

Communication from Public

Name: Scott Culbertson

Date Submitted: 11/08/2022 04:19 PM

Council File No: 22-1326

Comments for Public Posting: Honorable LA City Councilmembers, Ballona Wetlands Housing Intervention Motion (CF 22-1326) My name is Scott Culbertson, I'm the executive director of Friends of Ballona Wetlands (the Friends). The Friends is a 501(C)(3) non-profit corporation that for 44 years has been committed to the protection and restoration of the Ballona Wetlands. I am writing to support of passage of this motion. Like so many neighborhoods, ours has been significantly impacted by the struggles of our unhoused neighbors. In our case, the impacts have severely harmed the habitat that we are charged with protecting. Unfortunately, an encampment has emerged adjacent to the Ballona Freshwater Marsh (FWM), and residents of the encampment have greatly damaged the wetlands habitat and are impacting the native wildlife. Public access has evaporated. Birders and nature lovers from all over Los Angeles used to visit the FWM to enjoy its beauty and abundance of wildlife. Senior citizens would walk the public trails to exercise, get some fresh air, and enjoy the company of their friends and family. Before the encampments took over, busloads of students from under-resourced areas where green space is rare would visit to learn about nature and enjoy this natural habitat. The area is no longer safe and visitation has dropped to nearly zero. Last year we estimated the cost to repair the damage at more than \$200,000; it will take decades for this environmental oasis to recover. I was recently alerted that the CAO's office is ready to turn their attention toward this encampment at the FWM and has identified more than \$2 million within the City's Homeless Services fund to be allocated to this project. I understand that this amount will cover the costs to provide resources for those at the FWM who are in inoperable vehicles or would like to relinquish their vehicle to move indoors. We are sympathetic to the plight of the unhoused, and we want to see them receive services and be housed. We also want them to have safe places to stay, if they wish to remain in the community. But encampments cannot be allowed to flourish as residents of the encampments destroy the FWM – it's not humane to those living there, wildlife is being destroyed, and the residents of Los Angeles are being deprived of a valuable resource. On behalf of board of the directors and staff of Friends of Ballona Wetlands, and the community of students and nature lovers we represent, we

urge you to please pass this motion. Best regards, Scott H.
Culbertson Executive Director



Board Members

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November 8, 2022

Honorable LA City Councilmembers,

Ballona Wetlands Housing Intervention Motion (CF 22-1326)

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Public access has evaporated. Birders and nature lovers from all over Los Angeles used to visit the FWM to enjoy its beauty and abundance of wildlife. Senior citizens would walk the public trails to exercise, get some fresh air, and enjoy the company of their friends and family. Before the encampments took over, busloads of students from under-resourced areas where green space is rare would visit to learn about nature and enjoy this natural habitat. The area is no longer safe and visitation has dropped to nearly zero.

Last year we estimated the cost to repair the damage at more than \$200,000; it will take decades for this environmental oasis to recover.

I was recently alerted that the CAO's office is ready to turn their attention toward this encampment at the FWM and has identified more than \$2 million within the City's Homeless Services fund to be allocated to this project. I understand that this amount will cover the costs to provide resources for those at the FWM who are in inoperable vehicles or would like to relinquish their vehicle to move indoors.

We are sympathetic to the plight of the unhoused, and we want to see them receive services and be housed. We also want them to have safe places to stay, if they wish to remain in the community. But encampments cannot be allowed to flourish as residents of the encampments destroy the FWM – it's not humane to those living there, wildlife is being destroyed, and the residents of Los Angeles are being deprived of a valuable resource.

On behalf of board of the directors and staff of Friends of Ballona Wetlands, and the community of students and nature lovers we represent, we urge you to please pass this motion.

Best regards,

Scott H. Culbertson
Executive Director