

Thursday, April 27, 2006



THE BEACH REPORTER

The Weekly Newspaper of the Beach Cities



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Question of the Week

Question: The Manhattan Beach teachers union is signaling that it plans to apply more pressure against the School District in its battle to negotiate a contract. (See story on the cover for specifics sought and offered.) What's noteworthy is the tactics the union is using and rumored to be considering, including refusing to participate in after-school study sessions and other measures that some say are only damaging to the students.

** What do you think of the measures being taken by the union in its growingly contentious battle with the School District?*

** Is the district leaving the union with no other course of action?*

** What is the best way for the district to respond?*

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Redondo Beach News

Beach bluffs get a whole new look

By Drew Holland

(Updated: Thursday, April 27, 2006 10:21 AM PDT)

Once upon a time, the bluffs of Redondo Beach were covered with ice plant.

The South African weed spread like a multiplying virus, crowding out native plants and forcing animals to flee. It was originally planted to keep the wind from kicking up sand. But the shallow roots and heavy leaves of the plant couldn't keep the steep bluffs from falling apart. Although the seasons changed year after year, ever did the stubborn plant display its defiant green color.



Marine California poppies are one of the many kinds of native plants among the newly restored beach bluffs. (photo by Drew Holland)

Now, however, the bluffs between Vista del Mar and Avenue I are a different scene. Clumps of orange and yellow California poppies service meandering bumblebees. They blossom in harmony next to sunflowers and dune buckwheat. When the seasons change, new flowers will blossom and the bluffs will take new colors.

Three acres of what one scientist referred to as "ecological styrofoam" have been torn out and replaced with more than 30 native plant species.

It is the Beach Bluffs Restoration Project, which one day may transform the entire coastline from Malaga Cove in Palos Verdes to Ballona Creek in Marina del Rey. What began in 2001 as a local grass-roots effort now has the support of several state and county agencies.

"I was surprised at how quickly and smoothly it went," said co-chair Ann Dalkey. "I think that is because it is really a popular plan. There are very few contentious aspects to it."

The goal of the project is to replace the ice plant with native plants. This will hopefully prevent further bluff erosion and welcome back animals such as the endangered El Segundo Blue Butterfly.

A group of project volunteers and politicians gathered along the Esplanade last week on a cloudy Friday to celebrate the near completion of the pilot in Redondo Beach. Several signs have been placed along the

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Esplanade to inform passers-by about the different plants and the goal of the project.

SEA Lab Director Giancarlo Cetrulo said the pilot tested the science behind the restoration and whether the project could find hands to do the work.

Co-chair Travis Longcore added that the pilot tested whether the group could get permission to restore the bluffs in the first place.

"About half the project is completing the paperwork," Longcore said.

Both men said the project has been a success so far. But Cetrulo stressed that it would only remain so if the community puts its "fingers in the dirt." There is still work to be done and every Saturday volunteers go the bluffs to weed and plant.

"The other aspect is basic stewardship," said Cetrulo. "Which means don't trash the place."

Cetrulo asks that people not walk across the newly restored plants or throw trash on the bluffs.

As politicians and project leaders gathered for photographs, Javier Gallardo, 20, surveyed the bluffs.

"The hard work is paying off," said Gallardo, identified as a SEA Lab corps member by his dark blue T-shirt. "We still have to do all the weeding and plant some more plants, but we're almost done."

The SEA Lab has been instrumental to the project. Staff has grown the plants at the lab and corps members have done much of the bluff restoration.

Cetrulo said he has just secured a contract with Los Angeles Beaches and Harbors to begin restoring land along Dockweiler State Beach. He is looking into restoring areas in Cabrillo Beach and Malibu.

Cetrulo said the city of Redondo Beach has given about \$20,000 to the project. Overall the project has gathered about \$150,000 from various agencies but mostly from state bond funds, according to Cetrulo.

The project may be on its way to transforming the bluffs of the entire Santa Monica Bay.

"I think it's a real clear possibility and I'm going to do everything I can to make it happen," said Dalkey.

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