

Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program II Phase I
Scoping Meeting Script
June 16, 2021

ANDY YUEN
SAN DIEGO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX PROJECT LEADER

Slide 1

Welcome to our virtual public scoping meeting for the Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program II Phase I project.

Slide 2

My name is Andy Yuen and I am the Project Leader for the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

Slide 3

I want to thank you all of you for your participating in today's scoping meeting and your interest in the proposed restoration project at the Tijuana Estuary. We look forward to receiving your comments and suggestions as we prepare the Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement for this important restoration project.

Before we get started, I'd like to make everyone aware that this meeting will be recorded and posted to our project website.

Slide 4

In order to ensure that all of the participants in today's meeting can follow the presentations, we are providing a copy of the script from today's pre-recorded presentations. We are providing a link to the transcript in the chat box now. Next, for those of you taking advantage of this option, you will see a number in white at the top right corner of your screen which will correspond to the slide number in the scripts.

Finally, a video recording of today's scoping meeting will also be available on the Refuge website, which we are also putting in the chat box, for your use.

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I would like to now review the agenda for today's public meeting. I will discuss the purpose of today's scoping meeting and what we hope to accomplish, housekeeping items to keep the meeting running smoothly, the schedule for the EIR and EIS, and the different ways that you can provide comments to us. We will also have presentations by Refuge Manager Brian Collins with the Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge; Reserve Manager Chris Peregrin from Border Field State Parks, California Department of Parks and Recreation; and Wetland Ecologist Chris Nordby with Nordby Biological Consulting. The most important part of today's scoping meeting is the opportunity for you to provide us with your verbal and/or written comments using the chat on this proposed project.

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The subject of today's scoping meeting is a proposal to restore coastal wetlands in the western portion of the Tijuana River Valley.

Slide 7

The purpose of today's scoping meeting is to receive your comments and any information that you may have to help us define the scope and issues to be addressed in the draft EIR and EIS for TETRP II Phase I. We especially ask for your comments on defining the project alternatives, identifying concerns and environmental issues related to the proposed action, and helping us to identify and eliminate environmental issues that are not relevant to the proposed action.

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The most important session of today's meeting is to receive your verbal and written comments. We are here to listen to your comments and concerns. You can submit a written comment at any time by typing into the chat function of Webex. These comments will be included in the record. Once our speakers have completed their presentations, I will return to our virtual meeting and will be moderating the session to receive verbal and written comments from you. When it comes time to do so, in addition to the chat function, you can raise your hand to be put in the queue to make a comment orally.

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In addition to today's scoping meetings, you can provide us with comments through regular mail and email. Comments are due by July 12, 2021. Please type in your email address in the chat box and we will email you the information on this slide. We are holding two identical scoping meetings, one meeting in the afternoon and a second meeting in the evening. We are offering identical afternoon and evening meetings to ensure we can accommodate your busy schedules and allow for full public participation.

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The kick-off date for the EIR and EIS was the publication of the Federal Register Notice of Intent to prepare a draft joint EIR and EIS on May 27, 2021. After today's scoping meetings, we will fully consider your comments and feedback as we prepare the draft EIR and EIS. Remember that public scoping comments are due by close of business on July 12, 2021. In October 2021, look forward to receiving the release of the draft joint EIR and EIS for a 45-day comment period. We hope you can join us again for another public meeting to receive your comments on the draft joint EIR and EIS! We plan to issue the final EIR and EIS in March 2022, followed by the Record of Decision in April 2022.

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I would like to thank the Project Team for the exceptional work and support in developing the proposal to restore the Tijuana Estuary. These partners include California State Parks – Border Field State Park, the Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge, the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, the Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association, the California Coastal Conservancy, the California Wildlife Conservation Board, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

I would also like to recognize the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a cooperating agency in the development of the EIS for this project.

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I would also like to recognize additional project team members including Nordby Biological Consulting, Anchor QEA, and AECOM.

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We have identified a set of issues and concerns that we plan to evaluate and address in the draft EIR and EIS. These include:

- Biological resources and the effects to native upland and high salt marsh habitats, and disturbances to listed and sensitive avian species;
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources - Potential effects to historical and cultural resources as a result of excavation;
- Hydrology and Water Quality, including changes to fluvial and tidal hydrology, and short-term impacts to water quality;
- And Air Quality, including temporary increases in dust and other air pollutants during construction.

