

City of Long Beach – Department of Public Works
Colorado Lagoon Restoration Project
Frequently Asked Questions – Project and Construction Activities
June 2024 Update

Purpose/Goal

This document addresses questions regarding the overall restoration project and ongoing construction activities.

The Colorado Lagoon (Lagoon) is an 18-acre saltwater tidal lagoon located at 5119 East Colorado Street. The Lagoon has in more modern history been hydraulically connected to Alamitos Bay and the Pacific Ocean through a 900-foot underground concrete box culvert located under Marina Vista Park. The Lagoon serves three primary functions: it hosts estuarine habitat, provides public recreation (including swimming), and it retains and conveys storm water. The Lagoon site was formerly part of the vast Los Cerritos Wetlands and was naturally connected to what is now Marine Stadium. Over the course of several decades, an accumulation of contaminants resulting from stormwater runoff, in combination with muted tidal exchange, contributed to the listing of the Lagoon on the Federal Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list of impaired water bodies.

Restoration of the Lagoon has been an on-going and multi-phased effort that began with the Colorado Lagoon Feasibility Study and Restoration Plan (2005) intended to improve water quality and restore the ecological value of one of Southern California's last remaining coastal lagoons and is now at its final stages of restoration with restoration of an open tidal channel.

Environment and Project Details

Q: What is the Open Channel?

A: The open channel will daylight an existing underground connection between the Lagoon and Marine Stadium, known as a culvert. The existing culvert is only about 8' tall and 12-15' wide which limits natural tidal exchange. The open channel will create 3.35 acres of new subtidal habitat with natural features and

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includes two reinforced concrete box bridges with openings that are about three times larger than the existing culvert to allow full tidal exchange.

Q: What types of hazardous materials were encountered that necessitated abatement?

A: Some utilities that must be removed and relocated for this project contained asbestos materials. Abatement activities are in compliance with all regulatory requirements including material and soil testing, use of personal protective equipment, and specific procedures for handling materials that contain asbestos to prevent release into the environment.

Q: Is the current standing water in the channel footprint salt, fresh, or brackish?

A: The water is brackish which is a mix of saltwater and freshwater.

Q: How has the construction impacted the overall health of the Lagoon? Has it improved, is it staying the same?

A: The project goal is to improve the health of the Lagoon. Environmental controls, phasing, and monitoring have been implemented to avoid and minimize impacts during restoration activities. The Lagoon continues to benefit from earlier phases of restoration and the existing tidal connection to Marine Stadium will be maintained throughout construction with limited and short duration interruption that is carefully monitored. The Long Beach Department of Health & Human Services performs regular recreational water monitoring at the Lagoon and additional monitoring associated with restoration work continues to demonstrate the success of restoration to date.

<https://www.longbeach.gov/health/inspections-andreporting/inspections/recreational-water-samples/>

Q: What about Marine Life at the Lagoon?

A: Marine life (including marine mammals like sea lions) may travel between Marine Stadium and Colorado Lagoon through the existing culvert and the construction diversion channel. Marine mammal activity was previously evaluated during project monitoring. Any closures are subject to project environmental monitoring procedures which include specific measures for

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marine mammals and other sensitive species. Marine life passage was limited by the existing culvert due to grates at the openings, the open channel will not have any grates.

Q: Will there still be flat open park/grass space available? What facilities are included in the park?

A: Yes, there will be flat open space areas with irrigated turf that will serve as a multi-purpose recreation space and will include facilities for Softball/Baseball. All new grass will be tolerant to a marine environment. Other park uses are subject to future programming by the Parks, Recreation, and Marine Department and outside of the Colorado Lagoon Project scope.

Q: How high are the bridges?

A: The bridges will accommodate full tidal range including king tides. The roads slope gently up to the bridges with slopes less than 3.5%. The bridges are approximately 6-ft higher than the existing road at the highest point.

Q: What type of bridges are being constructed?

A: Reinforced Concrete Box Bridges (RCB). Major elements of the bridges are already constructed. The bridge type was selected during the design process before construction began and must meet several project requirements that include supporting restoration, pedestrian and vehicular safety, constructability, cost, design life, suitability for a marine environment, and limiting changes in roadway height. Please refer to project renderings and presentations for additional details.

Q: What will the bridge look like from the road?

A: The bridge will provide views of the open channel, which is the focus of this project. The street, bike lane, sidewalk, and barriers are major features visible from the road. Similar bridge features exist at the Marina Drive Bridge which crosses the San Gabriel River.

Q: Will the existing culvert be removed?

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A: The existing culvert remains in service during construction to support tidal exchange and water quality. The culvert will be re-routed and removed in several controlled and monitored phases with limited interruptions to tidal exchange. Ultimately, the culvert will be removed from all portions of the open channel, Lagoon, and Marine Stadium. Some portions of the culvert will be partially removed and backfilled, these portions will not be visible or accessible since they are located several feet below finished grade.

Q: Is grading completed for the project?

A: As of June 2024, earthwork and grading is ongoing and will continue for several months. Current field elevations are not representative of final elevations for the project. Final grades are anticipated to be established at the end of 2024 when landscape and planting begins.

