

NORTH AMERICAN

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION ACT

project flash

California Partnership Receives \$35,000 for Wetlands Project

On June 9, 2004, the North American Wetlands Conservation Council reported to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission that it had approved **\$35,000** in funding under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act's Small Grants Program for the **Bird Habitat Restoration Project—Ormond Beach in California's Ventura County in Congressional District 23**. The Act is nonregulatory and calls for voluntary partnerships to develop and implement wetlands and associated uplands conservation projects to benefit wetland-associated wildlife. Projects must meet certain biological criteria to be considered for funding, and partners must be able to match the grant request 1:1 with nonfederal funds.

The Audubon Society compiled a list of areas throughout the United States that it has deemed "high-priority" for conservation. The only listing for California is Ormond Beach, near the City of Oxnard. The beach is a remnant and rare example of historic Southern California wetlands. It is home to several federally and state-listed endangered or threatened species and species of concern, including coast horned lizard, tidewater goby, salt marsh birds beak, western snowy plover, California least tern, California brown pelican, Belding's savannah sparrow, horned lark, and white-tailed kite. Phenomenally, more than 300 bird species have been spotted at Ormond Beach.

Located in the **Pacific Flyway**, the beach has provided nesting and stopover habitat for a multitude of migratory birds. While numbers have declined over time due to increased human-related disturbances—off-road vehicle traffic, unleashed pets, and off-trail hiking—the birds continue to come. However, the beach's habitat quality is also in a state of decline: polluted with people's trash and overgrown with nonnative vegetation.

Project partners intend to rescue this historically important habitat by restoring a 100-acre section of Ormond Beach wetlands' nesting habitat. They will remove large-sized debris, such as abandoned automobiles and cement footings, from the nesting area and erect removable fences to protect it during the nesting season. They will remove nonnative plants and replace them with native species. The partners also will train volunteers to monitor the site and to help lessen human disturbance during the nesting season.

Through this project, partners not only will restore habitat conditions to benefit wildlife but also will create opportunities for public recreation and wildlife viewing. Making all this possible are Western Alliance for Nature, City of Oxnard, City of Hueneme, Los Padres Chapter of the Sierra Club, and Earth Alert. The partnership will add **\$38,546** to the grant amount to attain their project goals. Their efforts also will advance the habitat conservation goals of the **Sonoran Joint Venture**.

For more information about this project, contact Larry Wan, Western Alliance for Nature, director@wanconservancy.org, (310) 456-0611, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, keith_morehouse@fws.gov, (703) 358-1784.

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