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We are also evaluating:

- Traffic circulation, and the temporary increases in construction traffic on the roadways within the Tijuana River Valley;
- Impacts to Recreation and Public Access;
- Air Quality and the temporary increases in dust and other air pollutants during construction
- and lastly Greenhouse Gas Emissions during construction and future GHG sequestration by salt marsh vegetation.

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I am now going to turn the meeting over to Refuge Manager Brian Collins, who will give you an overview of the Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge.

[REFUGE MANAGER BRIAN COLLINS](#)

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Hello, my name is Brian Collins and I work as the Refuge Manager for the Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge, which is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

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The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans. The total acreage of lands and waters conserved by the National Wildlife Refuge System is over 150 million acres.

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The Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge was established to target the conservation of native species including species listed as threatened and endangered, that are dependent on its lands and waters. The Refuge's mission is to protect and manage coastal wetland and upland habitats to support the recovery of listed species and conserve the diversity of native coastal fish, wildlife, and plant species present in the region.

Federally threatened and endangered species within the Tijuana Estuary include the Light-footed Ridgway's rail, a marsh dependent non-migratory bird, migratory birds including the California least tern, California gnatcatcher, and least Bell's vireo, and western snowy plover, the federal endangered plant, salt-marsh bird's beak, and even an endangered invertebrate, the San Diego fairy shrimp.

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Tijuana Slough NWR is situated generally north of the Tijuana River mouth and is represented by the two tones of blue overlays on this map. Note that the river mouth appears farther north in this photograph than its current location which is just north of our border with Border Field State Park lands, shown in green on this image.

Refuge staff bring a wealth of practical wildlife conservation, endangered species recovery, and habitat restoration experience to the team. Our role is in administering the federal regulatory processes including compliance with NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) and with other pertinent federal regulations including the federal Endangered Species Act, and National Historic Preservation Act and many others, and in providing threatened and endangered species conservation and habitat management expertise to the team.

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This is an aerial photo showing the Tijuana River mouth looking south to the border and the community of Playas de Tijuana. As you can see from this photo, areas upstream of the estuary are comprised of highly urbanized environments whose development has caused a significant increase in sedimentation rates into the estuary. A natural, but in some places artificially managed barrier dune system protects the estuary from wave driven erosion and sedimentation from the ocean to the west.

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Within these barrier dunes and back dune habitats, many rare and sensitive species survive including the coastal horned lizard, silver legless lizard, Baja California coachwhip snake, Kangaroo rats, long-tailed weasels, various specialized insect species including tiger beetles and globose dune beetles, and rare plants.

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By conserving, protecting and restoring habitats that support species listed as threatened or endangered, many other species benefit including a long list of migratory birds, some of which are pictured here. These include shorebirds, seabirds such as terns, waders, raptors, and song birds, over 350 species in total.

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There are three species of federally threatened or endangered birds that are present within the footprint of the Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration project area during some portions of the year. These include the western snowy plover, California least tern and light-footed Ridgway's rail. The Western Snowy Plover ranges from the Oregon coast to the US / Mexico border. Its breeding range is centered on the central California coast but ranges from San Diego County to Humboldt County. Its wintering range tends to be concentrated more towards the south. Snowy plovers are present year-round at Tijuana Estuary, especially during breeding season where plover nests may be established in the back-dunes on both sides of the river. The area near the mouth is also a preferred roosting and feeding site for wintering plovers that migrate up and down the coast from northern Baja California Mexico to coastal Oregon.

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Snowy Plover nesting season runs from mid-March to early September. Chicks may hatch and be present on the beach as early as mid-April. The peak of nesting season is May, June, and July and is the most sensitive time for them in relation to human recreational activities causing disturbance to them on our beaches. Chicks must forage for invertebrates (kelp flies for instance) near beach kelp wrack almost immediately after hatching in order to feed.

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The California least tern is a colonial fish-eating seabird that is dependent on coastal nesting habitat that is nearby to areas where small fishes can be found that adults may feed to their one to two chicks that are produced per nest. Least terns and snowy plovers use essentially the same habitat areas along the beach strand for nesting. The California least tern nests in California between the US/Mexico border and the San Francisco Bay area and its main concentration of breeding sites is within San Diego County. Its wintering range is well south of our region. Both species, the least tern and snowy plover, frequently co-occur in loosely aggregated mixed nesting colonies. USFWS oversees breeding colony biological monitoring work at the Tijuana Estuary in partnership with California State Parks and private ornithologists.

