

# UC Santa Barbara

## Newsletters

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NCOS News - March 2020

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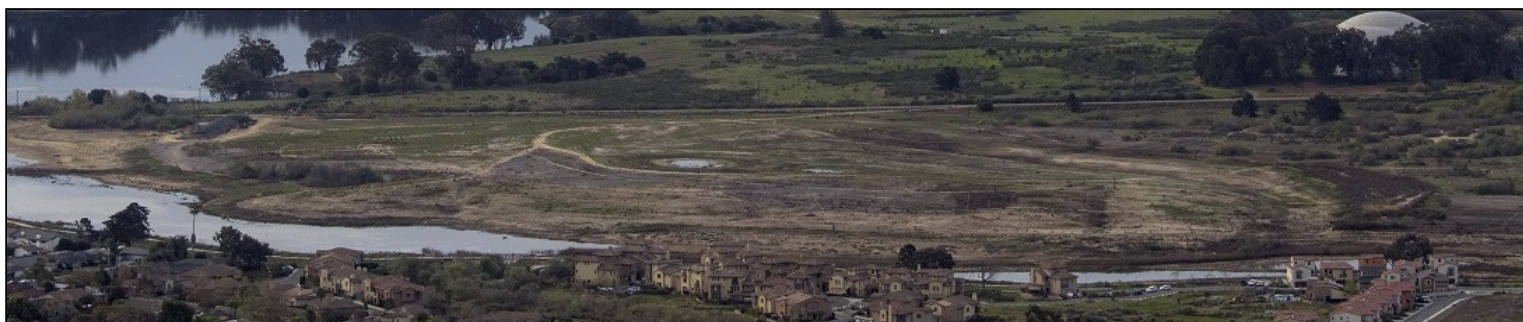
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# UC SANTA BARBARA

## North Campus Open Space Restoration Project

NCOS NEWS

March 2020



This latest NCOS aerial image by Bill Dewey was taken on February 29, 2020. The bottom image is zoomed in for a closer view of the Mesa, where the restored native grassland is really starting to show!

### **UPDATES & EVENTS**

#### ***Second Saturday Planting - Cancelled***

On account of the wet weather and under an abundance of caution with regard to COVID-19, we will not have a Second Saturday planting day this month. We hope to see you in April!

#### ***Visitor Plaza Construction Underway!***

If you have been out to NCOS recently, you likely have seen the fenced area by the Whittier Drive parking lot, where the Visitor Plaza and Discovery Trail are under construction. Here are a couple of behind-the-scenes photos of the construction in progress:



**In this view of the Visitor Plaza construction site, we can see the rocks that form the foundation of a bioswale that will capture and filter run-off from the parking lot.**



In this image, we see the foundation of the discovery trail and future location of a bridge over the bioswale, which is filled with run-off from recent rains.

## FEATURE STORY

### [How the Vision of Voters Made the NCOS Dream Come True](#)



Three years ago, the transformation of the former Ocean Meadows golf course to the North Campus Open Space restoration project began. Since then we have been reporting on many different aspects of the project, such as the hydrology of the wetland, the types of habitats being restored, birds and other wildlife, and how the project benefits students of all ages as well as other members of the community. Yet, many of you may be wondering, how did the project get started and who is funding it, and why? [Read on](#) to learn about the links between many of the key features of the NCOS project and the agencies that supported or prioritized their restoration and/or development.

[This feature story is continued on page 10.](#)

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**



### **"Second Saturdays" at NCOS**

**CANCELLED This month - see you in April!**

Please RSVP to [ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu](mailto:ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu)

Help us restore and create NCOS with plants and more! Meet at 6969 Whittier Drive at 9:30 am. Bring water, sunscreen, and wear a hat, clothes, and shoes suitable for garden work.



### **Saturday Tree Plantings**

You can help Your Children's Trees plant and care for oaks and other saplings at NCOS! Please contact [Your Children's Trees](#) for more information and to RSVP.



