

California Department of Parks and Recreation

Topanga Lagoon Restoration Project

Environmental Impact Report

Scoping Meeting

June 11, 2022

10:00 AM



Meeting Logistics

We so appreciate your time and assistance today!

Please keep your device muted so as not to interrupt the presentation.

All comments can be put into the CHAT.

We will take verbal comments at the end of the meeting.

All comments will be addressed and used in shaping the CEQA document.

Introductions

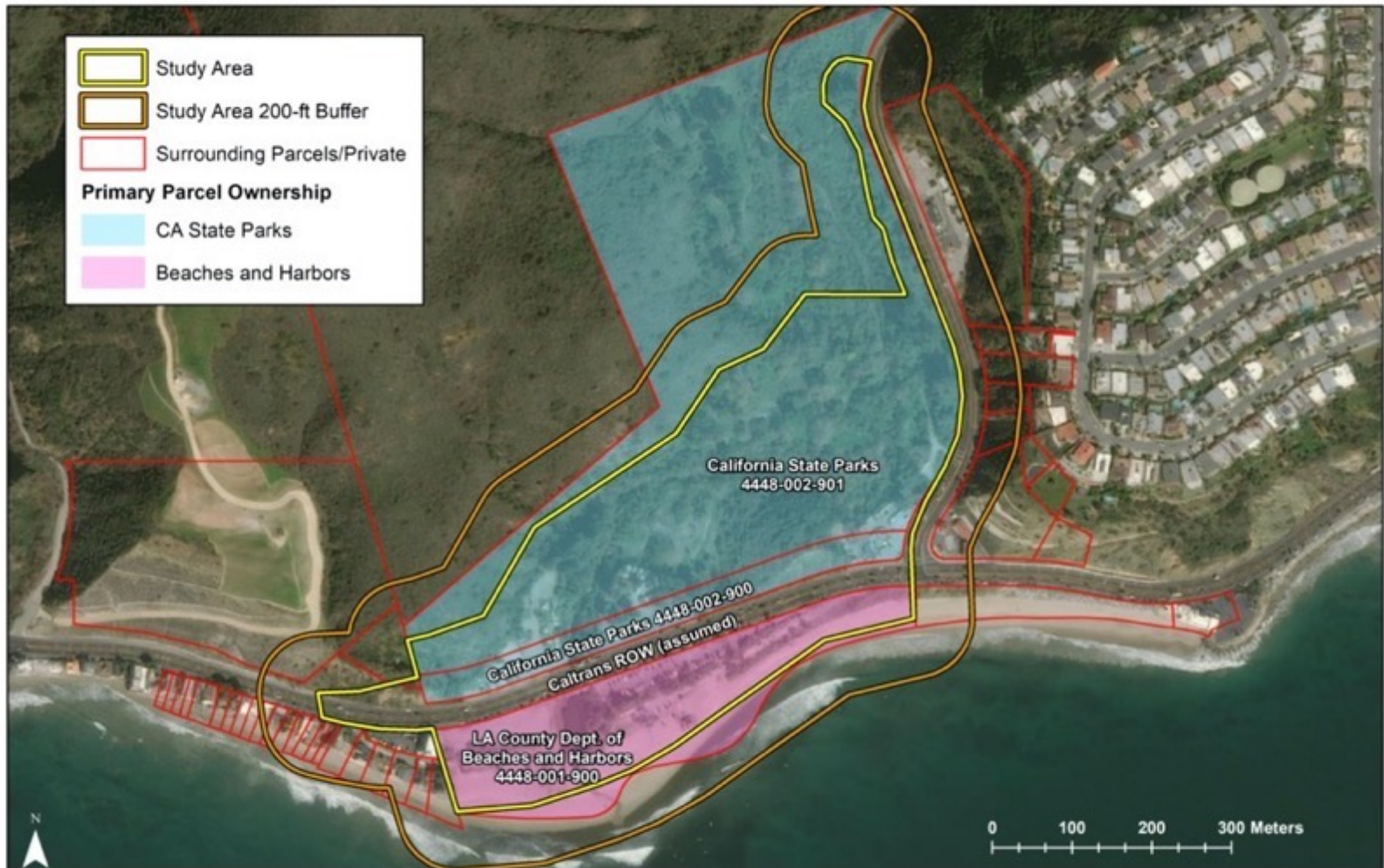
- **California State Parks, Landowner, CEQA Lead**
– Craig Sap, Danielle LeFer
- **Caltrans, Landowner** – Sean Herron
- **Los Angeles County Department of Beaches and Harbors, Landowner** – Ishmael Lopez
- **Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains, Project Coordination** – Clark Stevens
- **ESA, Consultant Preparing CEQA Document** – Tom Barnes

Project Location



Project Area Landowners

- Note: Buffer zone will not be directly changed by project



Meeting Agenda

- Background
- Purpose of Meeting
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Overview
- Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Components
- Project Alternatives Description
- Key Issues to be Addressed in EIR
- Schedule
- Public Comments

Background

- Benefit two federally endangered species (Tidewater Goby and Southern Steelhead Trout) that will otherwise continue to decline
- Address Sea level rise and erosion that threaten recreational beach, facilities and surf break
- Replace aging 1933 PCH bridge

Process to Date

- **Scoping Meeting (today) initiates the formal CEQA/NEPA environmental review process**
- **Alternatives proposed for consideration were developed based on technical studies and input from two public workshops held in 2020 and 2021.**