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California Least Terns are an endangered species. Their nesting season runs from April 15 to September 15 of any given year. Before they can fly, both terns and plover young will freeze on the ground sometimes instead of fleeing a source of disturbance. This makes them particularly vulnerable to human interactions on the beaches of Tijuana Estuary.

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The light-footed Ridgway's rail is an endangered species largely reliant on coastal salt marsh habitats found in southern California and northern Baja California, Mexico.

The rail's presence in our salt marshes is an indicator that there is an adequate prey base of fish, invertebrates, insects and small mammals, natural tidal hydrology, and tall enough vegetation for them to hide from predators in during high tides.

Habitats that support the rail in turn provide support to a wide variety of other species, including a number of species of special conservation status including the State endangered Belding's Savannah sparrow and the federally endangered plant Salt-marsh Bird's beak and a myriad of other wetland- dependent species.

Ridgway's rails are also indicators of environmental change due to their habitat's vulnerability to habitat losses due to watershed alterations, but also to the fact that many of the marshes they occupy are not expected to have long-term resiliency to sea level rise as most of them are immediately adjacent to urban areas and have nowhere to move inland as sea levels become higher.

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Historically, the Tijuana Estuary has functioned with a wide and open river mouth. A full range of tidal flows into the estuary is crucial to the health of this wetland. Given the recent increases in sedimentation, combined with the wastewater inputs from urban areas upstream, an open and fully tidal river mouth condition is crucial to the ecological health of the estuary.

The Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program is a practical effort aimed at reversing the negative effects that sedimentation, and wastewater and trash deposition have caused. Refuge staff are excited and honored to be a part of the hardworking, creative, and deeply experienced team members who are presenting this project to you today. By working together, we have an opportunity to restore our precious wetland ecosystems, recover endangered and threatened species, and improve the environmental health of the Tijuana River Valley for the benefit of wildlife and people. This project, when it is built, will be an important milestone for the restoration of the natural ecosystems of the Tijuana Estuary.

This ends my section of today's presentations. Thank you.

ANDY YUEN

SAN DIEGO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX PROJECT LEADER

Slide 29

Thank you, Brian, for your presentation. I am now going to turn the meeting over to Reserve Manager Chris Peregrin, from the California Department of Parks and Recreation, who will give an overview of Border Field State Park and the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve.

RESERVE MANAGER CHRIS PEREGRIN

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Hi. My name is Chris Peregrin. I work as an environmental scientist for CA State Parks and as the manager of Border Field State Park, and the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve. As mentioned earlier by Andy Yuen, CA State Parks will serve as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act, for the environmental review of this project. I will now take few moments to provide additional detail about CA State Parks, our specific interest in this project, and the partnerships we maintain to directly manage the land on which the project is proposed.

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The Mission of CA State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

With 280 state park units, the department contains the largest and most diverse recreational, natural, and cultural heritage holdings of any state agency in the nation.

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Located in the southwest corner of the state, Border Field State Park encompasses roughly 800 acres and is a great example of the best of California's natural and cultural history, and recreational experiences.

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The area supports an amazing diversity of natural resources, and through this project, we intend to enhance these resources to ensure the long-term sustainability of the ecosystems, and natural processes, that make this place so special.

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The Tijuana Estuary also protects a variety of cultural resources. The project site is the ancestral land of the First People, the Kumeyaay. Throughout this process we will work with the Native American community, and other cultural resource specialists, to protect these sensitive resources, as well as those resources tied to other cultural legacies of the area, including military and agricultural uses.

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Ultimately, the project will improve the environmental quality of the Tijuana Estuary, enhancing the area for public enjoyment of activities such as trail use, wildlife viewing, and appreciation of this exceptional natural area set in a dynamic international region.

Slide 36

The significance of these resources speaks to the important of the partnerships we maintain to manage this unique area.

Border Field State Park, and more generally the Tijuana Estuary, is unique from a management context in part because of our partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (or, NOAA) through the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, commonly referred to as the NERRS, or the Reserves.

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System is a network of 29 estuarine areas—places where freshwater from the land mixes with saltwater from the sea. NERRS area established across the nation for long-term research, education, and coastal stewardship. The reserves are a partnership between NOAA and the coastal states and territories. The mission of the reserves is to practice and promote coastal and estuarine stewardship through innovative research and education, using a system of protected areas.

