

Back from the Brink

Port support helping to revitalize, restore native wildlife habitats

The Port of Long Beach has played a significant role in helping to restore and improve Southern California's wetlands and native wildlife habitats.

The Port has contributed tens of millions of dollars to Southern California wetlands projects in recent years.

"Native wetlands are vital natural resources," said Port of Long Beach Executive Director Richard Steinke. "The Port is interested in what we can do to support these important wildlife habitats."

Wetlands, also known as salt marshes, provide homes for a wide variety of birds and marine life and serve as a stopover for migratory birds. The Port's most recent wetlands restoration contribution provided more than \$50 million for the Bolsa Chica Wetlands in nearby Huntington Beach. Last year the project hit a key milestone when a new inlet restored natural seawater flow to the wetlands.

Now the Port is studying whether it can help with

projects to renew the natural order at Long Beach's Colorado Lagoon and Los Cerritos Wetlands.

About 500 acres of the original Los Cerritos Wetlands in southeast Long Beach and western Orange County is still undeveloped and potentially available for restoration. The nearby Colorado Lagoon – enjoyed by swimmers, model boat enthusiasts and birds alike – has also become the focus of restoration plans as supporters in the community work for its environmental renewal.

The Port participates in qualifying wetlands-restoration projects in exchange for the right to develop Port property. The Port can only fund projects or portions of projects that meet standards under the federal Clean Water Act. The qualifying habitat projects are developed in cooperation with resource agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the California Department of Fish and Game.

Since most of the land in and around the Southland's wetlands habitats is privately owned, restoration

projects also depend on the cooperation of these landowners. Finally, the projects need funding partners.

With the Colorado Lagoon and Los Cerritos Wetlands, Port officials hope to improve habitat not just at important coastal wetlands in the region, but at sites within the city of Long Beach.

The Port has agreed to safely dispose of contaminated sediments (undersea soils) removed from the Colorado Lagoon and is contributing to an environmental study -- the first step in developing a proposal to improve tidal circulation. Separately, Port officials are reviewing whether the Port can play a role in a proposed project to restore and revitalize the Los Cerritos Wetlands.

"These projects provide important habitat for birds, fish and other species," Steinke said. "And there is a community benefit as well. Wildlife areas and open spaces are vital assets in the midst of a densely populated urban landscape."

Tune In

Learn more about the Port's wetlands restoration efforts in an upcoming episode of the "Pulse of the Port," the Port of Long Beach's award-winning TV program airing on Long Beach Television Channel 8:

- Mondays and Wednesdays at 7:30 and 11 p.m.
- Fridays at 7 p.m. and (in Spanish) at 7:30.
- Saturdays at 7:30 p.m.
- Sundays at noon.

Also available for viewing anytime on the Port's web site, www.polb.com.

On the Web

To see more wetlands photos, visit www.polb.com for a photo gallery feature.

Port funding is helping restore and revitalize local wildlife habitats, such as the Bolsa Chica Wetlands, shown here.

Wetlands Projects at a Glance



Bolsa Chica Wetlands

- **Size:** Nearly 1,100 acres
- **Location:** Huntington Beach, bounded by Pacific Coast Highway, Warner Avenue and Seapoint Avenue.
- **Uses:** Natural habitat for birds, fish and invertebrates and a migratory bird stopover (more than 200 species of birds have been sighted). Walking paths and bird-watching opportunities.
- **Restoration projects:** A new inlet re-established tidal flow, oil wells were removed, the tidal basin was shaped and new habitats were created.
- **Port's role:** The Port contributed more than \$50 million toward the \$147 million project.



Colorado Lagoon (proposed project)

- **Size:** 41 acres
- **Location:** Long Beach, bounded by Park Avenue, East Appian Way and Colorado Street.
- **Uses:** Swimming, model boat sailing and other recreation. Natural habitat for aquatic species and birds. Serves as a classroom for children's educational programs.
- **Potential restoration projects:** Removal of contaminated sediments, improving tidal flow, removing non-native vegetation, planting new flora.
- **Port's role:** The Port has agreed to safely dispose of contaminated sediments removed from the lagoon and will contribute to environmental studies on a tidal flow-improvement project.



Los Cerritos Wetlands (proposed project)

- **Size:** 500 acres
- **Location:** Long Beach, bounded roughly by Pacific Coast Highway, Studebaker Road and Westminster Avenue.
- **Uses:** Habitat for birds, fish and invertebrates. Envisioned as an outdoor classroom for area schoolchildren and others to learn about nature.
- **Potential restoration projects:** Reintroduction of tidal saltwater flow section by section, shaping and contouring, and replacement of non-native plants with native species.
- **Port's role:** Potential partner in restoration and revitalization of wetlands.

Other Projects

- The Port contributed \$8.8 million to an Anaheim Bay (Seal Beach) National Wildlife Refuge project that created nesting islands for the endangered light-footed clapper rail.
- The Port contributed \$1 million to help restore the Upper Newport Bay Ecological Preserve in Newport Beach, which includes habitat for the endangered California least tern.

Underwater ‘Robots’ Search the Depths

Security Submersibles Add Eyes Under the Sea

The Port of Long Beach’s security efforts don’t stop at the water’s surface. The Port is getting a much clearer picture these days of what’s going on underwater thanks to the addition of some new members to the security team.