Tally of Comments Received 2.29.20	Max possible 19
Restore Topanga lagoon	11
Natural gateway into park with minimal build structures	4
Overnight accommodations	-5
Visitor uses: interpretive and educational facilities	-1
Ecological:	
• Improve fish passage for steelhead trout	13
• Maintain/improve habitat for tidewater goby	13
• Increase wetland and transitional habitat	15
• Self-sustaining function	13
• Protect nesting habitat	12
• Improve water quality in lagoon and ocean	13
• Note that sand movement and beach re-nourishment are potential project benefits	9
Sea Level Rise:	
• Accommodate increased wave action and tidal levels	9
• Move the lifeguard station and restroom septic tank	12
• Anticipate upstream migration of lagoon and transitional habitats	11
• Impacts to cultural resources in floodplain/Snake Pit area	3
Cultural/Historical:	
• Native American and historical resources within the project area. Consideration of pre- and post-1933 site topography and effects to cultural resources.	10
• Topanga Ranch Motel – determined to be eligible to the National Register of Historic Places for its association with, and an example of, the evolution of 1930s-1950s roadside recreation. Character-defining features include the courtyard layout and the landscape trees and shrubs.	1
• Interpretation	1
Emergency:	
• Lifeguard and Ranger access under PCH bridge has been identified as a benefit if possible to avoid problems during high traffic weekends and summer	6
• Emergency turn around during road closures – direct traffic under PCH bridge as a turnaround to be explored further	9
• Helicopter evacuation – need to attach utility power lines to the bridge structure which would provide opportunity to move the pad to the west. It might also be possible to place a pad on top of the new lifeguard building? Food for thought!	6
Recreation/Visitor Serving:	
• PARKING! Need to sort out how much and where	7
• Surfer access to view waves from PCH	5
• Make sure no change to surf break!	12
• Pedestrian access under PCH	9
• Interpretive signs	6
• Trails	11
• Picnic area	8
• Restrooms (there are septic limitations!)	12
• Restaurants and shops	-6
• Potential Visitor Center	1
• Topanga Ranch Motel Low Cost Accommodations	-6
• Handicapped access	7
• Other visitor serving concessions	-6
Transportation:	
• Maintain traffic access on PCH during bridge replacement	6
• Provide shoulder parking- Caltrans is unlikely to allow any parking on the bridge for safety reasons. Maybe add a lane to the bridge deck on south side for short term parking?	4
• Provide view to ocean through railing	3
• Bridge needs to be single span less than 200 feet	4

Summary of Previous Public Input

Orange highlights issues of most interest

What We Heard...

- Restore Topanga Lagoon to the greatest extent possible.
- Anticipate and plan for resilience to sea level rise and coastal erosion.



What We Heard...

- Improve lagoon ecological function
- Maintain/improve goby habitat
- Improve steelhead fish passage
- Protecting nesting and beach habitat
- Improve water quality
- Increase wetland and transitional upland habitat.



What We Heard...

- Avoid changing the surf break



What We Heard...

- Move lifeguard headquarters/restroom and helipad to better location.



What We Heard...

- Provide interpretation of the site history from Native Americans to present.



What We Heard...

- Maintain some visitor services like Reel Inn, Cholada and Wylie's Bait Shop.



What We Heard....

- Evaluate opportunity for Topanga Ranch Motel as affordable overnight accommodation
- Preference to limit to day-use only.



Thanks to All Who Provided Guidance!



Purpose of Scoping Meeting

Initiate CEQA Process

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) was prepared as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to announce that the California Department of Parks and Recreation is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Topanga Lagoon Restoration Project.

Public Scoping

The NOP facilitates a scoping process to gather additional stakeholder input on what potential impacts the EIR should consider and analyze to assist in identifying the preferred alternative. Comments from stakeholders help to focus the EIR analysis on environmental issues.

Participating Agencies

- Lead Agency
 - California Department of Parks and Recreation (Landowner, CEQA Lead)
 - US Army Corps of Engineers (NEPA Lead)
- Responsible Agencies
 - Caltrans (Landowner)
 - Los Angeles County Department of Beaches and Harbors (Landowner)



What is an Environmental Impact Report (EIR)?

- An informational document describing the range of alternatives and the anticipated potential environmental effects of implementing a project, as required by CEQA.
- Acts as a forum for public participation in the environmental review process.
- An EIR includes Mitigation Measures to address potential adverse environmental impacts.
- An EIR does not advocate or promote the project.

Federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Compliance

- It is anticipated that the EIR may also be used to support NEPA compliance with federal agencies.
- This could include US Army Corps of Engineers and Caltrans if federal highway funds are used.
- If so, Environmental Assessment may be prepared to comply with NEPA.

Why does Restoration Need an Environmental Impact Analysis?

- Any project has temporary impacts associated with changes.
- Restoration alternatives have different footprints with different effects to existing features.
- On site development may be removed, modified, or relocated.

The Project EIR Will Evaluate Direct and Cumulative Impacts for the Following Topics

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology /Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards & Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology / Water Quality
- Land Use / Planning
- Noise
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities / Service Systems
- Wildfire

How to Comment?

Public Comment Period Ends June 22, 2022

- **Provide a Verbal Comment Today**

- Select the **Raise Hand** button located at the bottom of the Zoom window.
- If you're joining by phone, dial ***9** and then ***6** to unmute
- State your name
- Each person will have 3 minutes to provide their comment

- **Provide Written Comments Today**

- Click on the Chat
- Type in your question and click submit
- Email comments to:

TopangaLagoonRestorationProject@esassoc.com

How to Comment?

Public Comment Period Ends June 22, 2022

- **The NOP is Available for Electronic Review at:**
<https://www.redsmm.org/resources/topanga-lagoon-restoration/>.
- **The NOP is Available for Viewing at:**
 - Malibu Library: 23519 Civic Center Way, Malibu CA, 90265
 - Calabasas Library: 200 Civic Center Way, Calabasas CA, 91302
 - Topanga Library: 122 N. Topanga Cyn Blvd., Topanga, CA 90290
- **A Hardcopy Can be Emailed or Mailed if Requested.**

Project Objectives

- Reestablish the lagoon ecosystem to improve estuarine hydrologic functions
- Enhance sea level rise and coastal erosion resilience
- Restore habitat and species within the project area
- Preserve and interpret cultural resources
- Integrate public access, emergency, and visitor services by all landowners
- Maintain traffic capacity during construction
- Manage and maintain the lagoon to ensure long-term viability of the restoration efforts

Proposed Project Key Elements

- Reestablish an expanded Topanga Creek/Lagoon Ecosystem to protect endangered species
- Visitor serving improvements
- Replace and lengthen aging PCH bridge to allow for additional habitat and resilience

