

Example of Misleading Influence by Local Nonprofits WildCoast and SWIA

Pond 20 Could Be Ecological Gem – Commentary to Union Tribune, Jan. 9, 2012 – Google for Original
By Andrew J. Schneller (WILDCOAST), Patricia McCoy (SWIA) & Maria Mendoza (OTAY-MESA NESTOR,
ON BEHALF OF PEOPLE WITH HER OPINION)

Comments by Roger Benham (www.Pond20forUs.com) are in CAPITALS and UNDERLINED

At the south end of San Diego Bay sits Pond 20, where Black-Necked Stilts and migrating Alaskan shorebirds such as Red Phalaropes arrive during the winter to feed during high tide events. (THIS IS A COMPLETE DISTORTION OF THE TRUTH. THERE IS NO HIGH TIDE EVENT IN POND 20, IT HAS BEEN PRACTICALLY DRY AND SEALED OFF FROM THE BAY FOR DECADES. DURING THE 1960's AND 70's ONLY A PORTION OF POND 20 HAD WATER - REMEMBER THE BRINE SHRIMP BOATS? PROBABLY FOR THE LAST 80 YEARS, THE MAJORITY OF POND 20 HAS ALWAYS BEEN DRY.) Pond 20 offers an expansive view of south San Diego Bay where former salt production facilities to the west are being restored to rare salt marsh wetland habitat. THIS IS MISLEADING BECAUSE SINCE THE 1998 GIVEAWAY OF 750 ACRES OF WESTERN SALT TO MITIGATE RICH DEVELOPMENTS TO THE NORTH, ONLY ABOUT 20% HAS HAD ATTEMPTED RESTORATION. THE MAJORITY OF THE FORMER SALT PRODUCTION LAND HAS NOT BEEN TOUCHED, AND LOOKS DESOLATE, SEE "POND 20 FACTS" AT www.Pond20forUs.com) To the north lies the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge and the recently completed Bayshore Bikeway where families come to recreate and enjoy the open space beauty of the south bay. (YES, TAX PAYERS HAVE PAID FOR THE BIKE PATH, AND IT IS GOOD, HOWEVER, IF "FAMILIES COME TO RECREATE" THEY WILL BE RUN OVER BECAUSE, UNLIKE TRUE PUBLIC AMENITIES LIKE LIBERTY STATION, A NARROW "BIKE PATH" IS NOT REALLY A PLACE TO BRING A FAMILY, WHICH IS WHY WE NEED POND 20 FOR A TRUE LIBERTY-STATION-LIKE PUBLIC AMENITY SO FAMILIIES CAN TRULY RECREATE AND ENJOY USING AND VIEWING OF OUR HARD BOUGHT OPEN SPACE FROM WITHIN POND 20 ITSELF) Owned by the San Diego Unified Port District, the 95-acre Pond 20 has the potential to become permanently protected as a beautiful open space gem utilized by San Diegans, tourists and wildlife alike. (YOU SHOULD HERE MENTION THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE IB AREA HAVE ALREADY GIVEN 90% OF WESTERN SALT, AND, UNTOLD AMOUNT OF THE TJ RIVER VALLEY, FOR "CLOSED OFF INACCESSIBLE" OPEN SPACE AND SWIA MITIGATION PROJECTS, AND HOW THE PORT DISTRICT IN FAIRNESS PROMISED POND 20 TO THE COMMUNITIES OF THE IB AREA FOR DESPERATELY NEEDED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT) Best-case scenario: The public should have open access to the property for wildlife viewing, and the Coastal Salt Marsh, wetland, and upland wildlife habitat of Pond 20 should be restored. There must be supervision from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and funds generated from mitigation projects should accrue to the stakeholders. (THIS WOULD BE A GOOD TIME FOR YOU TO DISCLOSE THAT YOU, WILDCOAST AND SWIA, ARE IN THE LAND MITIGATION BUSIENS AND STAND TO PROFIT FROM THE USE OF POND 20 FOR WETLAND RESTORATION. ALSO, ARE YOU SAYING THE "ACCESSIBLE" OPEN SPACE OF GLORIETTA BAY, THE HOTEL DEL CORONADO, AND THE CORONADO PUBLIC GOLF COURSE ARE NOT BENEFICIAL FOR VIEWING? WE HAVE A SERIOUS IMBALANCE OF TOO MUCH MITIGATION WHICH HAS DEGREDED OUR ECONOMY WHILE OUR NEIGHBORS HAVE THRIVED.)