Small, submarine-like devices equipped with video cameras, known as remotely operated vehicles (or ROVs), now allow security personnel to easily and quickly examine the underside of vessels, piers and other structures without sending a diver into the water.

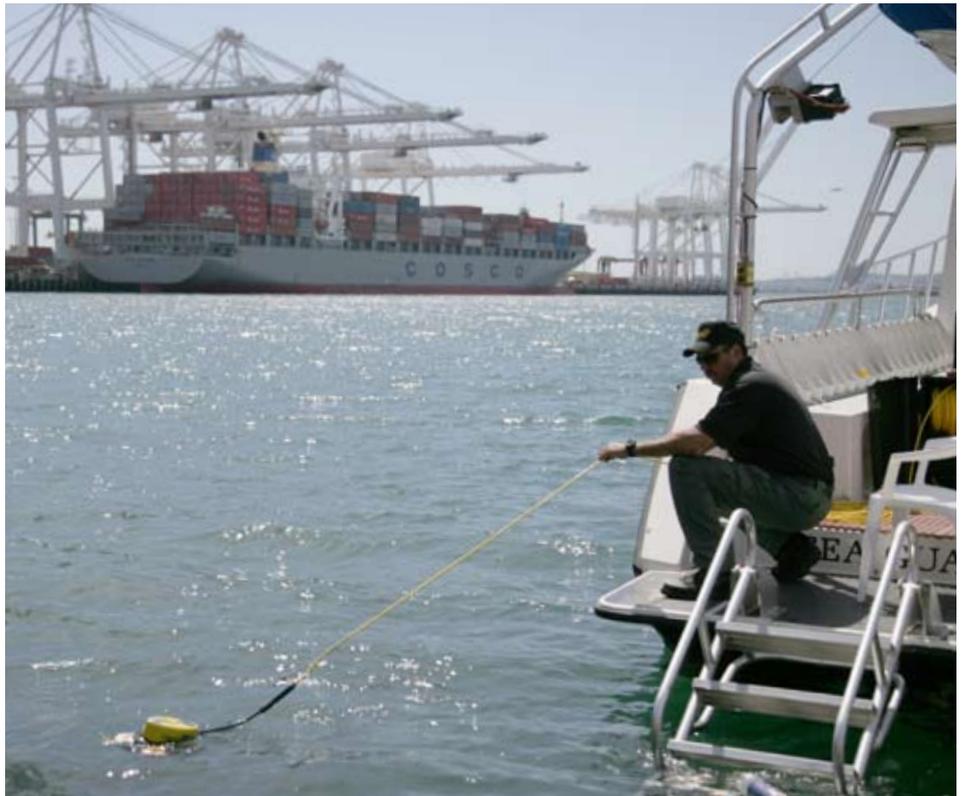
The Port’s Security Division and Harbor Patrol personnel began training with the \$30,000 VideoRay ROVs in April. Two units were put into service full-time in May, enhancing underwater surveillance capabilities at the Port.

The ROVs add to what Port Security Director Cosmo Perrone calls “domain awareness” – the ability to know what’s going on in the water and on land at all times. The submersibles help security personnel to more quickly investigate anything that seems suspicious.

“The faster we dispel the suspicion that something is awry, the faster we can get the goods moving in a normal fashion,” Perrone says.

The portable units are lightweight – about 8 pounds – and aren’t much bigger than a toaster. Tethered by a long yellow cord, the VideoRay is guided from dockside or boat by an operator who stays high and dry, watching the video feed from a distance.

The ROVs have spread widely throughout maritime security programs around the country



The submarine-like devices equipped with video cameras are giving Port security officers an improved ability to monitor conditions underneath harbor waters.

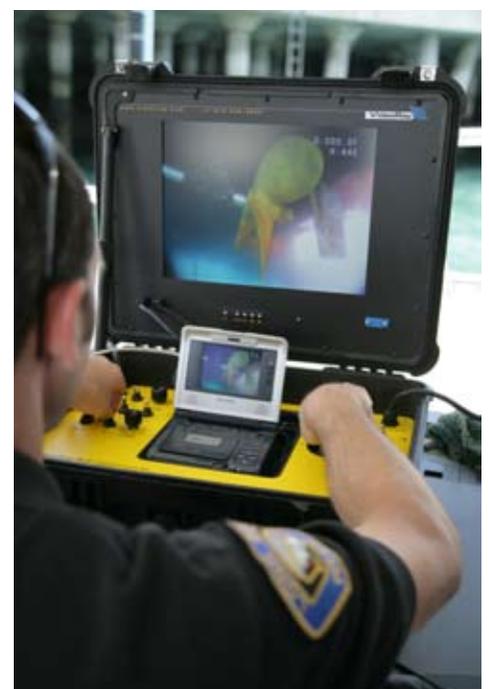
in recent years. They are also extensively used by engineering firms for inspections of underwater equipment such as pipelines.

In addition to the ROVs’ underwater video cameras and halogen lights, the units can be equipped with sonar detectors, radiation detectors and ship hull inspection systems.

“We’re continually looking at new ways to improve security, particularly with technology, and the ROVs give us another useful tool,” Perrone said.

On the Web

See the aquatic security robots in action — visit the Port’s web site, www.polb.com, for a video program on the ROVs.



Video monitors connect security officers to the underwater cameras down below.