



**Responses to Public Comments on
Ormond Beach Restoration and Public Access Project:
Preliminary Restoration Plan (May 2019)**

The Ormond Beach Restoration and Public Access Project (“OBRAP”) Preliminary Restoration Plan identified a preliminary preferred alternative and was released for public input in May 2019. Input was received at a public meeting (July 2019), in focus groups, and via written comments. The May 2021 OBRAP Preferred Alternative and Preliminary Design Plan (“Plan”) reflects the Project Partners’ consideration of public input on the May 2019 OBRAP Preliminary Restoration Plan.

Submitted public comments are available for review at https://www.oxnard.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/OBRAP_Public-Comments_Final_4.24.20.pdf

Responses to public input are provided below.

Table of Contents (press the CTRL key and click on the title to go to the indicated section):

PUBLIC ACCESS AND AMENITIES	2
SECURITY AND STEWARDSHIP	6
HABITAT RESTORATION	7
PROJECT AREA.....	8
PROCEDURE.....	10

PUBLIC ACCESS AND AMENITIES

Item 1:

Many commenters were concerned about the potential impacts to habitat and wildlife that could come with enhanced public access and public amenities. Some commenters suggested there should not be visitor serving development in the Project Area, or that visitor services and development should be limited to currently disturbed land. Specific criticisms were made about impacts to nesting bird habitat.

Other concerns raised included that improved amenities might encourage additional unhoused persons to utilize the area; that visitors to the area would leave more trash, which could cause an increase in wildlife predators; and that there may be impacts from lighting the area.

Response 1:

The Project Partners believe the Preferred Alternative best meets the OBRAP restoration and public access goals:

The restoration goal of the OBRAP is to preserve, enhance, and restore natural habitats and processes that support a dynamic and self-sustaining ecosystem at Ormond Beach (Section 3.1).

The public access goal for the OBRAP is to enhance opportunities for people to easily and safely visit Ormond Beach and enjoy the nature, educational and research opportunities, and recreation that are compatible with the restored Ormond Beach ecosystem (Section 3.2).

The Preferred Alternative reflects the Project Partners' consideration of input from both the public and from the Science Advisory Committee. The Preferred Alternative identifies a trail network that arranges trails largely to the perimeter of the Project Area, leaving contiguous internal habitat areas. This approach is reinforced by the additional trails in Area 5 (Figure 7-1). Because of the numerous habitat types and how they are distributed, this configuration allows visitors to experience and appreciate many habitats while minimizing human disturbance with the perimeter trails. A multi-modal primary trail connection at Hueneme Road facilitates access for residents of South Oxnard. Small spur trails leading to overlooks provide a nature immersion experience and the solitude many community members say they treasure about Ormond Beach.

In addition, in consideration of public input, the public access features in the coastal dunes (Central Area) were modified to better protect bird habitat (Area 7, Figure 7-1). The trail, bird blinds, and other features were refined to be mostly hidden below the dune crest. The trail was configured for pedestrians only (no bicycles), and the trail was relocated to avoid nesting areas. Bird fencing and trails shown in the Plan are subject to revision and adaptive management in response to human disturbance and bird presence. See Section 7 for additional details.

Finally, the Plan presents a preliminary design. Many of the public access amenities described in the Plan are identified as features that could be incorporated into the Plan, or would need to be refined, in later design stages. Comments about these features will be provided to the Project

consultants for consideration as the design progresses, during which there will be additional opportunity for public comment. The next phases of design will further develop the restoration and public access elements in the Plan and will include responses to environmental review, additional technical analysis, and regulatory review. Additional technical studies are also expected.

Item 2:

Commenters identified many public amenities and activities they would like to see in the Project Area. Some commenters expressed a preference for areas supporting rest and relaxation with more benches, tables, and shaded areas. Many identified a need for safe restrooms, hydration stations, and a playground. If restrooms are built, suggestions were to use composting toilets and solar power, with solar panels used as shade over parking areas. Commenters supported bike paths. Commenters supported multilingual signage.

Response 2:

The Plan presents a preliminary design. Many of the public access amenities described in the Plan are identified as features that could be incorporated into the Plan, or would need to be refined, in later design stages. Comments about these features will be provided to the Project consultants for consideration as the design progresses, during which there will be additional opportunity for public comment. The next phases of design will further develop the restoration and public access elements in the Plan and will include responses to environmental review, additional technical analysis, and regulatory review. Additional technical studies are also expected.