Unfortunately, the business community is proposing that Pond 20 be developed as retail space and/or a boutique hotel. But in addition to the 400,000 cubic yards of soil that is needed to bring the parcel (3 to 12 feet) level to Palm Avenue, ample retail space along the Palm Avenue corridor currently sits empty, attracting neither proprietors nor customers. (YOU ARE TRYING TO FORCE YOUR SELF-SERVING OPINIONS DOWN THE PEOPLES THROAT WITHOUT GIVING THEM OPTIONS. THERE DOES NOT HAVE TO BE A HOTEL, HOUSING, OR RETAIL SPACE, THERE COULD BE MUCH MORE CREATIVE, UNIQUE AND DESIREABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND "USABLE" OPEN SPACE. BECAUSE OF YOUR ACTIONS AND MISLEADING INFLUENCE, THE CITIZENS HAVE BEEN DENIED OPTIONS. YOU ARE WRONG ABOUT POND 20 HAVING TO BE FILLED LEVEL TO PALM AVE. REGARDING THE EMPTY PALM CORRIDOR WITH "NEITHER PROPRIETORS OR CUSTOMERS", A STUDY WOULD SHOW THAT THE OVERBALANCE OF MITIGATION LANDS AND YOUR SELF-SERVING UNFOUNDED ECOTOURISM ECONOMICS ARE ACTUALLY THE CAUSE OF THE LACK OF BUSINESS VITALITY).

A 2008 study by Rasmuson Appraisal Services concluded that potential development costs for Pond 20 were projected to exceed the land value. (AS MOST PEOPLE IN REAL ESTATE KNOW, YOU CAN GET AN APPRAISEL TO SAY ANYTHING.... SINCE YOU HAVE A CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST, YOU SHOULD NOT BE PROMOTING APPRAISELS OF POND 20) Portions of the property are critical wetlands. (ACCORDING TO PORT DISTRICT LAND EVALUATIONS, ONLY 2% OF POND 20 IS CLASSIFIED AS "WETLAND") Additionally, in a strongly worded 2011 letter from the California Coastal Commission (CCC) to the Port, CCC staff explained that the property is within the 100-year floodplain and CCC does not permit structures in floodplains. (I AM VERY CONCERNED THAT THIS CCC LETTER FROM "STAFF" IS NOT THE LEGITIMATE POSITION OF THE CCC AND IS BEING FRAUDULENTLY TOUTED BY SELF-SERVING NONPROFITS THAT WANT TO USE POND 20 FOR MITIGATION AND ENRICH THEMSELVES) Further, Pond 20 currently acts as an important open space buffer to the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge. CCC concluded that "raptor and other bird use of the site is substantial and diverse ... the best and highest use of the site would be habitat restoration." (WITHOUT VOTE OR REFERENDUM, THE CITIZENS OF THE IB AREA HAVE GIVEN MORE THAN ANYONE TO PROTECT THE BIRDS, AND HAVE ALREADY GIVEN A SUBSTANTIAL "BUFFER". WITH THE PORT DISTRICT REVERSING THEIR PROMISE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF POND 20, THEY ARE PUNISHING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY FOR DOING MORE THAN ANYONE. AGAIN, I AM GRAVELY CONCERNED ABOUT THE FRADULENT USE OF CCC LETTERHEAD BY "STAFF" TO DETERMINE THE RIGHTFULL USE OF POND 20).

With scarce opportunity left for habitat restoration in south San Diego Bay, Pond 20 represents our best remaining opportunity for preservation of open space and revenue generation. (YOU HAVE NOT TALKED ABOUT THE 750 ACRES OF WESTERN SALT ALREADY PROVIDED FOR HABITAT RESTORATION IN 1998, OF WHICH 80% HAS NOT BEEN RESTORED – YOUR ACTION TO TAKE POND 20, THE LAST REMAING 10% THAT WAS PROMISED TO THE RESIDENTS OF THE IB AREA FOR ECONOMIC BENEFIT, IS NOT ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT – IT IS ABOUT GREED AND POWER) The Port and the cities of Imperial Beach and San Diego have an opportunity to share profits generated through a habitat mitigation bank. Habitat mitigation banks offer landowners an alternative means for revenue generation while still retaining ownership and preserving opportunities for recreation, open space, and wildlife. (THERE HAVE NEVER BEEN ANY NUMBERS GIVEN REGARDING "PROFITS" SO THAT A RATIONAL DECISION CAN BE MADE, AND THE REAL WEALTH IS WITH THE ONGOING REVENUE FROM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WHICH IS WHY

