ballona Wetlands for nesting, feeding, wintering grounds and resting stopovers. As a result, the Ballona Wetlands is the premier bird watching destination in the Los Angeles Basin. Year-round recreational activities include creek-based kayaking, small pleasure-craft boating and fishing. Wetlands-based recreational activities include birding, walking, cycling, sightseeing, environmental stewardship and education activities.

Playa Del Rey, including Del Rey Lagoon and Park (inland areas only) – Year-round recreational activities include walking, biking, birding and sightseeing.

Del Rey Lagoon Park – Recreational activities include baseball, basketball, children’s play area, picnicking and outdoor grilling, community center classes and programs. The El Segundo blue butterfly habitat exists west of LAX. Also nearby is a rare dune beach in Playa Del Rey. The Ballona Escarpment extends along the southern edge of the wetlands.

5.11.2 Thresholds of Significance

Under the CEQA Guidelines, a significant impact related to recreational facilities and public resources would occur if the proposed Project would increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.

5.11.3 Public and Recreational Facilities Impacts

OPERATIONAL IMPACTS

Operation of the proposed Project would not increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities in the Project area. Upon completion of the Project construction, all areas that experienced surface disturbance during construction would be returned to their present condition. The improved reliability of the sewer lines and the reduction in the potential for overflow into the adjacent waterways and the ocean would ensure the availability of existing recreational resources for residents and domestic and international tourists. A beneficial long-term impact on existing recreational resources is anticipated. There would be no long-term adverse impacts that require mitigation measures to the study areas affected.

SHORT-TERM CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

Although the proposed Project would not involve permanent adverse impacts to recreational facilities and public resources, site-specific adverse impacts may occur during the construction period. These short-term impacts are listed below by the affected community:

Venice

- Pipe laydown activities associated with Push Site 2 would interrupt access to the public trail along the east side of Grand Canal that starts at Via Dolce;
- All or most of the parking along Via Marina at the entrance channel would be removed;
- Access to a designated scenic highway/drive would be eliminated for a period of about 7 months. Via Marina along the entrance channel would be closed to public traffic (one lane would be closed and, along with the parking area, one would be used for a construction/laydown site);
- The Class II Bike Trail along Pacific Avenue would be closed during construction;
- Beach access at Hurricane Street would be affected by the extraction shaft, and cut-and-cover-construction along Hurricane Street. This area is used for passive recreation and volleyball;
- Fishing from the North Jetty would be restricted due to laydown area and receive site. No parking would be available in this area; and
- Construction activities on the beach and reduced parking could interfere with scheduled recreational events on the beach such as volleyball tournaments.

Marina Del Rey - Aubrey E. Austin Park

- Sightseeing from the Via Marina (a scenic highway/drive) would be affected; and
- The existing parking for the marina at the intersection of Marquesas Way and Via Marina will be eliminated and used for a pipe laydown area. Access to the marina would be affected.

Playa Del Rey

- The parking lot at Del Rey Lagoon Park would be used by the Project. The construction activity would affect the recreation experience for this park;
- The bike path at Pacific Avenue bridge and along the la-down area at 62nd Street would be adversely affected;
- Access to the beach would be adversely affected, as parking would be removed along 62nd Street and along Pacifica Avenue at the park; and
- The Napoleon Street residential foot path could be interrupted by construction activities.

While the overall length of Project construction is multi-year, construction impacts at specific recreational resource locations would be much shorter. Some laydown and staging areas would adversely affect local recreation resources throughout the construction period. Cut-and-cover activities along the pipeline corridor would affect specific areas for periods of approximately 3 weeks in any 1,000-foot segment.

Although there would be impacts of existing recreational activities and use of public recreational resources during Project construction, the construction activities and related adverse impacts are considered short term and not significant. No permanent substantial physical deterioration of recreational facilities or public recreational resources would occur or be accelerated. Therefore, no significant impacts to recreation are anticipated.

5.11.4 Mitigation Measures

Although no significant impacts to recreation are anticipated, the following mitigation measures would minimize adverse short-term construction related impacts in the Project area.

REC-1

In order to minimize competition between construction-related equipment and activities and Dockweiler State Beach users for parking space at Vista Del Mar and the resulting temporary impacts to recreation, special parking arrangements should be made for construction workers (see Section 5.4 Circulation, Traffic and Transportation).

REC-2

In order to minimize recreational access and use issues during the course of construction, additional consultation and coordination with key stakeholders, local residents, members of the general public and City/County planners should occur to balance the needs of the recreational users and construction related activities (see Section 5.4 Circulation, Traffic and Transportation).

REC-3

The City should coordinate with the sponsors of local and major regional, national and international beach events to schedule the events and/or construction activities to minimize conflicts.

REC-4

The City should coordinate all construction scheduling and activities with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works for the purpose of eliminating or reducing construction-related impacts.

5.11.5 Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

No significant long-term impacts to recreational facilities are anticipated. Project construction activities would adversely affect the enjoyment of local recreational facilities, including use of the beach, natural lagoons, parking lots, bikeways, sidewalks and public trails. Although temporary, these adverse short-term construction impacts for the duration of Project construction cannot be avoided.

5.11.6 Cumulative and Secondary Impacts

The impacts of the proposed Project, when considered in combination with the environmental effects of other related projects shown in Table 1.7-1, Related Projects, would not involve long-term or significant cumulative impacts; however, construction-related impacts could be cumulative should two projects be constructed in the same area at the same time. Specifically, should construction of the Los Angeles County Marina Del Rey Tide-Gates Rehabilitation Project, located at the intersection of Pacific Avenue and Via Marina Way near the Grand Canal, occur at the same time as construction of the VPP Dual Force Main Project, impacts may occur along the recreational walkway on Via Marina Way. However, these impacts would not occur with adequate coordination between the City of Los Angeles and its departments, and between the City and County Departments of Public Works to ensure that construction-related activities do not create additional impacts to the aforementioned areas.