### **Thursdays - CCBER Greenhouse Associates**

Come help transplant seedlings of native plants with the CCBER team from 9:00 - 12:00. To join, please send an email to [ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu](mailto:ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu).



## Group Volunteer Opportunities

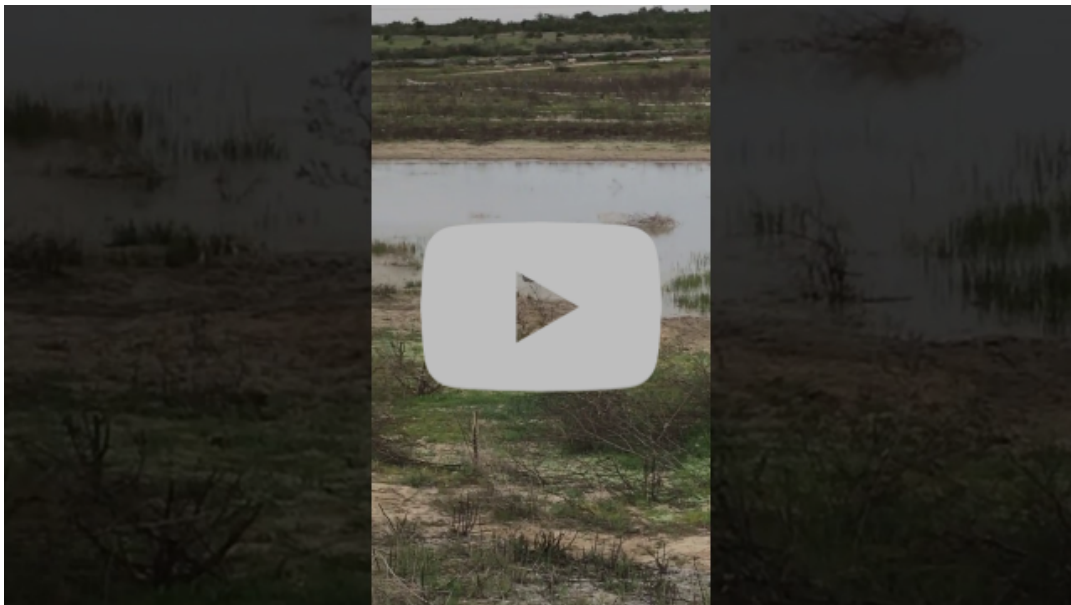
We gladly welcome local business, non-profit, school and other community groups to come out to NCOS to help with planting and other activities. For more information, please send an email to [ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu](mailto:ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu).

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### **COMMUNITY FORUM & PHOTOS**

We are interested in any observations of wildlife activity on NCOS. Please send your observations, with or without photos, to [ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu](mailto:ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu). Thanks!

This month, we have a fun video of two Greater Yellowlegs appearing to race around a vernal pool, possibly in competition for claiming the pool as their territory, or perhaps it's a mating ritual? In addition, we are grateful for new photos shared by community members, including a gorgeous gem of a hummingbird taken by Karen Lunsford, an opportune candid shot of a Cooper's Hawk, and a Ruddy Duck by Jérôme Pinti ([https://www.instagram.com/jerome\\_goes\\_wild/](https://www.instagram.com/jerome_goes_wild/)).



**Greater Yellowlegs vernal pool race.**



**Allen's Hummingbird. Photo by Karen Lunsford.**



**A Cooper's Hawk ruffles its feathers, seemingly to show off for the photographer, Lori Gaskin.**





**Ruddy Duck transitioning to breeding plumage; note the bright blue bill.**  
Photo by Jérôme Pinti ([https://www.instagram.com/jerome\\_goes\\_wild/](https://www.instagram.com/jerome_goes_wild/)).