Additional Project Elements

- **Maintain coastal access including parking areas and beach recreational and habitat areas in response to sea level rise and coastal erosion**
- **Maintain emergency access and traffic control**
- **Protect existing surf break**
- **Maintain traffic flow during construction**



Project Alternative Designs

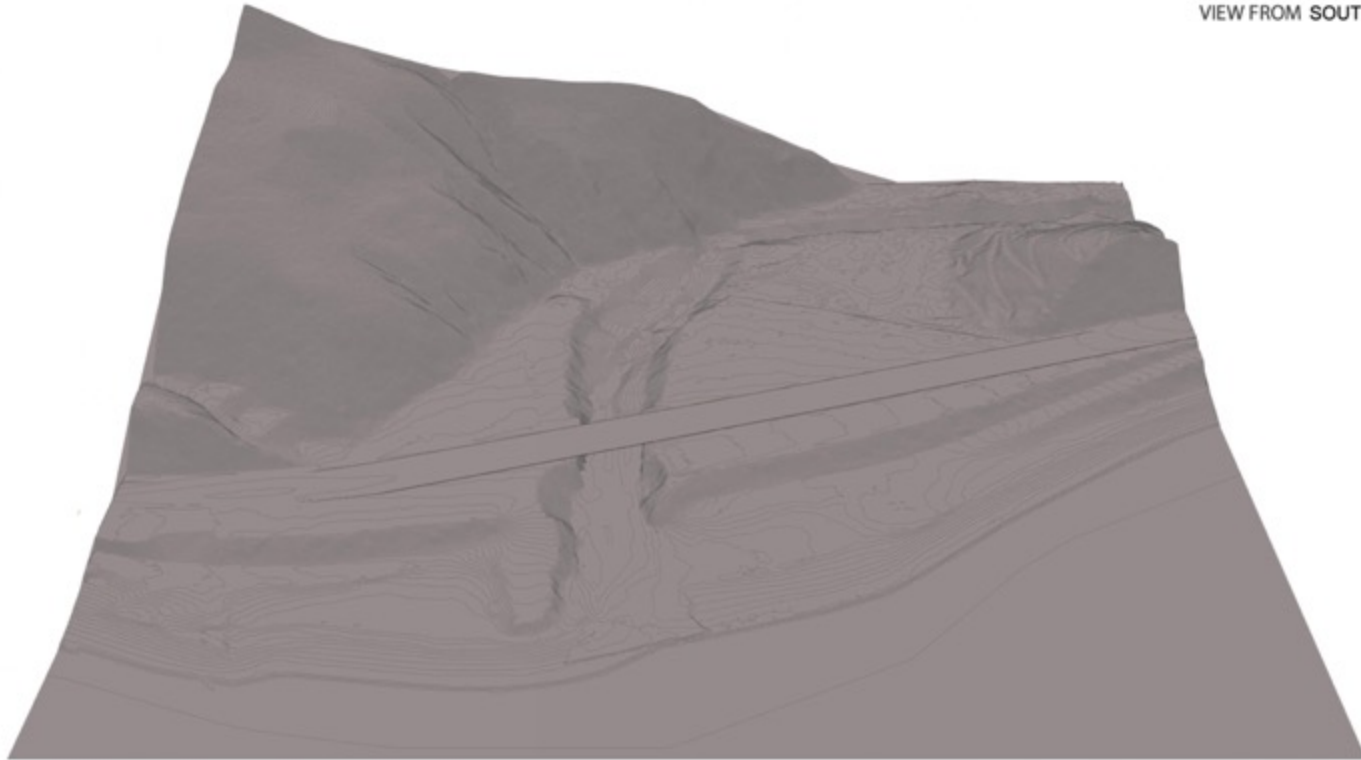
1. No Project Alternative/Managed Decline
2. Maximum Lagoon Habitat Alternative
3. Limited Lagoon Habitat Expansion Alternative
4. Maximum Managed Retreat Alternative

