



NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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NOAA Celebrates Earth Week at Recovery Act Project to Restore California Wetlands

Margaret Spring, NOAA's chief of staff joined the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy and other local partners celebrated Earth Week in Huntington Beach, Calif., today at an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act project that is putting residents to work to restore more than 40 acres of Magnolia Marsh.

"This project is a great example of how the Recovery Act is making a difference in people's lives," said Spring. "Restoring Magnolia Marsh is an investment that pays off immediately by supporting blue and green jobs in a growing part of our economy. Over the long term, this wetland restoration will improve water quality, help support improved fishing and other outdoor activities, and will give this area greater resiliency to floods and the effects of climate change."

NOAA provided \$3.3 million in Recovery Act funding to the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy for the project. Contractors have excavated historic channels within the wetland and later breached a levee to allow ocean water to flow through the marsh. The restored tidal flow will bring back important nursery habitat for many fish, including California halibut. This will lead to other benefits, including improved fishing and tourism.

"Restoration of Magnolia Marsh represents a special milestone in our organization's 25-year-long effort to bring life back to the Huntington Beach Wetlands," said Gordon Smith, chairman of the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy Board of Directors. "The Magnolia Marsh, near our interpretive center and wildlife hospital, will serve as our showcase for educating the community about the value and sensitivity of our area's few remaining coastal wetlands."

Magnolia Marsh was once part of a 3,000-acre system of wetlands next to the Santa Ana River that extended several miles inland. Most of these wetlands were damaged when streams were straightened to reduce flooding, and when the Pacific Coast Highway cut them off from the ocean. Today only about 180 acres of wetland remain.

Magnolia Marsh is the third coastal wetland segment to be restored in this system, after Brookhurst and Talbert marshes. These wetlands are now being returned to fully functioning ecosystems after nearly 100 years.

Through the Recovery Act, NOAA was provided \$167 million for marine and coastal habitat restoration. The Magnolia Marsh Restoration is one of 50 habitat restoration projects selected by NOAA for this funding

More than 30 projects have broken ground, with the rest preparing to start throughout the next year and a half. The 50 projects are supporting thousands of short-term and long-term jobs. They support the equivalent of more than 250 full-time jobs and are expected to support the equivalent of an additional 1,000 full-time jobs before they are completed.

When all the planned projects are complete, 8,900 acres of habitat will be restored, and fish will gain access to 700 stream miles that had been blocked by obsolete and unsafe dams. The projects also will remove more than 850 metric tons of abandoned fishing gear and other marine trash, rebuild oyster and other shellfish habitat, and reduce threats to 11,750 acres of coral reef habitat.

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