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The Bay Foundation Releases Year 5 Report on Ballona Wetlands Community Iceplant Removal Project

Los Angeles, CA (September 1, 2021) – [The Bay Foundation \(TBF\)](#) has released the latest annual report for the [Ballona Wetlands Restoration: Community Iceplant Removal Project \(Year 5\)](#), indicating that the restoration project has thus far successfully removed over 34 tons of iceplant from the project area within the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve (Reserve), showing very little regrowth. Five-year highlights include installation of over 1,400 native plants and seeding native vegetation throughout the site. Over 25 native species were seeded or planted, and results show an increase in native vegetation cover overall. The project, which relies on community volunteers as well as TBF staff and partners, has also removed hundreds of bags of other non-native invasive plant species, which require ongoing maintenance. The project also aimed to broaden public involvement and stewardship at the Reserve. The project is in partnership with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and Friends of Ballona Wetlands (FBW). [[Link to Year 5 report](#) / [Link to additional annual reports](#)]

While iceplant's presence is pervasive across southern California, and may not seem to be an issue to the average person, the importance of iceplant removal at a site like the Reserve should not be understated. It is an invasive species that has increased in area on the Reserve by approximately 20% over the last several decades, covering approximately 30 acres of the Reserve (prior to implementation of this project). While this project was focused on a relatively small area, it serves to inform future hand-restoration efforts both at the Reserve and throughout southern California.

"It is incredibly inspiring to see the benefits of this restoration project to native plants and wildlife," states Karina Johnston, TBF Science Director. "After five years of dedicated work by TBF staff, partners, interns, and volunteers; much of the site has been transformed from being impacted by invasive species, with very little habitat value, to one that supports wetland and dune plants, pollinators, and other wildlife."

The project began on Sept. 1, 2016, and relies on volunteer and community support to remove non-native plants by hand. While Years 3 and 4 removed over 17 tons of iceplant during community restoration events, plus an additional 152 large bags of other non-native and invasive vegetation, Year 5 was presented with the coronavirus pandemic, and its limitations on events. Public events were halted due to COVID-19 restrictions from health agencies. However, TBF staff and interns from Loyola Marymount University's Coastal



Research Institute (CRI) still hand-removed an estimated 2.5 tons of iceplant during Year 5. An additional 233 bags of other non-native and invasive vegetation, such as radish, mustard, crown daisy, and Geraldton carnation weed, were also removed from the site.

Report highlights:

- Across five years:
 - 34.5 tons of iceplant were removed across a total of 1.71 acres
 - 457 volunteers contributed over 1,200 hours across 41 community restoration events
 - Over 400 large bags of additional non-native and invasive vegetation were removed across five years
 - CRI research students have evaluated native plant germination strategies, conducted monitoring, and assisted in non-native plant removal throughout the site
- During Year 5:
 - Over 1,400 native container stock plants were installed; over 34 lbs of native seed was distributed
 - 31 non-public restoration and maintenance events, conducted by TBF staff, project partners, and interns, focused on the removal of non-native vegetation such as radish, crown daisy, iceplant, and Geraldton carnation weed
 - Activities included hand weeding, weed whacking, biomass pile removals, collecting and distributing native plant seed, erosion control matting placement, planting native container stock plants, and watering
 - The focus on reseeding and planting native container stock vegetation increased the native species richness and cover in many areas, with noticeable differences prominent in the hillside areas
 - Existing native plants such as alkali weed, saltgrass, and pickleweed continued to increase in cover; overall, the site increased in native plant cover
 - Saltgrass, the preferred habitat for rare species such as the wandering skipper, expanded within the restoration area, especially in areas that had some pre-restoration baseline cover prior to iceplant removal
 - Non-native plants continued to pose challenges, requiring ongoing maintenance and removal in many areas of the site

"Volunteering at the community restoration event was such a great experience. It was interesting to learn about the history of the wetlands and what type of invasive species are currently growing there," shares Camille Morales, LMU student volunteer. "While the number of participants allowed at each event is limited for now, the friendliness, enthusiasm and positivity whilst picking weeds throughout the wetlands makes the volunteering 10x more fun. I can't wait to help again!"

On August 1, 2021, the public permit conditions of CDP No. 5-15-1427 began in Year 6, and TBF has restarted limited-capacity public community events. TBF developed strategies and



practices to resume public events in a safer manner in line with local guidance. The scheduling of future events will be informed by and in accordance with public health agencies. To volunteer or find out more information, please visit TBF's website, www.santamonibabay.org, click on "Events".

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About The Bay Foundation (TBF)

The Bay Foundation (TBF) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit environmental group founded in 1990 to restore and enhance the Santa Monica Bay and local coastal waters (from the LA-Ventura county line to the Palos Verdes Peninsula). The Bay Foundation is a partner in the Santa Monica Bay National Estuary Program along with the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission and many other organizations. TBF works collaboratively with a broad group of stakeholders, including government agencies, industry, environmental groups, and community members. TBF engages scientists and conducts research while mentoring student interns and volunteers in conjunction with the Frank R. Seaver College of Science and Engineering through the Coastal Research Institute at Loyola Marymount University. (TBF: www.santamonibabay.org, CRI: lmu.edu/cri)