Decisions about public access and public amenities will be guided by the public access and restoration goals for the OBRAP:

The restoration goal of the OBRAP is to preserve, enhance, and restore natural habitats and processes that support a dynamic and self-sustaining ecosystem at Ormond Beach (Section 3.1).

The public access goal for the OBRAP is to enhance opportunities for people to easily and safely visit Ormond Beach and enjoy the nature, educational and research opportunities, and recreation that are compatible with the restored Ormond Beach ecosystem (Section 3.2).

Item 3:

Commenters raised concerns that industry in the area (Ormond Beach Generating Station, Wastewater Treatment Plant, railway, Hueneme Road freight corridor) interferes with restoration and with public access, safety, and enjoyment.

Response 3:

The Project Partners agree that past and ongoing industrial operations impose constraints and uncertainties on the OBRAP. These are discussed in Section 4.1.2 (Restoration Constraints) and 4.2.2. (Public Access Constraints). Section 7 (Preliminary Design of the Preferred Alternative) describes how the Preferred Alternative is designed to minimize or work within constraints and

identifies remaining uncertainties. The Project Partners will continue to engage with agencies and operators in the area during design development and implementation of the Plan.

On January 21, 2020, the City of Oxnard City Council authorized an agreement between the City and GenOn to continue operations at the Ormond Beach Generating Station until December 31, 2023, and up to December 31, 2024, if necessary for grid reliability. The agreement stipulates that GenOn is obligated to ensure:

- Demolition of the OBGS facility
- Remediation of soil and groundwater at the site
- Financial contributions up to \$25 Million to the Trust Fund, depending on length of Resource Adequacy Contracts (If demolition and remediation costs exceed the Trust Fund balance, GenOn must fund the remainder of the work.)

Item 4:

Many commenters would prefer a visitors' center to be located at what is often referred to as the "Gateway Park" area, on Hueneme Road, near the southern end of Saviers Road. Commenters also noted the lack of detail in the Plan about the visitors' center and they discussed ideas for mission, use, and staffing of the visitors' center. Commenters also discussed providing educational opportunities, programs, services, and signage throughout the Project Area.

Response 4:

A potential site location for a visitors' center is identified for general planning purposes in the Plan, but details about design, mission, activities, staffing, etc. would be developed in later stages of the OBRAP and would potentially be under the purview of the long-term manager for the area. Identifying an entity to manage the Ormond Beach area for the long-term, is a high priority of the Project Partners, and comments about this issue will be included in discussions with potential long-term managers.

The Plan identifies the potential site location for a visitors' center at East McWane Boulevard and Edison Drive because that property is owned by The Nature Conservancy (Area 4, Figure 7-1). The Project Area is limited to property owned and controlled by the Project Partners.¹ The City of Oxnard's 2030 General Plan does identify the privately-owned 8.15-acre property on Hueneme Road, near the southern end of Saviers Road (Area 2, Figure 7-1) as "Park." As explained above, development of a visitors' center would be expected to take place during a later phase of the OBRAP.

Comments about this issue will be provided to the Project consultants for consideration as the design progresses, during which there will be additional opportunity for public comment.

Item 5:

¹ In late 2020 The Nature Conservancy acquired another adjoining 20-acre parcel from Metropolitan Water District. This parcel is not included in the Project Area due to the timing of acquisition but will be incorporated in future planning phases.

Commenters identified different preferences for entry to the Project Area. Some commenters supported the Perkins Road entry as proposed. However, many commenters would prefer a point of entry at what is often referred to as the “Gateway Park” area, on Hueneme Road, near the southern end of Saviers Road. Commenters also raised concerns with pedestrian safety at all identified entry points.

Response 5:

The Preferred Alternative identifies public entry points at Perkins Road, Edison Road and McWane Boulevard, and Arnold Road. The intent is to improve access near local neighborhoods and create entry points that are closer to the beach. No point of entry is identified on Hueneme Road near Saviers Road because the Ventura County Railroad spur runs through the Project Area from Hueneme Road (to the Ormond Beach Generating Station), blocking public access. A crossing could potentially be installed in conjunction with a new entrance at Hueneme Road; however, this is under the purview of the Port of Hueneme which owns and controls the railroad.