TOPANGA LAGOON
AERIAL VIEW FROM SOUTH



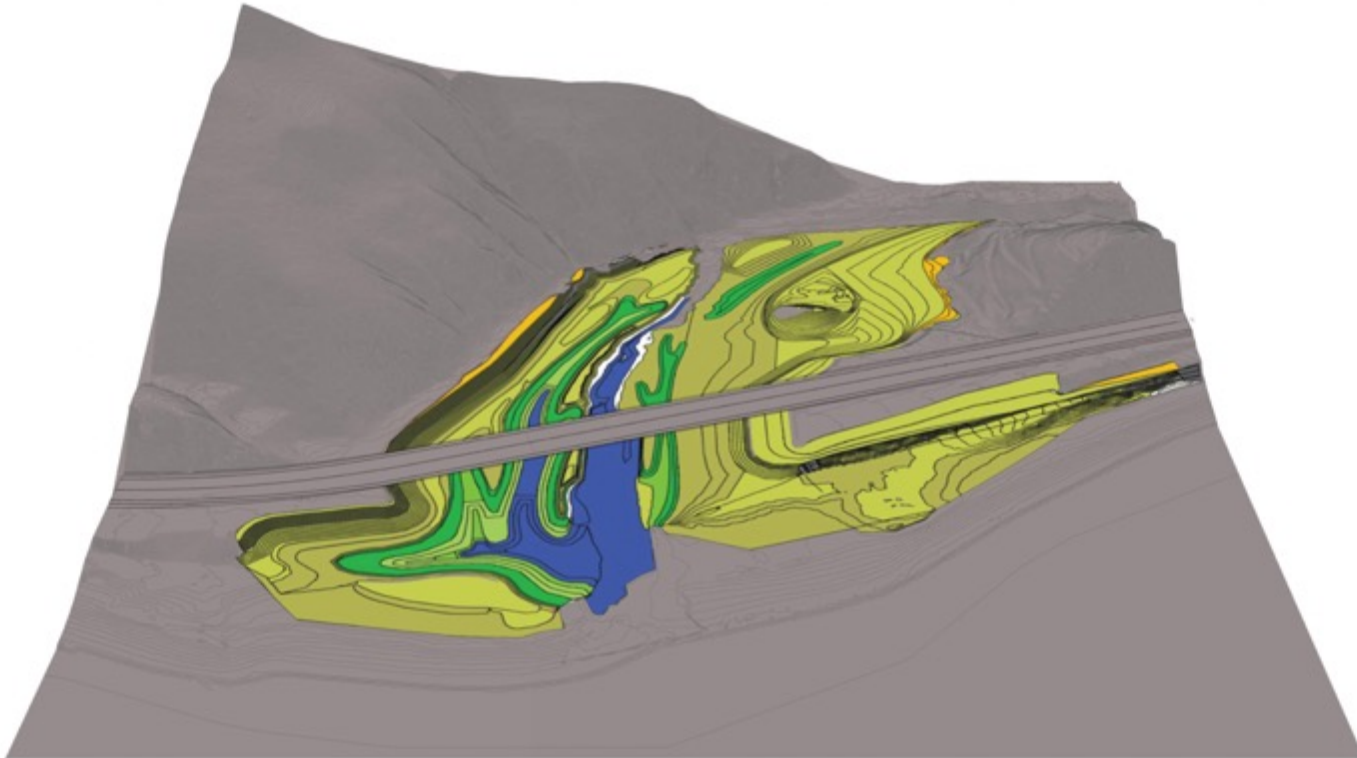
EXISTING CONDITION

TOPANGA LAGOON EX
TOPOGRAPHIC MODEL
VIEW FROM SOUTH

