

# **N. County wetlands would benefit from bill**

Leaders of local nonprofits  
support effort by Rep. Levin

BY PHIL DIEHL

Two local nonprofit leaders are praising Rep. Mike Levin, D-San Juan Capistrano, and others in Congress for introducing a bipartisan bill that would authorize \$60 million annually to protect coastal wetlands. The Resilient Coast and Estuaries Act would strengthen efforts to preserve natural

habitats along the San Luis Rey River in Oceanside, at the San Elijo Lagoon on the border of Encinitas and Solana Beach, and in coastal communities across the United States from the sea-level rise and intensifying storms that accompany climate change.

“As climate change and development continue to degrade the functioning of these coastal treasures, it is even more imminent to engage in their protection and restoration,” said Natalie Shapiro, executive director of the Buena Vista Audubon Society in Oceanside.

“In addition, as a nonprofit actively restoring coastal wetlands in North County San Diego, we experience first-hand the need for funding this critical work and are thrilled that the act includes ... grants to nonprofit organizations,” Shapiro said in a news release.

“Local nonprofits play a crucial role in addressing environmental issues that affect

their communities,” said Doug Gibson, executive director and principal scientist at the Nature Collective, formerly the San Elijo Lagoon Foundation.

“We are part of the local community and positioned to provide critical services and support at a grassroots level,” Gibson said. “Let’s all work collectively to set aside estuarine lands and waters so everyone can connect with, experience, and protect nature.”

The bill would prioritize projects in areas without adequate resources to adapt to climate change.

“Our cherished lagoons and estuaries are vitally important to the stability of our environment and economy,” Levin said. “It’s crucial that we help our coastal communities preserve these natural resources and better prepare for the impacts of climate change.”

Levin introduced the bill with Rep. Suzanne

Bonamici, D-Oregon, and Rep. Jen Kiggans, R-Virginia.

The bill, if passed by Congress, directs the secretary of commerce to designate at least five new national estuarine research reserves, including the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve. It is an extension of the Coastal Zone Management Act, which was passed in 1972 and expired in 2013.

The reserves would specialize in research to support conservation and management efforts locally and across the country.

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