

Controversial Bulldozing Proposal for LA's Ballona Wetlands Doubles in Price to Up to Almost Half a Billion Dollars

Stunned silence greeted the admission that the cost of one of California's most divisive proposals has doubled in price to up to 400-million dollars.

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, February 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- At a high-stakes Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission hearing on February 19, 2026, the California

Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) admitted that the cost of the hotly disputed proposal to bulldoze the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve has now ballooned to up to \$400 million. The whopping figure is sparking shock and outrage among local residents and environmentalists.



Spending almost half a billion dollars on this ecologically devastating project is beyond irresponsible.."

Jane Velez-Mitchell, Journalist, Author, Nearby Resident

This doubling of the original estimate comes as the project faces unprecedented legal, environmental, and community opposition. The "restoration" project, which critics have dubbed the "Stop the Scam Restoration," proposes a decade of industrial-scale construction on Los Angeles' last remaining coastal wetlands. The plan reportedly involves:

- 9+ years of heavy machinery operation.
- The extraction and movement of 2 million cubic yards of

soil.

- 351 workers on-site daily
- 810 additional vehicle trips per day

"At a time when millions of Californians are struggling to pay their rent, spending almost half a billion dollars on this ecologically devastating project is beyond irresponsible," said local resident and journalist Jane Velez-Mitchell. "I see Egrets, Pelicans, Cormorants, White-tailed Kites and Sea Lions here daily. This would devastate them."

Estimated Annual Costs Estimated Project Cost
\$150,000 to \$5,000,000 annually \$150,000 to \$400 million

Estimated Milestones

- Complete a Land Management Plan for Pre-Restoration for the Reserve
- Support permitting, design, and implementation of large scale Ballona Wetlands Restoration Plan.

DISPLAYED DURING SANTA MONICA BAY RESTORATION COMMISSION GOVERNING BOARD MEETING

Ecological and Community Impact

The one-square-mile reserve in Playa del Rey is home to 1,700 species, including threatened and endangered wildlife with no other habitat. A judge previously invalidated the project's Environmental Impact Report (EIR), citing a failure to consider the impact on these species. Furthermore, the Army Corps of Engineers has refused to certify the project due to errors in flood planning.

Critics, including celebrities like [James Cromwell](#), have joined together to plead with state government agencies to rethink this gargantuan project. Critics argue the plan is a "greenwashed" cover for the fossil fuel industry to upgrade a massive gas storage facility located deep within the wetlands—a facility the LA City Council has recommended be shut down.

Olympic-Sized Traffic Concerns

Marcia Hanscom of Defend Ballona Wetlands warned that the project would paralyze traffic on LA's Lincoln Boulevard, a primary artery to LAX, just as the city prepares for the 2028 Summer Olympic Games. Added Hanscom, " "There is a new Director of the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and soon we will have a new Governor and State Senator. We are hopeful that California's leadership soon realizes this extremely unpopular plan needs to be replaced by management that emphasizes full protection of these rare coastal habitats and not an industrial Frankenstein project."



Ballona Burrowing Owl - Photo by Jonathan Coffin



Endangered Belding's Savannah Sparrow



Actor James Cromwell Speaks, Photo by Natalie Ford

"Destruction is not restoration," added longtime resident Susanne Cumming. Community leaders are instead urging officials to adopt the "[20-Point Gentle Restoration Plan](#)," a proposal that achieves ecological goals without heavy machinery or wildlife displacement—and at a fraction of the cost.

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