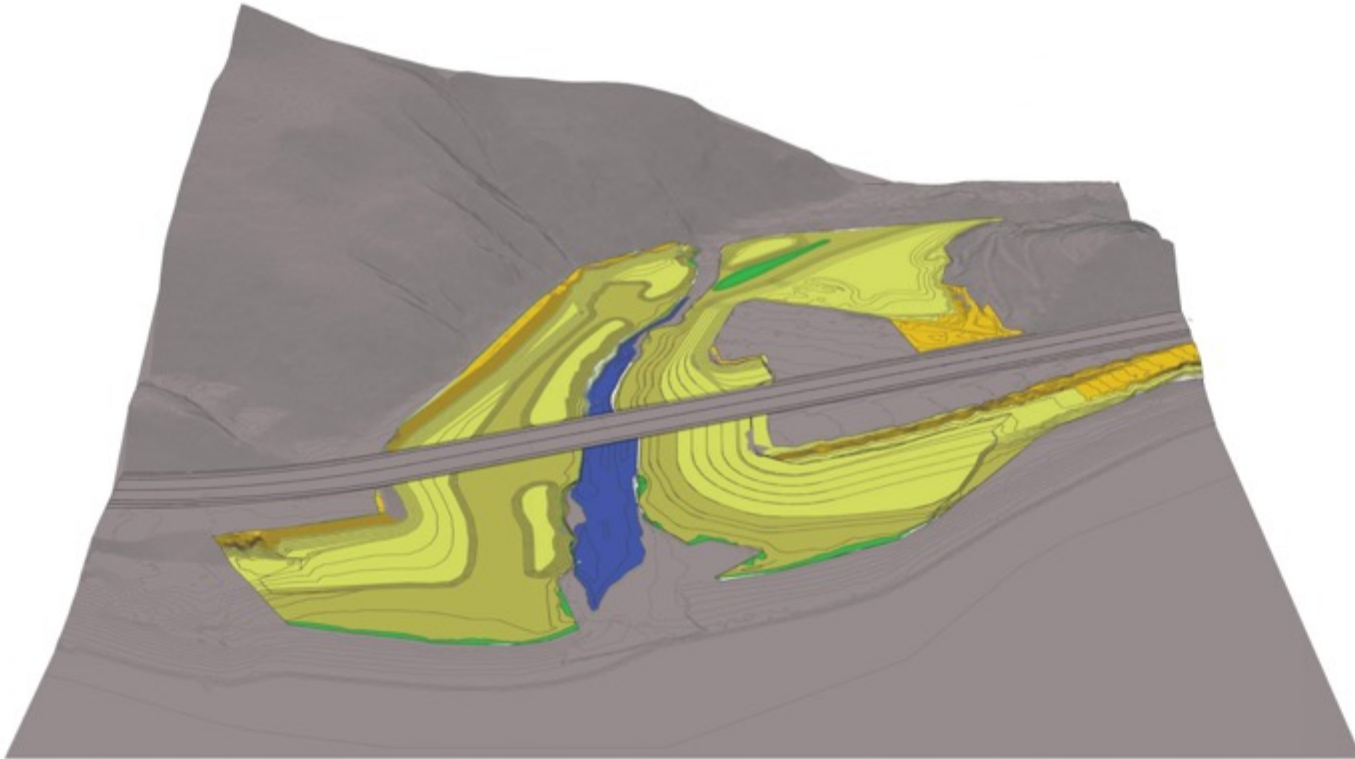


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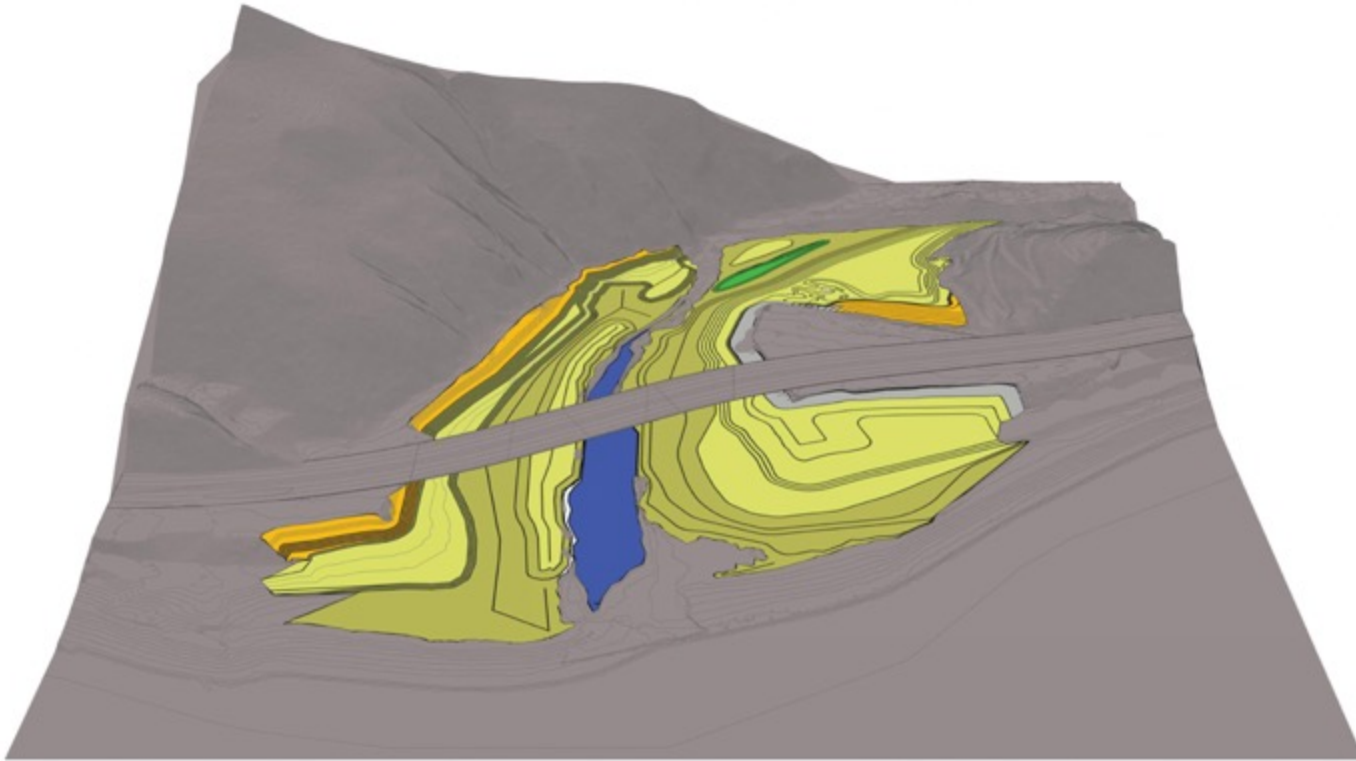
TOPANGA LAGOON ALT2



