

[San Dieguito Wetlands 'the Yosemite of Southern California'](#)[Environment and Resources - Land](#)

Written by Emily Holding

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Representatives from Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas & Electric, along with environmental and public officials, met in Del Mar Monday morning to dedicate the San Dieguito Wetlands Restoration Project.

The \$90 million, 150-acre restoration project was begun over a decade ago by the co-owners of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station—Southern California Edison, SDG&E and the city of Riverside—as mitigation to offset adverse environmental impact from the nuclear plant. It is one of the largest wetland restoration projects on the west coast.

Sherilyn Sarb of the California Coastal Commission said that the project's mitigation model of using independent monitoring and the outside scientific community to guide the permit process is one that will be used in the future. "I think it's a very good example of how man can work with Mother Nature to the benefit of people and wildlife," she said.

Cecil House, senior vice president and chief procurement officer for Southern California Edison, noted that even before the project was complete, scientists pointed to the project as a model for how companies and community planners can help species colonize manmade habitats.

"The goal from the outset was to create a new breeding habitat for ocean fish and to attract wildlife, including endangered species back to this part of the Southern California coast," said House. "I am pleased to say that that goal is now a reality."

Pamela J. Fair, SDG&E vice president of environmental and support services, called the project "a wonderful success story," citing the more than 200 bird species and millions of fish in the area as a testament to the project's success.

"We have wildlife coming back that perhaps hasn't been in this region for hundreds of years," she said.

And that success succeeded all expectations, according to San Diego County Supervisor Pam Slater-Price, who Southern California Edison spokesperson Gil Alexander joked was probably in every picture taken of the wetlands because of her commitment to the area over the years.

Jacqueline Winterer, president of Friends of San Dieguito River Valley called it "surprising" that this restoration project was accomplished in an urban area.

"A lot of people worked, but there was some luck to be able to do this," she said, adding that it was "exalting" to be part of the effort to restore the wetlands. She said it was exciting that 150 years after places like Yellowstone and Yosemite were set aside for preservation, "we're still doing that."

In fact, Slater-Price called the wetlands "the Yosemite of Southern California" and a "resource for time to come," and as such, she said the restoration is a "wonderful legacy project for the energy companies to have to their credit."

“This is a resource that is now set for perpetuity for all of us to enjoy. Not only for us, but to all the kids in the green shirts and for their kids to enjoy,” she said, motioning toward a 5<sup>th</sup> grade class from Porter Elementary School that had come to the event.

Fair said the nature preserve is a jewel in the region, and encouraged attendees to invite their friends and family to come enjoy the area.

“It’s something that we don’t want to keep to ourselves.”



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