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At the Tijuana River NERR, NOAA has identified CA State Parks as the state partner to manage the Reserve. Furthermore, CA State Parks has partnered with the Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association, a local non-governmental organization, to enable us to effectively implement the programs of the NERR System. Through this partnership we implement the core programs of the NERR, including: Education, Coastal Training, Stewardship, and Research.

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TRNERR is a living outdoor classroom that advances estuary and data literacy, and provides meaningful, hands-on educational experiences for adults, children, and teachers. TETRP II, Phase I provides an exceptional opportunity to expand this education specifically into the practice salt marsh restoration and coastal resilience.

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The coastal training program brings helpful scientific data and information to coastal communities.

At the Tijuana Estuary, the coastal training program offers data sharing and technical assistance for government officials, businesses, individuals, and the local community. TETRP II Phase I provides a great opportunity to connect these coastal decision makers to the latest science and practice of salt marsh restoration and coastal resilience.

Slide 40

The Tijuana Estuary's Stewardship Program focuses on day-to-day protection and enhancement of the Tijuana Estuary, and connection with volunteers to steward this land in a community context. Years of hands-on land management are informing the proposed project, and indeed, the long-term stewardship of TETRP II Phase I will depend upon this continued community engagement.

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In closing, Research reserves are living laboratories, ideal sites for research and long-term monitoring.

The research, coupled with the monitoring data, provides a strong, science-based foundation for addressing coastal management challenges on local and national levels. TRNERR brings over 20 years of site-specific research and monitoring to the planning of TETRP II Phase I, and by embedding research and monitoring into the design of this project, we will continue this tradition, providing site-specific guidance for management of the Tijuana Estuary, as well as lessons learned for coastal communities throughout our nation.

ANDY YUEN
SAN DIEGO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX PROJECT LEADER

Slide 42

Thank you, Chris, for your presentation. I am now going to turn the meeting over to Wetland Ecologist Chris Nordby of Nordby Biological Consulting, who will provide a presentation on the history and goals of the Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program II Phase I.

WETLAND ECOLOGIST CHRIS NORDBY

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Hello, my name is Chris Nordby and I'm a wetland ecologist who has been working in Tijuana Estuary and the Tijuana River Valley for over 40 years. In that time, I've seen a lot of changes. The most significant of which has been the deposition of sediment within the southern portion of the estuary just north of the US/Mexico Border leading to loss of tidal prism and loss of ecologically valuable wetland habitat.

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For your reference, tidal prism may be defined as the volume of water that enters and exits the estuary on a given tidal cycle. Tidal influence is extremely important to a healthy wetland system. High tides bring dissolved oxygen and nutrients vital to estuarine plants and animals. Tidal exchange also provides the physical mechanism whereby the mouth or inlet is scoured of sediment and remains open. The Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program seeks to restore tidal prism, and therefore tidal exchange, to historic levels following decades of loss.

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The objective of my presentation today is to provide an overview of the Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program, abbreviated as TETRP, from its inception in the 1980s to the current project known as TETRP II Phase I. TETRP II Phase I is the first phase of a modified restoration program based on earlier studies which I will present. The culmination of TETRP II Phase I is the two restoration alternatives that form the foundation of the EIR/EIS that is the subject of this public meeting.

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In order to follow some of the specifics of my presentation, it is necessary to understand the geography of the Tijuana River and Estuary. This slide shows an aerial view of the valley and estuary. In my opinion, the most notable feature of this photograph is the density of development that surrounds the river, with San Diego to the north and the city of Tijuana to the south. This density of humanity puts tremendous stress on the river and estuary, yet it still provides a home to the plant and animal species that Brian Collins discussed in his presentation.

Note that the Tijuana River enters the U.S. via a concrete channel in Tijuana, flows west through an energy dissipator and continues west in roughly the middle of the valley to the inlet to the ocean. There is a clearly defined northern arm known as Oneonta Slough, and a southern arm which is the location of the current project. As you can see in the area labeled Project Area, there is a brown area that represents recent sediment deposition from Goat Canyon located somewhat east of the project area. Many of these geographical features and their relationship to TETRP II Phase I will be discussed further in my presentation.

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The overarching goal of TETRP is to restore wetland habitats in the south arm of Tijuana Estuary that have been degraded by sediment deposition from trans-border canyons and periodic flooding of the Tijuana River. In so doing, the tidal prism of the estuary will also be increased.

This slide shows the former entrance kiosk to Border Field State Park which was located near the mouth of Goat Canyon. The sediment that you see here was the result of a single rain event demonstrating just how erodible the sediments of the trans-border canyons and uplands are.

