



PRESS RELEASE

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Environmental Groups Sue City of Oxnard to Protect Ormond Beach Wetlands From Development

Ventura County — The Environmental Defense Center, the Sierra Club, and the Environmental Coalition filed a lawsuit against the City of Oxnard today disputing the City's decision that new residential, commercial and industrial development at Ormond Beach will not harm sensitive wetlands or the State's plan to restore the area.

On June 14, the City approved the first of two major developments targeted for the Ormond Beach "Specific Plan" area. The SouthShore Project, a primarily residential development with over 1500 housing units, will pave over a vast open space area that currently protects the wetlands from existing urban development. The second development project (not yet approved by the City) would similarly convert an open space area to commercial and light industrial development, and limit the size of the California State Coastal Conservancy's planned wetland restoration. The City evaluated the potential environmental impacts of both projects in one Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The environmental groups assert that the City's EIR and approval of the SouthShore Project violated the California Environmental Quality Act and State Planning and Zoning law.

"Ormond Beach is a vitally important habitat area," said Mike Stubblefield of Los Padres Sierra Club. "These wetlands support numerous rare plants and wildlife, including over 200 species of migratory birds, and the City has failed to carry out its job to make sure this area will be protected from the development."

Karen Kraus, staff attorney with the Environmental Defense Center, noted, "The City's environmental review fails to take sea level rise into account, and understates potential impacts to the wetlands as a result." Ms. Kraus also pointed out that the EIR's water resources and greenhouse gas emissions analyses are deficient.

Janis McCormick of the Environmental Coalition stated, "The City's decision totally disregards the Coastal Conservancy's restoration plan. The new development is incompatible with sensitive wetland habitat, and a portion of the development is directly in the footprint of the Conservancy's restoration area."

The Ormond Beach wetlands are located in Oxnard, between Port Hueneme and the Point Mugu Naval Base. Although the wetlands have been historically filled in to create agricultural fields and to support industrial development (including the Halaco facility which has become an EPA “Superfund” clean-up site), the area is still considered an important habitat area. The California State Coastal Conservancy has been acquiring property to permanently protect and restore Ormond Beach since 2001. If successful, the SCC’s restoration plan would restore Ormond Beach to one of the largest preserved coastal wetlands in southern California

The lawsuit was filed in the Superior Court of the County of Ventura. Additional information is available [online](#).

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***The Environmental Defense Center**, a non-profit law firm, protects and enhances the local environment through education, advocacy, and legal action and works primarily within Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo counties. Since 1977, EDC has empowered community based organizations to advance environmental protection. Program areas include protecting coast and ocean resources, open spaces and wildlife, and human and environmental health. Learn more about EDC at www.EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org.*

***The Sierra Club** is a national, environmental organization that protects communities, wild places, and the planet. The Los Padres Sierra Club serves Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. Learn more about Los Padres Sierra Club at <http://lospadres.sierraclub.org/>*

***The Environmental Coalition** is a confederation of citizens and local groups working together to protect the environment and the quality of life throughout Ventura County.*