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**For more information on the**  
**North Campus Open Space Restoration Project,** [Click here](#), or email [ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu](mailto:ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu)

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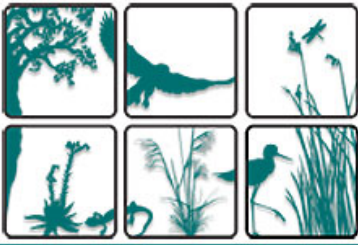
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## HOW THE VISION OF VOTERS MADE THE NCOS DREAM COME TRUE

Three years ago, the transformation of the former Ocean Meadows golf course to the North Campus Open Space restoration project began. Since then we have been reporting on many different aspects of the project, such as the hydrology of the wetland, the types of habitats being restored, birds and other wildlife, and how the project benefits students of all ages as well as other members of the community. Yet, many of you may be wondering, how did the project get started and who is funding it, and why? This article focuses on the links between many of the key features of the NCOS project and the agencies that supported them.



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www.billdeweyphoto.com

**Aerial photo of the former Ocean Meadows golf course and lower Devereux Slough, taken in October, 2009 by Bill Dewey.**

The NCOS project was made possible thanks to the vision of the residents of California who, as a whole, voted in support of various bond measures designed to promote water conservation, flood protection, sustainable development, trails and passive recreation opportunities as well as the protection and enhancement of wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. The funds that the voters approved flow to various state agencies to manage and distribute in support of the vision of the bond measures. Additional funds for the project came from federal agencies and are derived primarily from gasoline taxes and hunting and fishing licenses.

Wetland restoration and support for listed species (threatened or endangered) are top priorities of the [US Fish and Wildlife Service \(USFWS\)](#). Their funding helped UC Santa Barbara acquire the former golf course (through the [Trust for Public Land](#)) and supported the creation of the [estuary](#) and the [vernal pool wetlands](#) on site as well as several of the unique habitat features that benefit the endangered [Tidewater Goby](#) and threatened [Western Snowy Plover](#). The design of the estuary includes small side channels or fingers that are like little coves where fish can shelter in eddies when the slough breaches into the sea and water flows rapidly out of the system. These features help prevent fish from being swept out to sea, and you can read more about them in [this earlier article](#). The large sandy area on the southwest side of the restored wetland is designed to support Western Snowy Plover breeding habitat, and while we have already observed several

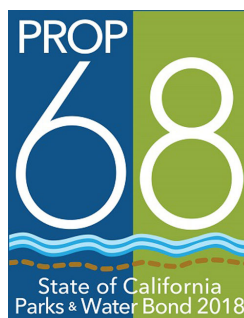
nesting attempts, it is uncertain whether these nests were successful; skunks and crows have been identified as likely predators of the eggs and chicks ([read more about this here](#)). Vernal pools are a rare wetland type that support a unique suite of plants and aquatic invertebrates. Monitoring of aquatic invertebrates in the vernal pools is being conducted by UCSB students with support from the [Santa Barbara Audubon Society](#), who have shown that the restored pools have already become functional habitats for the key species in terms of abundance and diversity ([here is a report about this project](#)). Federal funding from gasoline taxes was also directed to the project through the [California Transportation Commission's Active Transportation Program](#) grant that supports non-vehicular travel and funded the construction of the Marsh trail and bridges.



**Aerial photo of the North Campus Open Space restoration project, taken in August, 2018 by Bill Dewey.**

Several California state bond measures (primarily Propositions 1, 68 and 84) funded the majority of the soil excavation to create the wetlands and diverse habitats in support of wildlife and public access to nature. Funding from the [Ocean Protection Council](#) was focused on the restoration of wetland ecosystems that are resilient to climate change, support special status species and that provide the community with open space and passive recreational opportunities to enjoy nature. The Department of Water Resources' [Urban Streams Enhancement](#) program provides support to projects that use natural systems to reduce flooding and provide wildlife habitat. Their funding was primarily focused on the excavation of the golf course from the historic wetland and the restoration of riparian woodland habitat adjacent to the freshwater tributaries of the project site, such as Phelps Creek and Whittier Channel. The restoration of the wetland has reduced flood elevations by two feet ([here's a story about that](#)), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency is currently working on revising the flood maps for the area in response to this project.

