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From: Walter Lamb <landtrust@ballona.org>
Sent: Friday, January 27, 2023 4:30 PM
To: Joseph Alioto; Gutiérrez-Graudiņš, Marce@SCC; Douglas H. Bosco; abnotthoff@gmail.com; Cash, Bryan@CNRA; Miller, Gayle; Donne@Coastal; SCC Public Comment
Cc: Hutzel, Amy@SCC; Cooper, Megan@SCC
Subject: Ballona Timeline, Budget, Public Engagement (610 days, 0 public engagement meetings)

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Dear Conservancy Board members,

The recent acknowledgement by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife that they determined *years ago* that it would cost approximately \$9 million to complete the design and permitting of the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project is just the latest glaring red flag that requires your attention.

In April of 2017, when CDFW was internally acknowledging that the error in the flood control calculations was a "real problem", one manager asked a subordinate manager for ideas to navigate the issue, asking "what do you have left up your sleeve?" ([link](#)) We now know that the "Sequences 1 and 2 project" was what they had up their sleeve. A way to decouple the project from federal permits, which CDFW has long known were slipping out of reach, in an effort to fast track some semblance of a mechanized restoration process in order to facilitate a ground-breaking ceremony for the Governor. Ironically, the purported underlying purpose of pushing these two sequences is to get water into an area that CDFW has asserted "has been hydrologically starved of its water source for many decades" but which is, in fact, seasonally charged with water, as the state's own environmental analysis indicates, as the recent photos below of Southeast Area B confirm.



We are now working to determine when your staff were informed of this \$9 million estimate and when you, as Board members, were informed of this estimate. What is already clear, however, is that CDFW knew on May 27, 2021 that \$1.69 million would be even remotely sufficient to complete the work described in the section of the staff recommendation titled "Work to be Funded with this Authorization", and yet there was zero effort to make that clear to you or to the 44 members of the public who took time to speak that day.

More concerning than the money itself is the time that it would take to do the work for that money would be needed. Given that it will have taken almost 20 years to spend the \$15 million from the Prop 12 funds allocated in 2000, it could easily take close to 10 years to spend the \$7 million plus (\$9 million minus \$1.7 million) that CDFW estimates is still needed. Public access plans, purported measures to mitigate against rising sea levels, and plans to address the spread of invasive species are all on hold pending that additional work, which does not appear to even be on the horizon.

Despite going on record in May of 2021 and March of 2022 expressing support for regular updates, more public engagement, the importance of the certified public access plan, mitigating sea level rise, and other issues, you are now sending the strongest possible signals to your staff and to CDFW that you want to be kept blissfully in the dark. This is no way to oversee an important public agency entrusted with allocating huge sums of the public's money.

This problem is not going to solve itself. The "Sequences 1 and 2 project" has no viable path forward because it was born out of political desperation, not a careful decision-making process with transparency and public input. Your leadership is needed now. Your last [web update](#) is over four months old. Any one of you can request an update at the meeting.

Thank you for considering these comments.

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