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This slide shows an aerial view of Goat Canyon during a similar storm event. Note the entrance kiosk in the upper left. Sediment has been deposited in plumes noted by the arrows resulting the burial of wetland habitat to the north and west of the entrance road.

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This is an aerial view of the Tijuana River and estuary during an approximately 35-year flood event in 1993. Number 1 illustrates the river overflowing its banks and depositing sediment in the valley and number 2 again illustrates the sediment plumes from Goat Canyon.

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The effects of sedimentation on the estuary were first recognized as a management priority in the 1980s. This period was characterized by repeated El Niño events that produced flooding in southern California. At this time, a number of studies were undertaken to determine the sources of sediment and potential methods for managing such sediment and restoring the areas degraded by deposition. These were mostly funded by the California State Coastal Conservancy.

The result was the TETRP EIR/EIS completed in 1991, also funded by the California State Coastal Conservancy.

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The 1991 EIR/EIS found that

- wetlands in the project area had decreased by 60%
- Tidal prism of the estuary had decreased 80% relative to an 1852 map of the estuary
- The reduction in Tidal Prism had resulted in a significant reduction in tidal scour of sediment in the tidal inlet increasing the potential for inlet closure
- The reduction in tidal prism was caused by sediment input from the river and its tributaries, inland migration of the barrier beach system, filling of wetland habitats and, to a lesser degree, by road construction.

The result has been the conversion of wetland habitats to weedy upland habitats.

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The 1991 EIR/EIS recommended the following actions to reverse the degradation in the south arm of the estuary:

- Restore 495 acres of wetland habitats and restore tidal prism to 1852 conditions
- Restore in phases starting with small projects in the north and south arms and apply lessons learned to the 495-acre restoration, a process referred to as adaptive management
- Re-establish dune vegetation on the barrier beach to slow inland migration

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This was the conceptual design of the 495-acre restoration. The inlet is located at the upper left. The project was to be implemented in phases with sediment excavated to return the marsh to tidal influence disposed of in two proposed river training berms, designed to prevent flooding of the river and Goat Canyon and sediment deposition in the newly restored marsh. The berms were 60 feet high and contained hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of sediment. They would have been constructed in areas that contained valuable wetland habitats resulting in a permanent loss of those habitats. Because of those impacts, the berms were considered too impactful, and the 495-acre project was not implemented.

- The 2.5-acre restoration in the north arm was constructed in 1997
- The 20-acre Model Project was constructed in 1999-2000

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Although not part of the TETRP 1991 EIR/EIS, a parallel program called the Goat Canyon Enhancement Project was completed in 2005 to help manage sediment issues in the south arm. The planning and construction of the basins was funded by the California State Coastal Conservancy.

A series of three in-line sediment basins were constructed to capture sediment before it entered the estuary. These basins have been effective in capture and removal of approximately 50,000 cubic yards of sediment annually. However, a great deal of sediment remains in the estuary and may be mobilized by storm events thereby continuing to impact wetlands.

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The locations of projects associated with TETRP are depicted in this slide. The 2.5-acre restoration in the north arm is known as the Oneonta Tidal Linkage. The 20-acre Model Marsh project is located within the boundaries of the current project. The Goat Canyon Enhancement Project and the Goat Canyon Quarry project are located to the east of the current project. The Goat Canyon Quarry project involved the restoration of an abandoned sand and gravel quarry using the sediment excavated to construct the Model Marsh allowing us to do two restoration projects for the cost of one.

Slide 56

Around 2004, the California State Coastal Conservancy funded another look at restoration of the south arm. This study, called the Tijuana Estuary – Friendship Marsh Feasibility and Design Study was completed in 2008. It recommended a 250-acre restoration, approximately ½ the size of the 1991 study. The project area was reduced in order to avoid the active flood plain of the Tijuana River thereby removing the need for the controversial river training berms.

Project features included a large area of open water to provide maximal increase in tidal prism and tidal scour of the inlet.

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About the time the 2008 feasibility study was completed, the issue of climate change and associated sea level rise became a focus of coastal resource managers worldwide. Potential funders for TETRP, in particular the California State Coastal Conservancy, determined that additional studies were necessary before money for restoration could be made available. Accordingly, several studies focusing on sea level rise at Tijuana Estuary were completed.