Operational

Q: Why were streets closed at the same time? (Colorado & Eliot)

A: The baseline construction schedule demonstrated that constructing both bridges simultaneously would shorten the overall duration of the project. This required closure of both streets at the same time.

Q: Which roads are used for construction traffic?

A: Project construction traffic avoids the community to the extent feasible using Colorado Street or Eliot Street to access Bellflower Blvd. Construction traffic may also access Colorado Street from Apian Way. Several construction projects by others are ongoing in the surrounding area including utility, road, sidewalk, and residential construction projects. Projects by others may have different street closures and construction traffic routes.

Q: Will concerts in the park be able to resume once the project is finished? It appears that the concert area may be affected by some of the new features.

A: Park concerts have been temporarily relocated and their return is currently being discussed. Meanwhile, other areas within the city are currently hosting concerts in the park for residents to enjoy.

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Q: What is the anticipated economic impact of the project to the City once the project is completed? What is the total cost of the project (grants, government funding, etc.)?

A: The project will positively impact recreational and natural features in the City. The Open Channel project total costs are approximately \$35 million funded primarily through the sale of mitigation credits to the Port of Long Beach as stipulated in a Memorandum of Understanding. Tidelands funds and grant funds from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy also contribute to the Lagoon restoration budget.

Q: Once the project is completed, is there going to be a path for pedestrians or bicycles?

A: Yes, the project includes a new pedestrian path along the Open Channel. Additional road, bike and sidewalk improvements are also included to maintain and improve access for pedestrians and bicyclists. Sidewalks, cross walks, and separated bikeways are maintained. Improvements include the new pedestrian trail, wider sidewalks, and shorter crossing distances for pedestrians. The City continues to maintain a pedestrian path during construction, this location will change as construction progresses.

Q: Where is parking allocated for Marina Vista Park and the baseball field?

A: The current parking facilities located by the tennis court and the street parking on Eliot St. will be maintained. No additional parking is added.

Q: Can paddlers, boats, and swimmers use the channel?

A: No. Swimmers, paddlers, and boaters may not use the channel. Swimming is allowed in the Lagoon designated swim area. Paddling and Boating is allowed in Marine Stadium subject to City regulations. Barriers are not proposed in the waterway; however, existing City regulations related to swimming, boating, and paddling, will continue enforced in these areas.

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Q: Will streets be repaved?

A: Street paving for this phase of the Colorado Lagoon project is limited to areas where bridges have been constructed. Pavement conditions will be assessed at the end of the project and restored within project limits. Street repaving projects are separate from the Colorado Lagoon Project and may have additional road closures, utility work and construction schedules. Planned street repaving projects are available on the Public Works website.

<https://www.longbeach.gov/globalassets/pw/media-library/documents/resources/general/infrastructure-investment-plan/street-improvements-plan-by-district>

Schedule

Q: What is the projected timeframe and priority for reopening Eliot St.?

A: Eliot St. is expected to reopen in Early 2025. Reopening the roadway is prioritized in the construction schedule; however, activities such as utility relocation must occur before bridge construction can be completed. Construction schedules are subject to unforeseen delays and weather impacts.

Q: When will the project be open to the Public?

A: Park spaces require an establishment period to ensure turf and other landscaping is ready for use. Park spaces are anticipated to open in Spring 2025. Construction schedules are subject to unforeseen delays and weather impacts.

Q: Why has construction been delayed?

A: Construction schedule delays occur when undocumented underground utilities are encountered as they must be evaluated for safe removal and relocation. There was a significant amount of unexpected utility work required for this project. Rain also impacts the construction schedule and significant rainfall over the past two winters has impacted several construction projects throughout the region.

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Q: Why does rain impact the schedule? How many rain impact days were included in the original schedule?

A: Rain impacts many construction activities, especially earthwork. Some of these activities include excavation for utilities, bridge work, channel excavation and, overall site grading. Saturated soils require time to dry before earthwork can resume so that equipment can operate. Highly saturated soils cannot be moved or exported offsite. Rain days are not included in the baseline schedule for this Project, the City evaluates the impact of rain days through regular schedule updates as the work progresses.

Q: What could impact the current updated schedule?

A: Construction schedules may be impacted by weather, utility relocation, and other unforeseen conditions.

Fire Station

Q: Was the decision to close Fire Station 14 necessary?

A: Yes. The project involves a comprehensive renovation of the fire station, this is necessary to provide adequate administrative areas, rest areas, restrooms and other personnel areas to support first responders. Additionally, the scope of work includes installing a new roof, air handler unit, and other improvements throughout the facility. All of these activities required the temporary closure of the fire station.

Q: With Fire Station 14 closed, how is the community being serviced?

A: Operations have been relocated to peripheral Fire Stations, specifically Belmont Shore Station 8, Station 4, and Station 19.

Q: Have the funds from Colorado Lagoon been reallocated to the fire station rebuild or any other City project?

A: No, these are two distinct projects with separate sources of funding. This phase of the Colorado Lagoon Restoration Project is funded primarily through

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the sale of mitigation credits to the Port of Long Beach as stipulated in a Memorandum of Understanding with the Port. Tidelands funds and grant funds from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy also contribute to the Lagoon restoration budget. The Fire Station 14 Project is funded through Measure A and General Funds.