



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Channel Islands National Park

1901 Spinnaker Drive
Ventura, CA 93001

805/658-5700 phone
805/658-5799 fax

Channel Islands National Park News Release

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For Immediate Release

Yvonne Menard, Channel Islands National Park (805) 658-5725

National Park Service Seeks Public Comment on Coastal Wetland Restoration

Channel Islands National Park Superintendent Russell E. Galipeau Jr. announced today the availability of the Prisoners Harbor Coastal Wetland Restoration Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for public comment. The National Park Service (NPS) is proposing to restore a portion of the coastal wetland and associated stream channel at Prisoners Harbor on Santa Cruz Island.

Prisoners Harbor, once the largest coastal wetland on the Channel Islands, was important for water retention and habitat for wildlife and native plants. Coastal wetlands in California are increasingly rare—over 90% have been eliminated.

Methods to restore ecosystem function to this coastal floodplain wetland and the stream corridor are analyzed in the Draft EIS. The project extends over nearly 60 acres of land owned by the NPS and The Nature Conservancy. Restoration action is needed because prior modifications to the site degraded the ecology of the wetlands and stream corridor.


Prisoners Harbor has an extensive legacy of human occupation including Chumash habitation, fishing, and ranching. In the late 1800s island owners rerouted and channelized the creek and filled the adjacent wetland with gravels, directed water flow through a Chumash archaeological site and introduced non-native plants such as eucalyptus and stone pines. These actions reduced the ecological value of the coastal wetland system and resulted in diminished habitat quality for island species, such as the Santa Cruz island fox, island scrub-jay, and migratory waterfowl.

The alternatives proposed by the NPS include three options for protecting and restoring the many resources at Prisoners Harbor with consideration of all significant natural and cultural features, ecological systems, historic and archeological resources, and the visitor experience.

The “action” alternatives described in the Draft EIS contain a varying mix of four main components: 1) ecological restoration, including removing fill and controlling invasive species; 2) restoring hydraulic function of the wetland by reconnecting the creek to the floodplain; 3) protecting sensitive archeological resources; and 4) improving the visitor experience.

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The NPS prefers Alternative B as offering the best combination of project benefits. This alternative includes: 1) removal of about 17,000 cubic yards of fill and 8 historic cattle corrals; 2) relocation of a historic scale house to its former location; 3) removal of eucalyptus from 20 acres in the lower Cañada del Puerto; 4) control of invasive fennel and kikuyu grass; 5) removal of 250 feet of berm to reconnect the creek with its floodplain; 6) construction of a protective barrier around a portion of an archeological site; and 7) improvements to the visitor experience.

In addition to the agency-preferred Alternative B, the Draft EIS evaluates a No Action alternative and a proposal (Alternative C) that restores a smaller portion of the wetland. Alternative C would remove 11,000 cubic yards of fill and retain two cattle corrals the scale house in its current location.

The park invites public review and written comment on the draft EIS by July 15, 2009. The Draft EIS is available at local libraries and online at <http://www.nps.gov/chis/parkmgmt/planning.htm> or www.parkplanning.nps.gov.

Interested individuals, organizations, and agencies may submit written comments online at www.parkplanning.nps.gov or by postal service, to:

Prisoners Harbor Coastal Wetland Restoration Project
Channel Islands National Park
1901 Spinnaker Drive, Ventura, CA 93001

The public is invited to attend an open house to obtain additional information and submit comments on the Draft EIS:

Public Open House
June 23, 2009
5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Channel Island National Park
Robert J. Lagomarsino Visitor Center
1901 Spinnaker Drive in the Ventura Harbor

This publication is available on line at: www.nps.gov/chis/parknews/newsreleases.htm



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