

MOTION

It is the City of Los Angeles' responsibility to protect, conserve, restore, and enhance our Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA), particularly when the natural resources exist within the public right-of-way. The Coastal Act policies provide protection for ESHAs, including various types of wetlands, sand dunes, riparian areas, coastal prairies, woodlands and forests, and other biological resources in the coastal zone. The City of Los Angeles lacks legal protections for habitat that lies within a public right-of-way that runs through and is immediately adjacent to State-protected land.

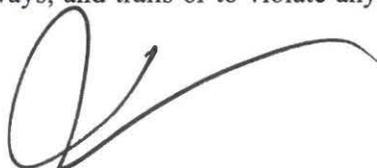
The Coastal Act defines these ESHAs as "Any area in which plant or animal life or their habitats are either rare or especially valuable because of their special nature or role in an ecosystem and which could be easily disturbed or degraded by human activities and developments" (Section 30107.5). The Ballona Wetlands is the largest remaining wetland habitat in Los Angeles County, a special status recognized by its designation as the only California State Ecological Reserve within the City of Los Angeles. It is further designated by the California Coastal Commission as a Critical Coastal Area due to the aquatic ecosystem's sensitivity to polluted runoff.

This approximately 500-acre habitat block, which includes the State Ecological Reserve as well as the adjacent Ballona Freshwater Marsh, supports a number of rare or endangered species documented in dozens of ecological surveys over the past half-century of interest and advocacy for preservation of the wetlands, including the federally endangered El Segundo blue butterfly, the state endangered Belding's savannah sparrow, the federally threatened Coastal California gnatcatcher, the federally endangered Least Bell's vireo, and the federally endangered Light-footed Ridgway's Rail. Additionally, the wetlands provide estuaries to shelter young fish from many predators and the rough open ocean and provide a refuge for migrating birds. Wetlands also allow for water to gently percolate into the ground and down into underground rivers and aquifers, cleansing the water as it recharges our local groundwater supply.

As noted in the legal definition, these delicate ecosystems may be easily disturbed by human activities. In order to bolster the City's ability to protect these habitats, the City should have the legal authority to prevent people from improperly entering sensitive areas, including leaving designated walkways and disregarding hours of operation. To protect the integrity of the habitat block, these restrictions should be enforced within the properties that comprise the Ballona Wetlands habitat block as well as along the public rights-of-way that traverse the area.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council request the City Attorney to prepare and present an ordinance to, within the areas known collectively as the Ballona Wetlands (east and north of the residential neighborhoods of Playa del Rey and Westchester, west of Lincoln Boulevard, and south of the City boundary along Ballona Creek; and east of Lincoln Boulevard, south of the Villa Marina neighborhood and the Marina Freeway, and north of Ballona Creek), and including all public rights-of-way within the above-described habitat block, make it a trespass to leave the designated roadways, walkways, and trails or to violate any posted access regulations, including hours of operation.

SEP 29 2021



Authorized habitat management, nature study, and interpretive activity permitted by the applicable land manager shall be exempt.

PRESENTED BY:



MIKE BONIN
Councilmember, 11th District

SECONDED BY:



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SEP 29 2021