

CARPINTERIA SALT MARSH ENHANCEMENT PLAN
Staff, Santa Barbara County Flood Control District

Carpinteria Salt Marsh, covering 230 acres, is the healthiest salt marsh on the south coast of Santa Barbara County. The marsh is the remnant of a larger historic bay, or estuary, that formed in the Carpinteria Valley. The watershed of the marsh is confined to the drainages of Franklin and Santa Monica creeks and a smaller unnamed drainage west of Santa Monica Creek. Santa Monica Creek extends about five miles southward from the crest of the watershed to the Marsh, where it joins Franklin Creek to form the Main Channel, which extends to the mouth of the estuary. Franklin Creek extends about four miles southward from the foothills of the Santa Ynez Mountains to the confluence of the tidal portion of the creeks.

Carpinteria Marsh includes intertidal estuarine wetlands, adjacent palustrine wetlands (nontidal wetlands) and some subtidal deep water habitat in both natural and artificial channels. Franklin and Santa Monica creeks and several smaller channels drain portions of the southern slope of the Santa Ynez Mountains and the Carpinteria Valley. It adjoins a sandy beach, subtidal reef, and kelp beds. It provides habitat for migratory waterfowl as well as several endangered species, including the salt marsh bird's beak (*Cordylanthus maritimus* ssp. *maritimus*), Belding's savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*), and Light-footed clapper rail (*Rallus longirostris levipes*). It is also an important nursery for marine and estuarine fish.

The Carpinteria Salt Marsh Enhancement Plan (Plan) consists of a combined flood control and wetland restoration project. The Santa Barbara County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District) is the primary local sponsor for the project. A portion of the Marsh (120 acres known as the Carpinteria Salt Marsh Reserve) is part of the University of California's Natural Reserve System (UCNRS). The Land Trust for Santa Barbara (Land Trust) owns areas in the marsh referred to as Basin 1 and the South Marsh. The project consists of actions to contain flood flows through the marsh to the ocean as well as enhancement and restoration of several degraded areas.

The flood control improvements include raising the height of an existing berm and constructing a floodwall along Del Mar Avenue to convey 100-year flood flows to the ocean. The improvements are designed to minimize impacts to existing biological resources while providing an opportunity to maximize restoration and enhancement of the marsh.

There are several areas within the marsh that are conducive to restoration and enhancement. Intertidal channels have filled with sediment throughout the marsh and will be restored to provide maximum tidal circulation and habitat for fish. Several berms will be removed and the areas will be revegetated with native salt marsh plants. A new tidal inlet will be established as well as some dune habitat. The recently completed Carpinteria Salt Marsh Nature Park located off Ash Avenue serves as an example of the restoration and enhancement goals in the marsh. A pedestrian bridge will be placed over Franklin Creek to connect the Nature Park with areas to be restored as part of the plan.

Construction on this project should begin in the summer of 2004. For more information on the plan, please call Karl Treiberg, Santa Barbara County Flood Control District, at 568-3440.