The Project Partners acknowledge the concerns for pedestrian safety along Hueneme Road and within the Project Area. This is a larger planning concern, which is not in the purview of OBRAP planning and implementation.

Item 6:

Commenters do not want public entry reduced at Arnold Road. Some commenters thought public entry would be entirely prohibited at Arnold Road.

Response 6:

The Preferred Alternative does not prohibit public entry at Arnold Road. Changes would be made to the current parking area to address Navy feedback about clearance policies and potential security issues, including ensuring adequate setback from the fence line at Naval Base Ventura County - Point Mugu. The proposed parking lot modification would accommodate ADA parking, limited parallel parking along the west side of Arnold Road, and a vehicle drop-off or turn-around area. Bike racks and a limited number of bike lockers would also be provided.

Item 7:

Commenters supported enhanced accessibility for the disabled, including wheelchair accessibility for some trails and boardwalks

Response 7:

The Project Partners want to improve access to the Project Area for people with disabilities. These comments will be provided to the Project consultants for consideration as the design progresses, during which there will also be additional opportunity for public comment. The Preferred Alternative includes Primary (developed) trails which could provide ADA access. Platforms adjacent to Primary trails could also be ADA accessible, as well as boardwalks.

SECURITY AND STEWARDSHIP

Item 1:

Many commenters raised concerns about encampments, and criminal activity. Commenters stressed the need to ensure personal safety and protection of habitat and wildlife, now and for the long-term, including providing an enforcement authority with the ability to issue citations. Some commenters said additional security would be needed at entry points and throughout the Project Area.

Response 1:

The Project Partners agree with commenters that safety and security are a priority and a significant challenge in the Project area. The current remoteness and limited accessibility in many areas of Ormond Beach tend to intensify these problems. One of the desired outcomes of the OBRAP is that an increase in visitation may discourage activities like dumping or camping. Access points can be designed to be open and promote visibility so that the area would no longer feel isolated.

The Project Partners do as much as they can to address these issues with their available resources and partners. The pandemic has increased problems at Ormond Beach, further stretching all agencies' abilities to manage the area. Actions taken to address these matters include:

- Adoption of the Ormond Beach Ordinance in June 2016, which prohibits camping, fires, and motor vehicles at Ormond Beach. It also prohibits bringing dogs or other animals to the beach, as well as going in or interfering with any protected habitat area. The City of Oxnard Police Department and Oxnard Code Enforcement issue citations for violations of this Ordinance and other law enforcement matters.
- The City of Oxnard has an agreement with the County of Ventura Health Care Agency for assistance with unsheltered encampments at the Halaco slag pile property to provide outreach, case management, and motel voucher services.
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has an agreement with Ventura County Behavioral Health's Backpack Medicine team to provide access for monthly outreach, medical services, and mobile shower pods.
- TNC also had an agreement with a local non-profit, Shelter Care Resources, which provided dumpster donation and trash services to people living on the Halaco slag pile.
- TNC's staff and TNC's private security team patrol TNC's property weekly for signs of encampments and cite people for camping.
- TNC is starting a volunteer stewardship program in 2021 to increase security and decrease trash on TNC property.

Identifying an entity to manage the Project Area for the long-term, is a high priority of the Project Partners. The long-term manager's ability to carry out security and enforcement is a significant consideration.

The Project Partners also acknowledge the significant community involvement in reducing trash and improving the Ormond Beach area habitat. Ventura Audubon, Surfrider, Coastal Keepers, FGH, Ventura Land Trust, Friends of Ormond Beach, and other groups and individuals have conducted volunteer trash cleanups (often in partnership with TNC).

HABITAT RESTORATION

Item 1:

Commenters identified a desire to understand how existing hydrology and habitat is functioning and how existing habitats may be improved without significant dredging or excavation. Commenters expressed a desire to avoid significant intervention or alteration of the area using heavy equipment, especially in dunes. Commenters also expressed their desire to maintain, and avoid impacts to, existing habitats that are used as stopover for migratory birds, to ensure that site management allows for trail closures to avoid impacts to nesting birds, and that public amenities (e.g., picnic benches) be located away from nesting areas.