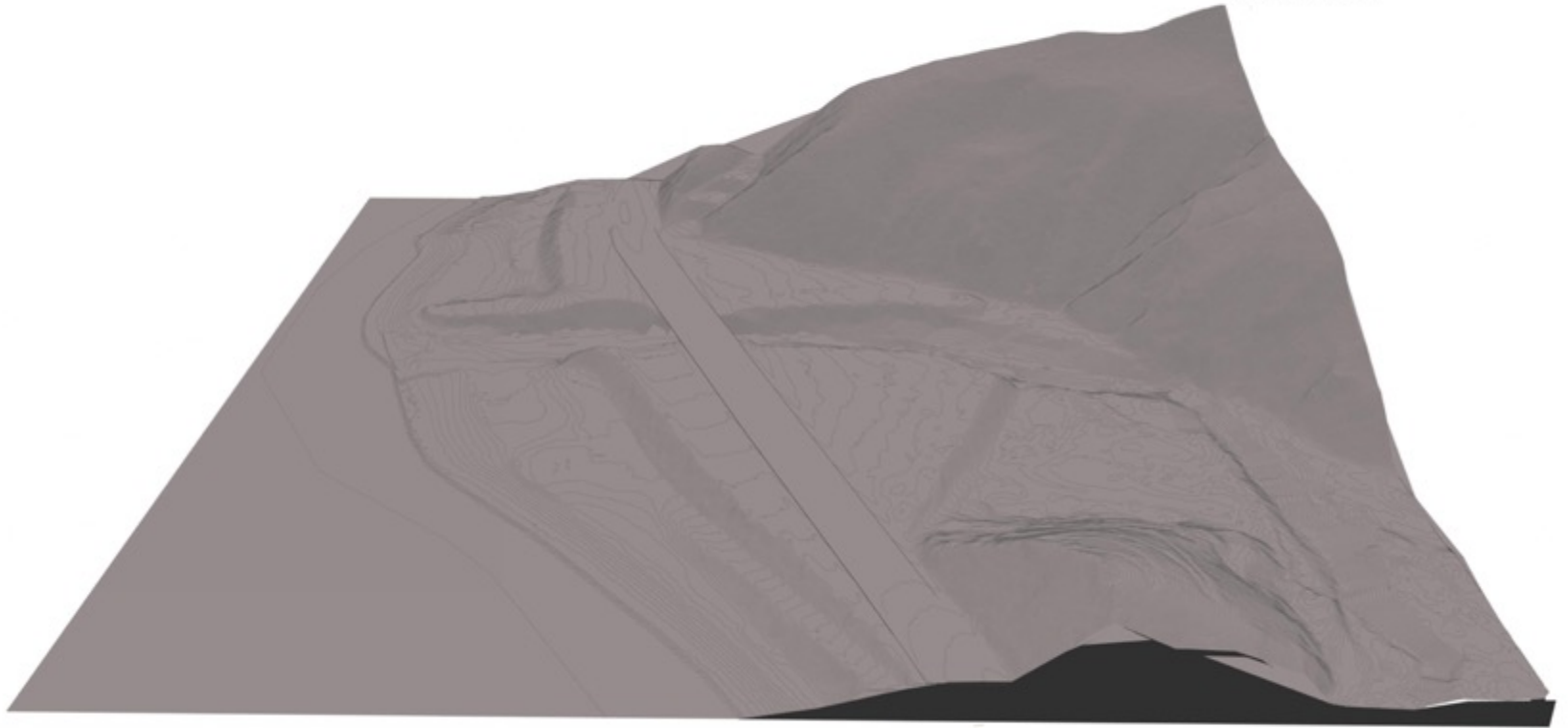
TOPANGA LAGOON ALT3



TOPANGA LAGOON ALT4

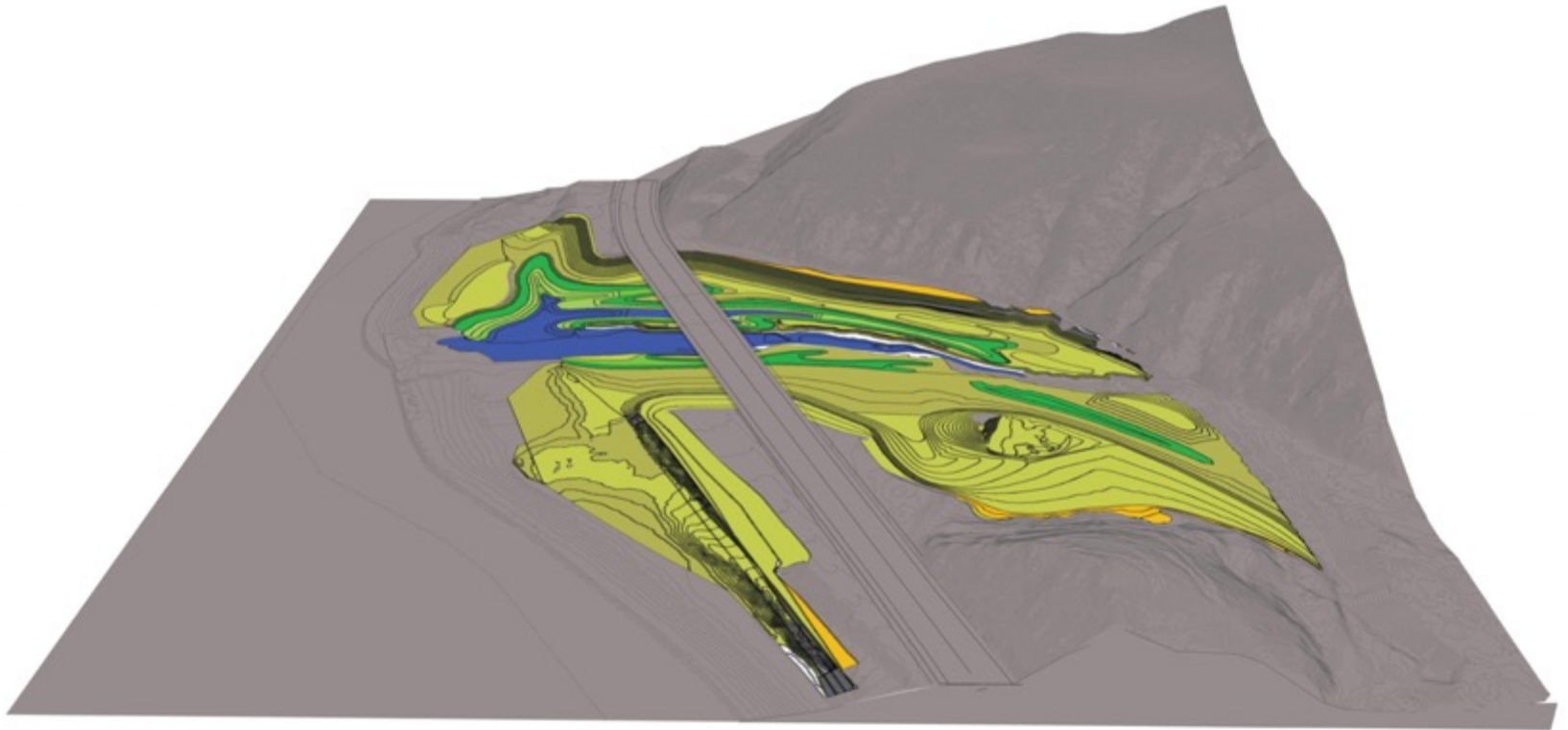


TOPANGA LAGOON EX
TOPOGRAPHIC MODEL
VIEW FROM EAST

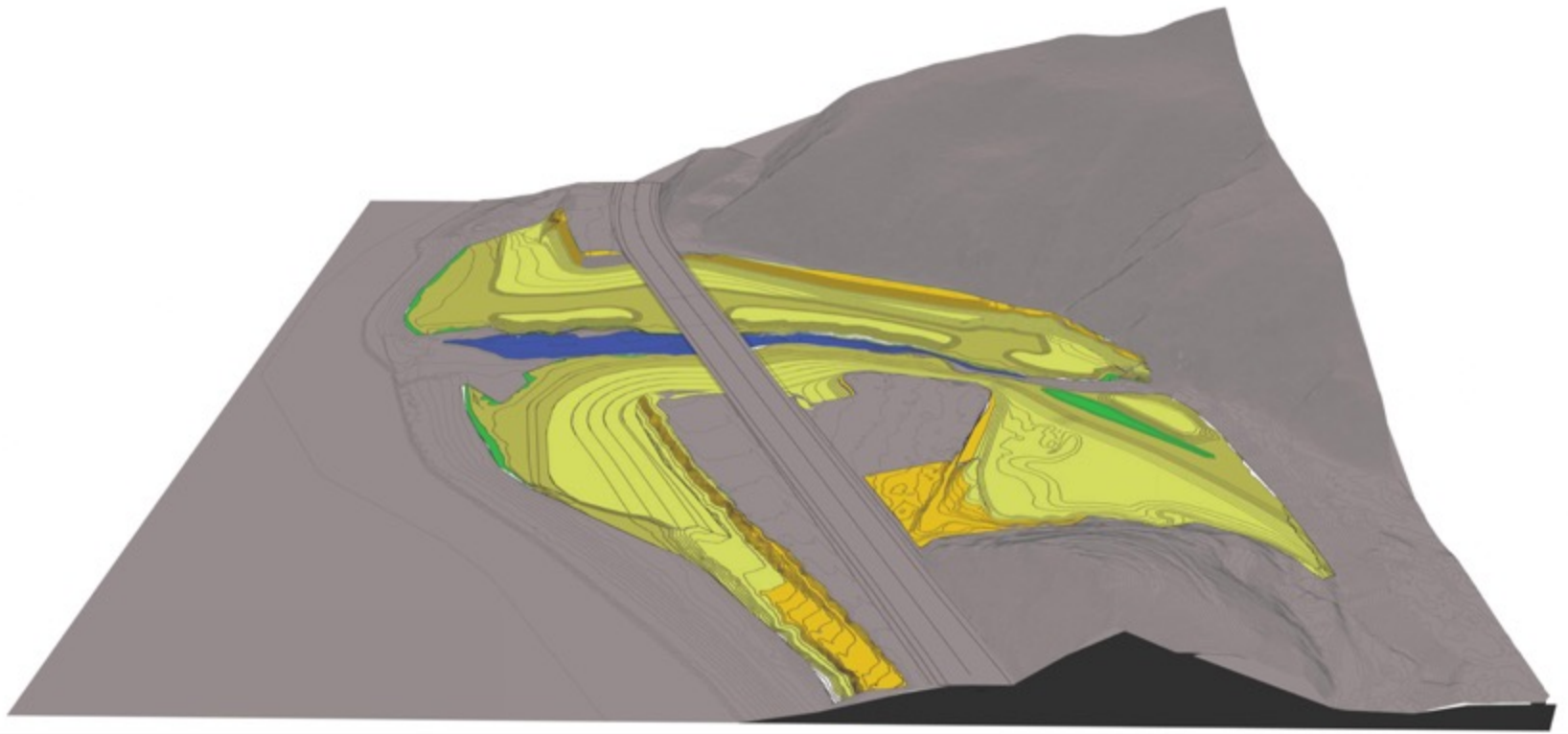


EXISTING CONDITION

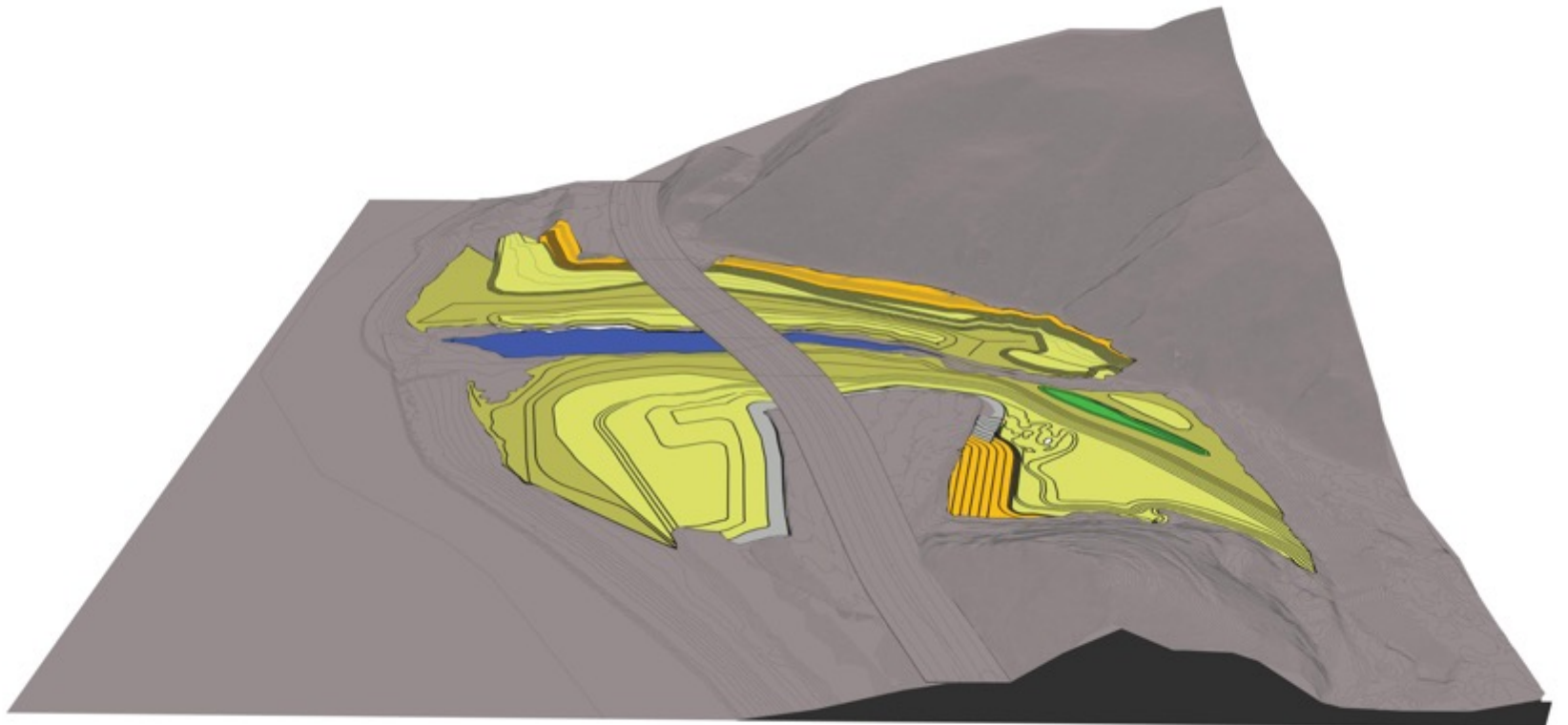
TOPANGA LAGOON ALT2



TOPANGA LAGOON ALT3



TOPANGA LAGOON ALT4



Elements Common to Each Project Build Alternatives

- Reconfigure and replace parking areas north and south of PCH
- Full or partial relocation of visitor services along Topanga Canyon Boulevard
- Realign and upgrade of utilities
- Relocate the helipad and lifeguard HQ/restrooms
- Relocate recreational, maintenance, emergency and ADA access

Alternative 1

No Project/Managed Decline



Alternative 1

No Project/Managed Decline



- No building renovations
- Continued degradation of critical for habitat for endangered species
- Continued degradation of Topanga Ranch Motel and other structures

Alternative 1

No Project/Managed Decline

- Continued coastal erosion undermining Lifeguard HQ
- Continued loss of recreational beach space
- No sea level rise adaptation



