



# FOCL POINTS

Friends of Colorado Lagoon is a coalition of concerned citizens working to preserve and restore Colorado Lagoon



Cutting the ribbon at the Lagoon (pictured from left): Senator Alan Lowenthal, Signal Hill Council Member Edward Wilson, Auggie Pirazzi, Assemblymember Bonnie Lowenthal, Dave Pirazzi, LB Councilmember Gary DeLong, Eric Zahn, LB Councilmember Patrick O'Donnell

## **President's Letter** by Dr. Christine Whitcraft, FOCL Vice President

SNIP! SNIP! With one smooth motion from a pair of very large ceremonial scissors, an improved, cleaner Colorado Lagoon was open! The re-opening event on August 25, 2012 was a huge success and a great show of community support and partnership. We had people swimming in the new clean lagoon, activities for the kids and adults alike, delicious food trucks, lively music, and best of all, a vibrant ecosystem to celebrate. Thank you to all for participating and to our sponsors and friends for making the day a success.

What does this opening mean for the community? First, you will see a bevy of activity in the Western Arm as FOCL and Tidal Influence (TI) undertake a major restoration and revegetation project. **Fences and boulders** will delineate the edges of the western arm. Similar to the central lagoon fences, this fence will also serve as protection for a new crop of native plants and as a trash barrier to prevent trash from blowing into the lagoon. **Split-rail fences** will divide the golf course from the bioswale and from the lagoon in the far reaches of the western arm. And finally, **native salt marsh and coastal sage scrub plants** will begin their life along the edges of the entire western arm. Part of the planting includes a Master's project by a student from CSU Long Beach investigating the impacts of diverse plantings on restoration success. We will see a report from her in future newsletters. See Eric's article later in this newsletter for a discussion on the replanting. Second, there are new **signs** hanging around the lagoon which show our visions for the lagoon post-planting. Please check them out as you walk by the lagoon. And finally, **visit us at the lagoon!** If you would like to be a part of these exciting transformations at the lagoon, FOCL and TI will be hosting a range of events at the lagoon from Saturday Estuary Explorations to Monday work days (see events list and flier on our webpage). Please join us to help further transform the Colorado Lagoon!

# Grand Re-Opening!



Zachary Cornejo, shown here, has been a FOCL intern since the beginning of the summer helping us with restoration and completing bird surveys. A senior at the California Academy of Math and Sciences, Zach has been a great help to the Lagoon project!

The Colorado Lagoon Grand Re-Opening was a tremendous event that took place over two days in August. After having the water closed off to the public for over six months due to the dredging project, the Colorado Lagoon opened its beaches to swimming, fishing and sun-bathing on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Two days later, FOCL hosted a grand re-opening which featured environmental education about the importance of the restoration to local fish species (thanks to funding from the MSRP program), arts and crafts, restoration kiosks and speeches from local leaders. The Grand Re-Opening was a great way to kick-off the next phase of the restoration and keep everyone involved as up-to-date as possible. Thank you to everyone who participated in the opening and thank you to all of our funders and partners who have supported our efforts at improving this habitat for wildlife and the local community!



## Native Trees by Taylor Parker ~ Education Director

While it could be confused with a large shrub in certain locales, the Toyon (*Heteromoles arbutifolia*) definitely reaches tree status in both size and majesty. Referred to as the Christmas Tree Berry and the Hollywood Tree, the Toyon's red berries ripen every winter and are what give it its holiday name, as well as the inspiration for that famous city in the hills. Toyon has been planted around the Lagoon and is a wonderful resource for the birds and other wildlife seeking a delicious meal.



# Envisioning History's Future

by Eric Zahn, M.S. FOCL's Restoration Director

Creating a vision for a historic landscape like Colorado Lagoon is an imposing challenge. The land in this area has been used in so many ways over the past 2 centuries. Predicting what it will become centuries from now is a daunting task when you rehearse the past. Circa 1883 this portion of coastline was a trio of sinuous tidal creeks stretching the salt marshes of Alamitos Bay to their northernmost point. These peripheral marshlands mixed with spring-fed streams gravitating from surrounding little hills (Spanish translation: "los cerritos") like Alamitos Mesa and Signal Hill. This mixing created an estuary that must have been rich in wildlife diversity. So rich in fact, that a handful of the homes in Alamitos Heights were originally family hunting lodges for folks living in Los Angeles in the early 1900's. One of these homes is also on the location of the ranch house whose occupants once herded livestock in the area that currently is Little Rec Golf Course.

However, this rural landscape quickly changed upon discovery of oil in Signal Hill in 1921 and then in the Seal Beach Field (near the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Shopkeeper Rd.) in 1923. Colorado Lagoon lies right along the Newport-Inglewood fault, so petroleum explorations in the 1930's sprawled all around this waterway and ominous oil pumps dominated the upland horizons. These industrial dinosaurs can be seen in the background of photos that documented the diving and swimming events that were popular at the Lagoon in the 30's through 50's. To think that the US Olympic diving trials for the 1932 games were held in this location is inspiring.

As the City grew, and suburban lifestyles were popularized, single family homes encroached on the Lagoon's shore. Daily, neighbors have sauntered out their front doors and headed downhill to get a taste of the California coastline. Parks were built along the perimeter, trees and sod were planted, and accessibility became a resource. Unfortunately, these same developments led to impacts on the Lagoon's water quality and the natural habitat became marginalized. This was the scenario until just recently.

As we know, the landscape of the Lagoon is being transformed yet again. An effort is being led to clean up this wetland and return the site back to a natural refuge for wildlife while embracing a history of recreation and the surrounding neighborhoods. Yet, what will this fusion look like in the end?

Well, Friends of Colorado Lagoon and Tidal influence have teamed up with the Zell Office of Landscape Architecture to try and put the community's visions on paper. Our goal is to visually demonstrate how Colorado Lagoon will balance the needs of sensitive ecosystem located in an urban area. We invite you to view some of our renderings on FOCL's website and blog and pictured here below. Most importantly, come help us landscape the Lagoon at one of our public restoration events this Fall. Together we will shape the future of this landmark and become a part of this story.



COLORADO LAGOON

VIEW OF FUTURE WESTERN ARM RESERVE AT CORNER OF APIAN WAY AND PARK AVENUE



DATE PREPARED - AUGUST 2012





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**FOCL is Awarded Grant Funding from DFG, PoLB, SETAC, and REI**

FOCL has recently been awarded grant funding from the Department of Fish and Game's Office of Spill Prevention and Response, the Port of Long Beach and the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry to assist with the restoration of the Western Arm of the Colorado Lagoon's wetland, upland, dune and eelgrass habitats. Along with the funds competitively awarded from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy earlier this year, FOCL is now poised to complete the habitat restoration with full funding for the project. FOCL will now be able to comprehensively revegetate the bare ground left by the dredging activities, develop interpretive signage, create trails, install protective –yet aesthetically pleasing – fences, and effectively monitor and maintain this project for the next two years. Best of all, we are able to do all of this with the community, with you! Please get yourself down to the Lagoon for one of our habitat restoration events, educational nature walks or other fun events and I am certain you will enjoy yourself and learn something about your neighborhood wetland!



Volunteers from the community stand with their tools after a recent restoration event. Most of the volunteers pictured here came from a Wilson High School Environmental Science Class and learned restoration science while also participating in valuable habitat building.

