

Ventura Audubon Society

November 19, 2020

RE: City of Port Hueneme General Plan Update

Cynthia Hartley
Executive Director, Ventura Audubon
ed@venturaaudubon.org

Tony Stewart
Community Development Director/City Planner
City of Port Hueneme
250 N Ventura Road
Port Hueneme, CA 93041

Dear Mr Stewart,

We thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the Port Hueneme General Plan update.

I am the executive director of Ventura Audubon Society (VAS) and I write on behalf of our conservation committee and our 600 members and their families. Audubon began over 120 years ago in response to the slaughter of millions of water birds. Today, our mission continues, now focused on the conservation and restoration of bird populations and wildlife habitat.

Ormond Beach is one of our chapter's top priorities. It is not only designated Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area (ESHA), but also a globally Important Bird Area. This is because it is critically important to bird populations worldwide. It is a key re-fueling stop for migrating birds on the Pacific Flyway and rare habitat for threatened bird species.

VAS has a long history at Ormond Beach, and we are deeply committed to protecting the wildlife and habitat in this important place. For 20 years VAS has worked for California least tern and western snowy plover recovery in partnership with USFWS and CDFW. In addition to locating and tracking nests, we conduct a volunteer naturalist program that enables the local community to participate in endangered shorebird conservation. We also directly protect nests during breeding season, monitor and document threats to nest and chick survival, and work with landowners and responsible agencies to inform management decisions.

We applaud the City for updating its 22-year-old General Plan. Much has changed in the generation since it was written. We have gained more than 20 years of species management experience on Ormond Beach, which has the largest nesting populations of WSP and CLT of any public beach in Ventura County.

We need help improving protection of these species, and your General Plan update is an opportunity to address the problems we have documented. Each time our volunteers patrol, they witness violations of City ordinances, as well as federal and state regulations. ATV's enter and destroy nesting habitat unchallenged, off leash dogs are common despite a complete dog ban, homeless vandalize nests and steal our equipment. These activities are causing nest

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destruction and death of chicks of endangered birds, which will have long term negative impacts on nesting populations. We have called authorities to report violations and request help, including Port Hueneme, but we are often greeted with antipathy and even turned away.

Although most of Ormond Beach is in the City of Oxnard, Port Hueneme is the main access point to this ESHA. Your city is the gateway to Ormond Beach. Many of the violations we encounter originate on Hueneme beach and could be stopped at your border. Establishing policies at this key location to enforce existing regulations and ordinances would make a tremendous improvement to the current situation and send a message to the community that conservation is important. We recommend adding the following provisions to the new General Plan and welcome the opportunity to partner with the City in this effort:

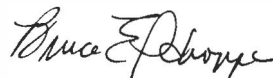
1. A clear statement that protecting endangered species and habitat is important for the health of the community and local disadvantaged populations
2. Outline a plan to promote public awareness of regulations that protect ESHAs
3. Include provisions, including partnering with organizations, for signage and enforcement of ordinances.
4. A proactive policy that includes cooperation with other agencies towards preventing homeless encampments and illegal entry of motorized vehicles onto the beach

We cannot protect these species and their habitat without the involvement of the City of Port Hueneme. We believe that by incorporating our recommendations the City of Port Hueneme would assert itself as a regional leader in conservation. The City has an opportunity to improve the conservation of rare and endangered species and habitat on Ormond Beach, and to improve the quality of life of your community and your citizens for generations to come. Please feel free to contact me if we can partner in any way.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Hartley
Executive Director
Ventura Audubon Society



Bruce Schoppe
Vice President of Conservation
Chair of Conservation Committee
Ventura Audubon Society

CC Andrea Jones, Audubon California
Lena Chang, United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Hans Sin, California Dept of Fish and Wildlife