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The current study deemed TETRP II Phase 1 was funded by the California State Wildlife Conservation Board and California State Coastal Conservancy in 2016. The significance of the name incorporates the history of the project – TETRP now being the 250-acre restoration recommended in the Feasibility and Design Study as opposed to the original TETRP and its 495-acre footprint. Phase 1 will be the first phase of construction of that 250-acre restoration.

Two alternatives have been developed for TETRP II Phase 1. Both are centered around the Model Marsh, built in 1999-2000, a successful restoration project that continues to function today. The two alternatives are known as the Maximum Tidal Prism Alternative and the Reduced Impact Alternative.

I will explain the features of the two alternatives in a moment. The project required a suite of new or updated studies to inform the restoration, including Biological and Cultural resource analyses, sediment analysis to address potential contamination and the grain size characteristics and hydraulic/hydrological modeling. Hydraulic and hydrological models are computer simulations of water movement within the Tijuana River and the tidal waters that allow us to predict how those waters will influence the project after it is built.

These studies in turn inform the New EIR/EIS which is the focus of this public meeting.

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The current Project Area includes areas to be excavated to restore salt marsh and tidal channels located in the center of the project area in the general vicinity of the Model Marsh. Again, this successful restoration was constructed in 1999-2000 and continues to function as a highly valuable wetland today providing some assurance that current project will be successful as well. Other parts of the project area include various tidal channels that may be incorporated into the project if needed. Finally, a long section of beach/dune habitat is included for restoration of these habitats.

Slide 60

The maximum tidal prism alternative includes large areas of intertidal mudflat and low salt marsh to provide as much tidal prism as possible, which you recall is the volume of water that comes into the estuary on high tide and goes out to the ocean on low tide.

This alt has two connections with existing tidal channels to feed the mudflat and low marsh – one on south beach slough in the upper left portion of the restoration and one on old river slough in the mid-right portion. It also has a series of what we refer to as High Tide Refugio shown as yellow islands along the southern edge of the Model Marsh. These provide wildlife with refuge from terrestrial predators during high tide when they would otherwise find refuge along the wetland/upland boundary where they would be vulnerable to such predators.

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The reduced impact alt includes very little mudflat instead focusing on low and mid-high salt marsh. Areas of regionally rare wetland/upland transitional habitat have been preserved, reducing the project impact. These are depicted as a pair of “islands” in the upper portion of the restored marsh and a reduce wetland area immediately east of the Model Marsh. There are three connections to existing tidal channel – two with south beach slough and one with old river slough. High Tide Refugio are proposed for both the north and south connection with the Model Marsh.

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To date the project team has achieved significant design milestones, including but not limited to;

- Alt selection and refinement
- Hydraulic and hydrological modeling
- Restoration Plan
- Construction Methodology
- Sediment Management Plan
- Cultural and Biological Resource impact analyses

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We're excited to be at this point in this project which is the culmination of nearly four decades of work. TETRP II Phase I is an important regional restoration project that will provide important habitat not only for the threatened and endangered species Brian Collins spoke of but passive recreation for the people of southern California and visitors from elsewhere.

ANDY YUEN

SAN DIEGO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX PROJECT LEADER

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Thank you to all of our presenters tonight.

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Before we begin our public comment session, I want to remind everyone that the public comment period for the Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program II Phase I project closes on July 12, 2021. You can provide us with comments through regular mail and email. Please type in your email address in the chat box and we will email you the information on this slide.

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Lastly, for more information on the project, you can visit the websites listed on the screen, which we have posted links to in the chat box, or contact Refuge Manager Brian Collins at brian_collins@fws.gov or by telephone: 760-431-9400 extension 273.

Slide 67

We will now be transitioning to the live portion of our meeting where we will be taking comments from members of the public to be included in the record.

Just to remind everyone, here are the ways that you can make your comment tonight:

- 1. Enter your comment in the Webex chat function. These comments will be included as part of the record.
- 2. You can raise your hand to be put in the queue to make a comment verbally.

For those of you joining us by phone, raise your hand by pressing *3. You will be notified that you have been unmuted when you are called upon.

For those of you joining us via computer, you can raise your hand via Webex by simply clicking the participants icon at the bottom of your screen, then clicking the hand icon. You will be called upon by name and unmuted when it is your turn.

When called to speak, please state your name and if you are representing an organization, please state the name of the organization. Comments will be limited to 2 minutes.

Now I will hand things over to Victor Avina from Falcon Strategies to moderate the comment session. Thank you in advance for your comments.