Alternative 2

Maximum Lagoon Habitat



Alternative 2

Maximum Lagoon Habitat

Disturbed area shown in white



Alternative 2

Maximum Lagoon Habitat



- Restore closer to historic condition
 - Lagoon increased to ~ 9.5 wetted acres
 - 27.8 riparian/transitional/upland acres
 - Beach expanded to 4.39 acres
- PCH bridge to span wider lagoon
- PCH alignment remains as is - construction staging will maintain traffic flow

Alternative 2

Maximum Lagoon Habitat

- Removes up to 30 ft of historic fill and existing structures
- Removes historic Topanga Ranch Motel
- Lifeguard HQ and helipad relocated

Alternative 3

Limited Lagoon Habitat Expansion, Topanga Ranch Motel Retained



Alternative 3

Limited Lagoon Habitat Expansion, Topanga Ranch Motel Retained



Alternative 3

Limited Lagoon Habitat Expansion, Topanga Ranch Motel Retained



- Habitat improvements:
 - Lagoon ~ 7.7 wetted acres
 - 29.47 riparian/transition/upland acres restored
 - Beach expanded to 4.42 acres
- More habitat values than existing conditions, but less than Alt 2 or Alt 4

Alternative 3

Limited Lagoon Habitat Expansion, Topanga Ranch Motel Retained



- PCH bridge replacement to span wider lagoon
- PCH alignment remains as is - construction staging will maintain traffic flow

Alternative 3

Limited Lagoon Habitat Expansion, Topanga Ranch Motel Retained

- Removal of up to 30 ft of historic fill and existing structures on west side of creek/lagoon only
- Rehabilitates most of the historic Topanga Ranch Motel
- Lifeguard HQ and helipad relocated

Alternative 4

Maximum Managed Retreat



Alternative 4

Maximum Managed Retreat



Alternative 4

Maximum Managed Retreat



- Habitat improvements:
 - Lagoon increased to ~ 7.6 wetted acres
 - 29.48 riparian/transitional/upland acres
 - Beach expansion to 4.56 acres
- More habitat values than existing conditions, but less than Alt 2
- PCH bridge to span wider lagoon
- PCH alignment moves north - construction staging will maintain traffic flow

Alternative 4

Maximum Managed Retreat

- Removes up to 30 ft of historic fill and existing structures on west side of creek/lagoon only
- Rehabilitates a smaller portion of the historic Topanga Ranch Motel
- Lifeguard HQ and helipad relocated

Topanga Canyon Blvd. Project Area



Potential Temporary Impacts

During Restoration Construction only:

- Coastal access restricted including reduced parking
- Impact to biological resources
- Water quality impacts
- Realignment of utilities could result in temporary service disruption
- Air emissions and noise

*Emergency services access and traffic flow to be maintained

Potential Permanent Impacts

- Removal of some/all existing structures
- Removal of historic Topanga Ranch Motel
- Parking and beach access relocated
- Lifeguard and helipad relocated
- PCH bridge and highway more resilient to sea level rise
- Recreational beach more resilient to sea level rise
- Protects the surf break
- Lagoon biological and hydrological conditions improved, supporting native species including federally endangered Tidewater Goby and Southern California Steelhead

CEQA Schedule and Next Steps

- **NOP Public Comment Period Ends - June 22, 2022**
- Notice of Availability for the Draft EIR - January 2023
 - 60-day public review and comment period
- Draft EIR Public Meeting – Estimated March 2023
- Final EIR Publication - Estimated June 2023
- Certify the EIR – Estimated July 2023

Comments?

Provide Written Comments Today!

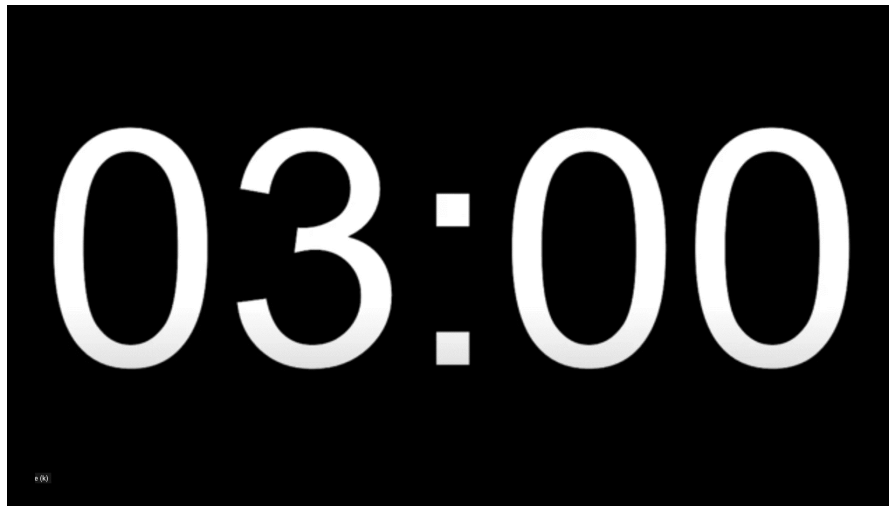
- Type in your comment in the Chat and click submit.
- All comments will be considered as we proceed with environmental review.
- We have appreciated all the previous input provided by the two public workshops in 2020 and 2021, which already informed the alternative designs, goals and objectives.

Email or Mail Comments by June 22, 2022

- Email comments to:
TopangaLagoonRestorationProject@esassoc.com
- Mail comments to:
Topanga Lagoon Restoration Project
Attn: Danielle LeFer
California Department of Parks and Recreation
1925 Las Virgenes Road
Calabasas, CA 91302

How to Give Verbal Comments Today

- Raise your hand – click **Reactions** at the bottom of the screen then **Raise Hand**
- If you're joining by phone, dial ***9** and then ***6** to unmute
- You will be unmuted and a timer will appear on the screen.
- You will have 3 minutes to provide your comments.
- Thanks for keeping your comments respectful!



Topanga Lagoon Restoration Project, EIR Scoping Meeting Concludes

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INPUT AND GUIDANCE!



Email comments to:

TopangaLagoonRestorationProject@esassoc.com

Due by 22 June 2022

Recording and Transcript of this presentation will be posted on RCD website
<https://www.rcdsmm.org/resources/topanga-lagoon-restoration/>