THE DEVELOPMENT INTEREST TO THE NORTH WANT POND 20 TO MITIGATE THEIR OWN ECONOMIC PROJECTS. YOU WANT US TO ACCEPT "PROFITS" THAT WILL GO INTO YOUR COFFERS, AS SOME SORT OF PAYOFF OR HUSH-MONEY. YOU ARE SIMPLY WANTING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF AN UNDERREPRESENTED AND GUILTY PEOPLE AND DESTROY YOUR COMPETITION, TRUE PRIVATE ENTERPRISE) Mitigation banking is a market-based approach established by federal regulations that allows a public entity such as the Port to restore and preserve wetlands, streams and aquatic resources for the purpose of selling credits to developers and public and private entities to offset the impacts of development that negatively affected wetlands elsewhere. Recently, individual credits from SANDAG's successful 100-acre mitigation bank in Pilgrim Creek sold for \$135,000 an acre. (THIS IS CHICKEN SCRATCH COMPARED TO REAL ONGOING RECURRING REVENUE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. WE HAVE PROPOSED THE PCH DINNER SHOW THAT IS CONSERVATIVELY A \$40 MILLION PER YEAR HOMEGROWN IB AREA INSTITUTION).

The issue of Pond 20 is now timely; on Jan. 10 the Port will work to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the cities of Imperial Beach and San Diego. While Pond 20 is in San Diego, it's also included in the city of Imperial Beach's Redevelopment Area. According to the Port this "MOU would allow the parties time to establish mutual goals and objectives for future uses for Pond 20 based on feasibility, market analysis and regulatory requirements." (JUST AS RECENT AS NOV 20, 2014, THE PORT DISTRICT WAS SHOWN BY THEIR OWN HIGHLY PAID ARCHITECT, A PHYSICAL MODEL OF A LIBERTY-STATION-LIKE DEVELOPMENT FOR POND 20. THIS OPTION WAS NEVER PRESENTED AS AN OPTION TO THE PEOPLE OF THE IB AREA? WHY NOT?)

In November 2011, the Port was given accolades for its work as an exemplary environmental steward; its Green Port Program won first place in the category of Comprehensive Environmental Management Plan at the fourth annual Work Boat Environmental Awards. (THERE SHOULD BE A LOT OF ACCOLADES GIVEN TO THE PEOPLE OF THE IB AREA, BECAUSE THEY HAVE TAKEN THE BRUNT OF GIVING A HIGHLY DISPROPORTIONAL ABOUT OF THEIR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, SO THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH COULD ENJOY THEIR MULTI \$BILLION ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND PUBLIC AMENITIES, SUCH AS LIBERTY STATION, PT LOMA) But will this environmental steward of south San Diego Bay have the foresight to recognize that economic development in the form of converting Pond 20 to retail or hotel space is ecologically inappropriate and fiscally unsound? (WHAT HOTEL? THIS IS A MISLEADING AND MANIPULATING STATEMENT BY AN ELITE MINORITY THAT PUTS THEIR OWN INTERESTS ABOVE THE COMMUNITY. THE COMMUNITIES OF THE IB AREA NEED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MORE THAN THE COMMUNITIES OF THE NORTH THAT WILL USE POND 20 TO MITIGATE THEIR OWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THIS IS A MEAN TRICK TO MAKE AN UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITY FEEL GUILTY, DESPITE GIVING MORE. IT IS SHAMEFUL THAT YOU DO NOT DISCLOSE THAT YOU HAVE A DIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST, AND STAND TO GAIN FINANCIALLY FOR THE MITIGATION OF POND 20).

As the public begins to provide input regarding the future of Pond 20, it will be of utmost importance for them to emphasize the broader landscape-wide ecological restoration trends that present an opportunity for financial gains, as well as contiguous wildlife corridors and the preservation of open space in the south bay. (IT IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE THAT THERE BE ADEQUATE PUBLIC INPUT, A LIST OF ALL OPTIONS FOR THE LOCAL CITIZENS TO CHOOSE, AND THE SELF-SERVING FINANCIAL

INTERESTS OF THE MITIGATION BUSINESS BE EXPOSED. THERE MUST BE MORE PUBLIC INPUT BEFORE WILDCOAST AND SWIA GET THEIR WAY)

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