Response 1:

The Project Partners agree with the commenters' desire to refine the Plan based on the best available science and observations of existing site conditions and natural resources. The Plan also considers analysis of historical conditions (Section 2.2, Appendix A-1) and future conditions (Section 2.4, Appendices C-1, D-1, E-1, F-1). One of the significant tasks of the next planning phase is to fill data gaps related to existing and anticipated site conditions, such as site hydrology, flood hydraulics, and vegetation response models. Additional faunal studies and other baseline monitoring will also be included in the environmental review process (Section 8.1). These data points will play an important role in understanding how environmental factors and the Preferred Alternative will impact existing and proposed habitats. The Project Partners will also avoid any interventions on the Project Area that may be unsustainable because they would require intensive management or would unnecessarily increase costs. For example, the preliminary preferred alternative included excavated inter-dune swales based on historical interpretation of habitats, but these features were removed in response to comments and a concern for the difficulty of sustainably managing such features (Section 6.5). Because of the sensitive and dynamic nature of the existing nesting habitats, the Project Partners anticipate adaptive restoration and management actions (Section 8.4), such as seasonal trail closures or beach trail adjustments will be needed in future management plans (Section 7.4.5). In response to comments, the public access features in Area 7 (Figure 7-1) were modified to better protect bird habitat. The trail, bird blinds and other features were refined to be mostly hidden below the dune crest, the trail was configured to be pedestrian only (no bicycles), trails were relocated to avoid nesting areas and references to picnic benches were removed to avoid impacts from trash and the attraction of nest predators to critical habitats (Section 6.5).

Item 2:

Commenters expressed concern over surface, groundwater and soil contamination, the need to identify sources of contamination and the relationship between the OBRAP and the Oxnard stormwater and wastewater systems.

Response 2:

The Plan describes current known conditions of hydrology and water quality including a summary of the ecological risk assessment for the Halaco Superfund Site (Section 2.3.4). The Preferred Alternative includes significant alterations to the stormwater system, including the re-routing of the Ormond Lagoon Waterway. The intention of this element is to improve water quality by avoiding the contaminated areas of the Halaco properties and improve flood protection to adjacent communities. Additional technical studies in the next planning phase and environmental review process will determine the feasibility of this element and whether other potential sources of contamination can be identified. The Preferred Alternative includes bio-swales at several locations intended to capture contaminated surface-water runoff prior to its entering sensitive habitats. The Plan does not currently include a connection to the Oxnard Wastewater Treatment Facility or the Advanced Water Purification Facility. The compatibility of the OBRAP with future expansion/operation of these facilities, including discharge of treated wastewater, is not currently known.

Item 3:

Commenters requested clarification on how Sea Level Rise (SLR) models were developed and used to design the Preferred Alternative.

Response 3:

Several models were used to understand future site conditions without implementation of the Project ("no project" conditions). Conditions evaluated include future sea level rise, shore migration, wave overtopping, lagoon response, and wetlands habitat evolution models (SLAMM) (Section 2.4 and Appendices C, D, E, F). Each alternative was modeled using the SLAMM modeling with beach transgression at various SLR projections. These results were evaluated against the restoration objectives (Section 6.3).

PROJECT AREA

Item 1:

Commenters would like other properties in the Ormond Beach area, including the sod farm property, the Ormond Beach Generating Station property, and the Halaco properties, to be incorporated into the Project Area to support acquisition and planning efforts.

Response 1:

The Project Area only includes property owned and controlled by the Project Partners. The Plan does identify potential future acquisition opportunities, including the sod farm property, the Ormond Beach Generating Station, Agromin composting facility, and the Halaco properties, and it discusses how these properties could facilitate the OBRAP (Section 2). This information supports the Project Partners' acquisition and planning efforts. Note that The Nature Conservancy acquired the Metropolitan Water District property identified in Section 2.6 in late

2020. This parcel is not included in the Project Area due to the timing of acquisition but will be incorporated in future planning phases, including environmental review.

Item 2:

The Ventura County Environmental Health Division (VC EHD) commented that the Plan does not identify the Arnold Road dump and the Perkins Road dump as “closed solid waste disposal sites,” and that post closure requirements may apply.

