



Public Comment

Prisoners Harbor Coastal Wetland Restoration Project



The National Park Service (NPS) is seeking public comment on a draft Environmental Impact Statement for alternative methods to restore the coastal wetland and associated stream channel at Prisoners Harbor and lower Cañada del Puerto on Santa Cruz Island, Santa Barbara County, California. The NPS has prepared a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this project in accordance with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.).

Proposed Project

Channel Islands National Park is seeking public review and comment on the draft EIS for the proposed Prisoners Harbor Coastal Wetland Restoration Project. The draft EIS analyzes alternative methods to restore ecosystem function to the largest coastal floodplain wetland and the steam corridor in the park. 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 ecosystem function of coastal wetlands and associated stream channel.

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, filled in the adjacent wetland with gravels from the surrounding hills and creek bed which directed water flow toward 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 silver lotus, Santa Cruz Island fox, island scrub jay, and migratory waterfowl.

Public Comment

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.

The NPS prefers Alternative B as offering the best combination of project benefits. This alternative includes: 1) removal of about 17,000 yds3 fill, removal of 8 historic cattle corrals; 2) relocation of a scale house; 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 a sensitive 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 an alternative that restores one third of the wetland (Alternative C). Alternative C would remove 11,000 yds3 fill, retain 2 cattle corrals, and retain the scale house in its current location.

The Park is seeking review and written public comment on the Draft EIS by July 15, 2009. The Draft EIS is available online at <http://www.nps.gov/chis/parkmgmt/planning.htm> or www.parkplanning.nps.gov. Paper copies of the EIS are available at all Ventura County libraries.

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 and provide written comments on the draft EIS:

Public Open House
June 23, 2009
5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Channel Islands National Park
Robert J. Lagomarsino Visitor Center
1901 Spinnaker Drive
Ventura, CA 93001