



Friends of Ballona Wetlands

Contact: Lisa Fimiani
Friends of Ballona Wetlands Board Member
(310) 339-2737
lisafimiani@sbcglobal.net

“The Friends of Ballona Wetlands Share Coastal Wetlands Success Stories with the Community”

The Friends of Ballona Wetlands had one of their most informative community meetings Wednesday evening, June 10th, in the office meeting room of Councilman Bill Rosendahl, with an open panel discussion on one of the hottest issues in the Ballona Wetlands – the value of wetlands restoration. Four speakers shared success stories up and down the California coast and invited members of the audience to ask questions about the projects they presented with great visuals of “before and after” photos.

Mary Small with the California Coastal Conservancy went first, outlining the huge 40,000 acre South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project up in the San Francisco Bay area, focusing on the challenges and triumphs of restoring tidal habitats in areas that had been severely impacted by urban development and salt production.

Dr. David Kay, Manager, Environmental Projects Southern California Edison and Friends Board Member then shared the story of the San Dieguito Lagoon on either side of the 5 freeway near the Del Mar Race Tracks, and how complicated that project was to get started and where it is today.

Dr. Michael Josselyn, with Wetlands Research Associates, went on to discuss the restoration of the Batiquitos Lagoon, also located in southern California, and how the restored tidal flow in that area has brought back, fish, birds, and other wildlife species to a bay that had literally been shut off from the sea.

Dr. Edith Read of E. Read and Associates, and a Friends Board Member, shared the Ballona Wetlands Freshwater Marsh success story, with fascinating photographs of what the Ballona Creek once looked like back in the 1930s and how much man has impacted the flow of that creek and the surrounding watershed.

What was very telling from all the presentations was the amount of time it takes to restore a wetland area back to its natural state, and how hard it is to change old land management practices. All of the projects have taken well over ten years to get off the ground, from initial think tanks and studies to the permitting and actual bulldozing of land to make way for the improved habitat. That issue was emphasized over and over – the need for big heavy earth moving equipment to get the job done.

That issue hit home for the Friends of Ballona Wetlands audience, because the Ballona Wetlands is on the verge of going through just such a makeover in the next ten years. To what degree the wetlands will be transformed will be determined by the combined cooperation of many factions to agree on a plan and foster that plan to completion.

Meanwhile, staff members of the Friends shared the non-profit's vision for the future, emphasizing partnerships between organizations to reach out into the community and engage people who live in neighborhoods along the Ballona Creek, encouraging them to embrace their watershed and work together to make it better. Along those lines, it was announced that the Friends and Ballona Creek Renaissance have partnered on and won a grant working with the Mar Vista neighborhood.

Founded in 1978, Friends of Ballona Wetlands is a non-profit organization that protects and restores the area with the help of more than 65,000 volunteers. Its mission is to champion the restoration and protection of the Wetlands, and to involve and educate the public as advocates and stewards. Each year, the Friends host thousands of visitors for interpretive wetlands tours and hands-on dunes restoration.

For more information, visit <http://www.ballonafriends.org>.