The [California Department of Fish and Wildlife](#) (CDFW) has several funding streams that were appropriate for this project: the [Proposition 1 grant](#) program and the Cap and Trade-funded [Climate Investments program](#). Grants from these funds contributed to the excavation of the estuary and establishment of salt marsh habitats with associated enhancement of habitat for threatened and endangered plants and animals such as the state listed [Belding's Savannah Sparrow](#) and migratory birds. The Climate Initiative program funded research about how wetlands sequester carbon from the atmosphere and help reduce our carbon footprint. In addition, the [Wildlife Conservation Board](#) (WCB), a part of CDFW, has provided significant support for habitat restoration across the state. For NCOS, they contributed to the acquisition of the land and to the construction and restoration phases of the project across multiple habitats and for multiple benefits to the environment.





## CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF **WATER RESOURCES**

The [California Natural Resources Agency](#) (CNRA) is an umbrella organization that has funding available through several mechanisms, including one of the first grants we received from the [Urban Greening program](#). This program specifically focuses on sustainable, native restoration along public access trails that reduce carbon in the atmosphere by providing alternative (*i.e.* car-free) means for people to travel through the environment, and also reduce heat island effects resulting from all of the pavement in urban environments. Their funding helped support the creation of bioswales and the plantings in the peripheral uplands zone between the Marsh trail and the housing adjacent to the project site. The CNRA also includes the [State Coastal Conservancy](#) (SCC), which is focused on restoring and protecting coastal resources as well as supporting public appreciation of those resources. The SCC funding is helping to support restoration of the transitional area between the Marsh trail and the estuary, and enhancing the connection between the community and the restoration project through support of K-12 school visits and installation of interpretive signage. The CNRA also manages the [Environmental Enhancement Mitigation](#) (EEM) fund, which is being used to restore 25 acres adjacent to the western side of the NCOS project. This area was densely colonized by invasive plants as a result of the disturbance in the 1960s, when the golf course was created. These invasive plants (*e.g.* pampas grass, mustard, and fennel) could have colonized the newly disturbed soil of the restoration project and led to its degradation. Thus, the EEM funding has been crucial to expanding the reach of the NCOS project and providing an increase in habitat quality and extent while also significantly reducing the threat of weed re-colonization on site.

Currently, we are actively implementing an important [California State Parks Environmental Education Facility Grant](#) to create a visitor plaza and discovery trail near the Whittier Drive entrance to the project site. This will include interpretive signage, a shaded seating area, bicycle parking and five overlooks along the trails with benches. [Private donors](#) are enabling this project to move forward because of the required match, and they are also helping to fund an ADA accessible bathroom facility.

Most recently, we applied for grant funding to create a permeable parking lot, restore the grasslands on the Whittier parcel, and create an active learning area to support K-12 and university classes on-site. Unfortunately, we just learned that our application was not selected. We are hoping that private donors will help us complete this vision for the gateway to NCOS.

The North Campus Open Space project has become a reality in a timely manner because of the commitment Californians have made to improve the environment for people and wildlife, and to seek natural solutions to the current and impending impacts of climate change and urban development on our communities. By addressing impacts such as sea level rise, climate warming, reduced groundwater levels, fragmentation and urbanization as well as flooding and loss of wetland habitat, the implementation of the project has significantly benefited from the vision and wishes of voters. CCBER is currently working to secure the value of this investment by developing an endowment so that the site can continue to thrive both ecologically and as a living, learning laboratory long into the future.



**Aerial photo of the North Campus Open Space restoration project, taken in January, 2020 by Bill Dewey.**

**Date:**

Wednesday, March 11, 2020 - 15:00

[Contact Us](#)

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