

**DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**<http://www.dfg.ca.gov>

South Coast Region
4949 Viewridge Avenue
San Diego, CA 92123
(858) 467-4201



November 6, 2007

Ms. Deborah Ruddock
State Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, 11TH Floor
Oakland, CA 94612-2530

Dear Ms. Ruddock:

Re: Support for Item 6, Acquisition of the Mitsuuchi Property, San Diego County

The California Department of Fish and Game is writing to express its strong support of Item 6, the acquisition of the Mitsuuchi property, located immediately north of the Batiquitos Lagoon, in the City of Carlsbad, County of San Diego. It is anticipated that the property would be held in fee by either the Batiquitos Lagoon Foundation or the Department of Fish and Game.

Conservation of the Mitsuuchi property will provide protection for the biological resources of the lagoon, which is a State Ecological Reserve. Due to historic agricultural practices, this property suffers from erosion control problems and invasive species, which negatively impact the health of the lagoon and its surrounding habitats. While the property is degraded, biological studies show that it has supported the coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) in the past. In addition, the northeast corner of the lagoon, possibly including this property, provides habitat for the State endangered Belding's savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*). Therefore in addition to preventing future urban development and associated run-off to the lagoon and serving as additional buffer to the lagoon, acquisition of the Mitsuuchi property would provide opportunities for valuable native habitat restoration, a passive public use trail, and potentially the establishment of a visitors' center.


Acquisition of the Mitsuuchi property has been pursued in partnership with the Batiquitos Lagoon Foundation ("BLF"), a small 501(c)3 corporation that was formed in 1983 by a group of citizens concerned about the future of the lagoon. The BLF, as the only citizens group at the lagoon, has been instrumental in the restoration and public access projects that have been completed around the lagoon. The BLF is a volunteer-driven organization without the funds to directly pursue acquisition of this scale. That said, using Coastal Conservancy pre-acquisition funds previously provided, the BLF has greatly assisted the Department with due diligence and negotiations associated with the purchase of the Mitsuuchi property. The Department hopes to continue to partner with the BLF after the property is secured to begin planning for restoration and public use.

Financial assistance from the State Coastal Conservancy combined with the balance of funds to be provided through a Section 6 grant now scheduled to be considered before the Wildlife Conservation Board in February 2008, would allow the purchase of the Mitsuuchi property to protect and enhance the ecological health and public enjoyment of the lagoon.

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Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact either David Mayer (858-467-4234) or Karen Miner (858-627-3939) in our San Diego Regional Office.

Sincerely,



Kevin Hunting
Acting Regional Manager
South Coast Region

cc: Bob Clark, Wildlife Conservation Board