



PUBLIC NOTICE

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT**

**SANTA ANA RIVER MARSH VOLUNTEER TRASH CLEANUP FOR COASTAL CLEANUP
DAY**

INTRODUCTION: In the 1990's, as part of the Santa Ana River Mainstem project, the Corps and non-federal sponsors restored 92 acres of the Santa Ana River Marsh (Marsh) located at the mouth of the Santa Ana River in Orange County, California. The primary purpose of the restoration was habitat enhancement, although it also provided mitigation for the elimination of coastal salt marsh habitat resulting from flood control modifications. The 92 acres of restored marsh includes 8 acres for mitigation and 84 acres for enhancement and preservation of endangered species habitat.

The SAR Marsh lies at the bottom of the Santa Ana River watershed, at the outlet of the River to the Pacific Ocean. Large amounts of trash from the entire watershed wash downstream each year and accumulate in the Marsh. This trash decreases habitat value and aesthetics, and can affect water quality. The Sierra Club, a non-profit organization, has requested to enlist the aid of volunteers to remove trash from the Marsh as part of the California Coastal Commission's annual Coastal Cleanup Day on September 21, 2019.

The proposed action would occur annually for four years (2019-2022), coinciding with the annual Coastal Cleanup Day.

This document serves to notify interested parties of the Corps' intent to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) and, if warranted, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), to provide an assessment of potential impacts within the proposed action area. The public notice will be available until Sunday, September 15, 2019, after which a Final EA and FONSI will be completed.

The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, state, and local agencies and officials; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed project.

Comments will be accepted through Sunday, September 15, 2019. Comments may be submitted electronically to Tiffany.c.armenta@usace.army.mil or via phone at 213-452-3279.

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LOCATION: The project area is located in the City of Newport Beach, Orange County, California, near the mouth of the Santa Ana River at the outlet to the Pacific Ocean. Generally the project area is located southeast of Brookhurst Street, northwest of Newport Boulevard, northeast of Pacific Coast Highway (Hwy 1), and southwest of Hamilton Avenue/Victoria Street. More specifically, the project area is bounded by the Santa Ana River on the west, Talbert Regional Park to the north, the community of Newport Shores to the south, and the Newport Banning Ranch to the east.



PROPOSED ACTION: The proposed action is a volunteer cleanup event, with Corps managed volunteers provided by the action proponent. The need for the proposed action is that trash has accumulated in the marsh. The primary purpose of the proposed action is to remove trash from the Marsh that is degrading habitat for myriad species and can affect water quality.

The volunteer event is scheduled to occur on September 21, 2019 to coincide with the California Coastal Commission's annual Coastal Cleanup Day. The proposed action would occur annually for four years

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(2019-2022), coinciding with the annual Coastal Cleanup Day. The cleanup event would involve the use of approximately 50 to 100 volunteers throughout the day to remove trash from around the 92-acre Marsh. The volunteers would be managed as Corps employees for the day by qualified Corps staff biologists.

The following commitments are included to minimize environmental impacts and ensure safety for volunteers.

- a) All trash removal and haul activities would occur within hours set by local noise ordinances.
- b) Trash removal would be performed by hand only.
- c) Trash removal would occur outside the bird breeding season to minimize impacts to migratory and sensitive bird species.
- d) All trash removal activities would be supervised by a qualified biologist and by Corps staff.
- e) All volunteers would complete Corps registration forms.
- f) All volunteers would receive information on sensitive biological resources and minimization measures prior to volunteer activities.
- g) All volunteers would receive information on the importance of leaving cultural artifacts in place.
- h) A safety precaution analysis would be completed and safety precautions would be taken during volunteer activities.

Trash removal would be performed by hand using gloves and trash bags. Removed trash in bags would be collected in a dumpster on-site and hauled away from the project site to an authorized landfill facility.

Training would be provided to all volunteers and volunteers will be monitored and supervised by Corps staff. Prior to entering the Marsh, volunteers would be educated on sensitive plants and wildlife, and methods for minimizing and avoiding impacts, including focusing on areas of heavy trash accumulation, using already disturbed pathways to access trash at the water's edge, avoiding patches of cordgrass habitat, and walking in a single file line through any Marsh vegetation. Volunteers would also be trained to walk slowly and quietly through the Marsh to give wildlife opportunity to move from the immediate area. Volunteers using kayaks or stand up paddle boards would be educated on avoiding cordgrass and launching from already disturbed areas.

IMPACTS: The proposed action will not significantly impact environmental resources including but not limited to biological resources, noise, traffic, air quality, water quality, land use, aesthetics, recreation, and cultural resources. The action will result in temporary and minor, less than significant, impacts to vegetation and wildlife. With implementation of environmental commitments, the proposed action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the light-footed Ridgway's rail. Environmental commitments and safety precautions have been incorporated into the project description to minimize these impacts. Removal of trash in the Marsh would provide an overall benefit to habitat, wildlife, and water quality.

COORDINATION: The Corps coordinated with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and informal Section 7 (Endangered Species Act) consultation was initiated for impacts to the light-footed Ridgway's rail in 2018. The Corps received concurrence for 5 years of annual Coastal Cleanup Day activities on August 27, 2018. Recommendations provided by USFWS to minimize disturbance to threatened and endangered species were incorporated into the EA. The proposed project (undertaking) has no potential to cause effects to historic properties pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act.