Response 2:

Section 7 (Preliminary Design of Preferred Alternative) identifies closed, inactive, pre-regulation solid waste facilities at Perkins Road and Arnold Road (Sections 7.3.3 and 7.5.3). It is noted that the VC EHD has requested review of the Project elements that entail uses of the landfill area, including any structures within 1000 feet. A Phase 1 investigation, possibly followed by a Phase 2 investigation, would be needed to assess whether the Plan results in uses or structures that trigger additional actions, such as Project revisions, landfill closure, or maintenance measures. Project Partners and consultants will continue to consult with the VC EHD.

Item 3:

Comments were made about the scope of contamination and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) responsibilities, site assessment, cleanup, and enforcement activities. A comment requested clarification about whether the Project Partners owned the Halaco properties and if these properties, or property owners would be included in the Plan. A commenter asked if the Ormond Lagoon Waterway (OLW) realignment considered the groundwater contamination at the Halaco Superfund Site.

Response 3:

The Halaco properties (11-acre smelter site and 26-acre waste pile site) are not part of the Plan because the Project Area only includes properties owned and controlled by the Project Partners. See Section 1.2 (Project Area) for a complete description of the Project Area.

The Project consultants reviewed U.S. EPA’s reports and are aware of Halaco groundwater contamination (Section 2.3.2). Development and implementation of the OLW realignment would be done pending coordination with the U.S. EPA. However, the timing of the cleanup of the Halaco Superfund site is not known and will affect Plan implementation (Section 7.7).

Comments and questions about contamination at the Halaco Superfund site and the U.S. EPA’s responsibilities, site assessment, cleanup, and enforcement activities should be sent to that Agency. Information about the Halaco Superfund site is available at <https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/cursites/csitinfo.cfm?id=0901242>

Item 4:

The Ventura County Watershed Protection District (VCWPD) identified Plan objectives and design that are consistent with VCWPD goals and operations, such as providing resiliency to anticipated climate change, and maintaining or improving existing levels of flood protection. VCWPD supported re-routing the Ormond Lagoon Waterway (OLW) and inclusion of bio-swales.

VCWPD also indicated that these elements will require a Watercourse Permit, supporting hydrologic/hydraulic analysis, and coordination with VCWPD. Trash capture from McWane Boulevard and the OLW may be necessary and regular maintenance of access points and pathways is encouraged to avoid trash entering waterways, as VCWPD will not assume maintenance of treatment wetlands, filter strips or bio-swales. A Watercourse Permit will also be required for proposed bridging at Tšumaš Creek and the OLW. VCWPD noted that a portion of Tšumaš Creek was reconstructed in 2015; therefore, 2011 Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data will not be accurate for this area. VCWPD also provided clarification on VCWPD management activities impacting Ormond Lagoon, and questioned if there are plans that would impact the poor water quality of the Perkins Drain. VCWPD also noted potential restoration opportunities, such as the use of supplemental water sources from the Calleguas Municipal Water District Salinity Management Pipeline, agricultural water from United Water Conservation District, or recycled water from the City of Oxnard to maintain water levels in wetland features.

Response 4:

The Project partners appreciate the comments provided by the VCWPD. These comments are noted and will be conveyed to the project team and consultants as the design is developed. Details on the management and existing conditions of Ormond Lagoon are included in Appendix B. Priorities for data gaps analysis are provided in section 8, and the Project Partners welcome the opportunity to work with the VCWPD to develop these studies and design refinements. There are no current plans for alteration of the Perkins Drain, additional treatment wetlands/bio-swales of other water bodies, or connections to supplemental municipal water sources. However, these may be considered in later phases.

PROCEDURE

Item 1:

Several commenters requested more time to submit comments.

Response 1:

The draft document was initially released for comment in May 2019. On August 30, 2019, the Project Partners extended the comment period to September 30, 2019. Thus, the comment period for this design phase was open for approximately four months

Item 2:

A commenter identified the State requirements for Tribal involvement in developing the OBRAP.

Response 2:

The Project Partners are engaging with Tribes in accordance with the State Coastal Conservancy's Tribal Consultation Policy. Building relationships with tribes and tribal organizations is a priority for Project Partners.