

PASADENA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Founded April 1904

1750 N. Altadena Drive
Pasadena, CA 91107
WWW.PASADENAAUDUBON.ORG

June 22, 2013

Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project
c/o Donna McCormick
1 Ada, Suite 100
Irvine, CA 92816

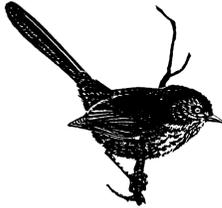
Dear Ms. McCormick:

On May 1, 2013, the Board of Directors of the Pasadena Audubon Society, representing 1400 members, voted unanimously to strongly oppose the proposed Annenberg interpretive center in Area C of the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve.

We oppose this proposal because this important upland component of the Ballona ecosystem in Los Angeles County should be restored, not developed. It is too precious to be turned into a facility that could be located somewhere else. Almost all of our local wetlands have been developed, and this remaining upland fragment is one of the few places in Los Angeles County where Loggerhead Shrikes and White-tailed Kites can be found; these species require the open space that Area C affords. Any development of this land will threaten the already greatly diminished habitat of these birds.

We also oppose the proposal because it violates the purpose of the Reserve and sets a terrible precedent. The land was transferred to the state for “conservation, restoration, or recreation purposes only,” and the proposed care and adoption facility for companion animals not only violates that agreement, but it also falls well outside the mission of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Worse, it sets a dangerous precedent; other private organizations would be able to argue that they too should be allowed to take over ecologically sensitive state land to use for their own non-appropriate purposes. Unbelievably, the MOU seems to view this proposal as a “model for future joint efforts.” This idea is truly unthinkable as it suggests that the government is a willing partner in this spurious usage of state, ie. public, lands. We find this to be of grave concern as it potentially negates the purpose of any or all state reserves.

Also alarming is the idea of dogs and cats being located at Ballona, especially with a potentially irresponsible host. Leonard Aube, the Executive Director of the Annenberg Foundation, states that he and his organization “do not” “differentiate or parse between animals—wild, feral, indigenous, companion, or others.” His own words illustrate astonishing ignorance and irresponsibility. He may not differentiate between animals, but the animals themselves do. Feral cats and even friendly domesticated dogs pose real and unnecessary threats to the already threatened animals of the Reserve. No animal care facilities should be located anywhere in the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve.



PASADENA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Founded April 1904

1750 N. Altadena Drive

Pasadena, CA 91107

WWW.PASADENAAUDUBON.ORG

If the goal here is to educate children, why not follow the excellent model presented by groups like the Los Angeles Audubon Society? They provide high-quality environmental education for children at the Ballona Wetlands by getting the children outside. Study after study shows that this is the best way to educate children about the environment, and it works much more effectively than keeping them indoors. We see no need for the proposed interpretive center when the wetlands themselves already exist. It strikes us as odd to destroy something in order to build a center to teach children about the thing that has been destroyed. Why not use the wetlands as a classroom?

The Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve was created to save 600 acres of wetlands from development. We cannot overstate the shortsightedness of the proposal to develop this land. It violates the very purpose of the Reserve itself and obscures the mission of California Department of Fish and Wildlife. We ask that it be stopped. Thank you for your time and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Laura S. Garrett (signed)
Conservation Chair
Pasadena Audubon Society

CC: California Department of Fish and Wildlife