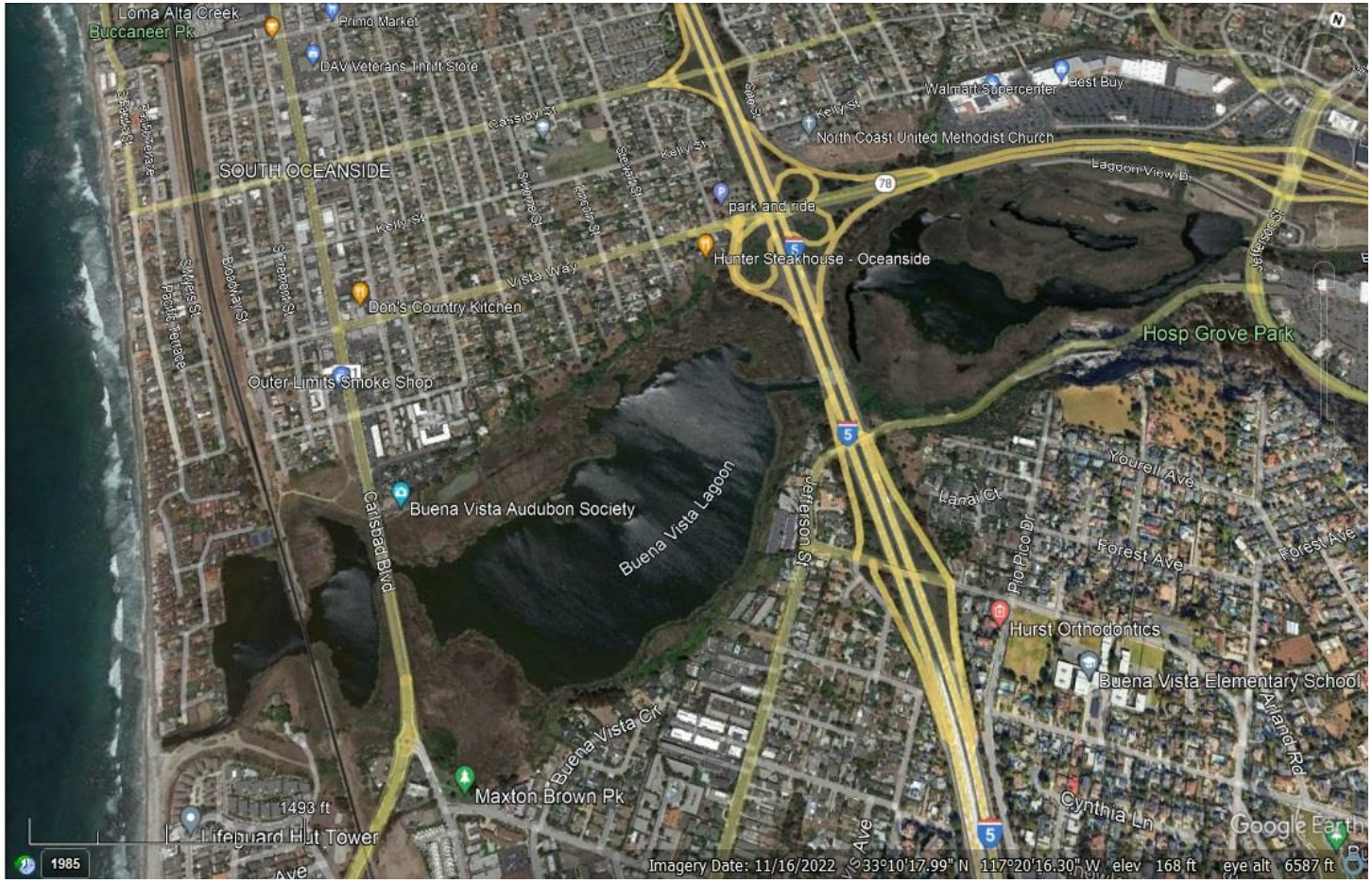
# What is going on with the Buena Vista Lagoon?

# Buena Vista Lagoon: a 220-acre Ecological Preserve under CA Department of Fish & Wildlife jurisdiction



**The Lagoon is currently a freshwater estuary due to a weir installed at its mouth in the 1970s for flood control. This blocked the Lagoon from the ocean, severing its connection with tidal flows.**

# Current Lagoon habitat

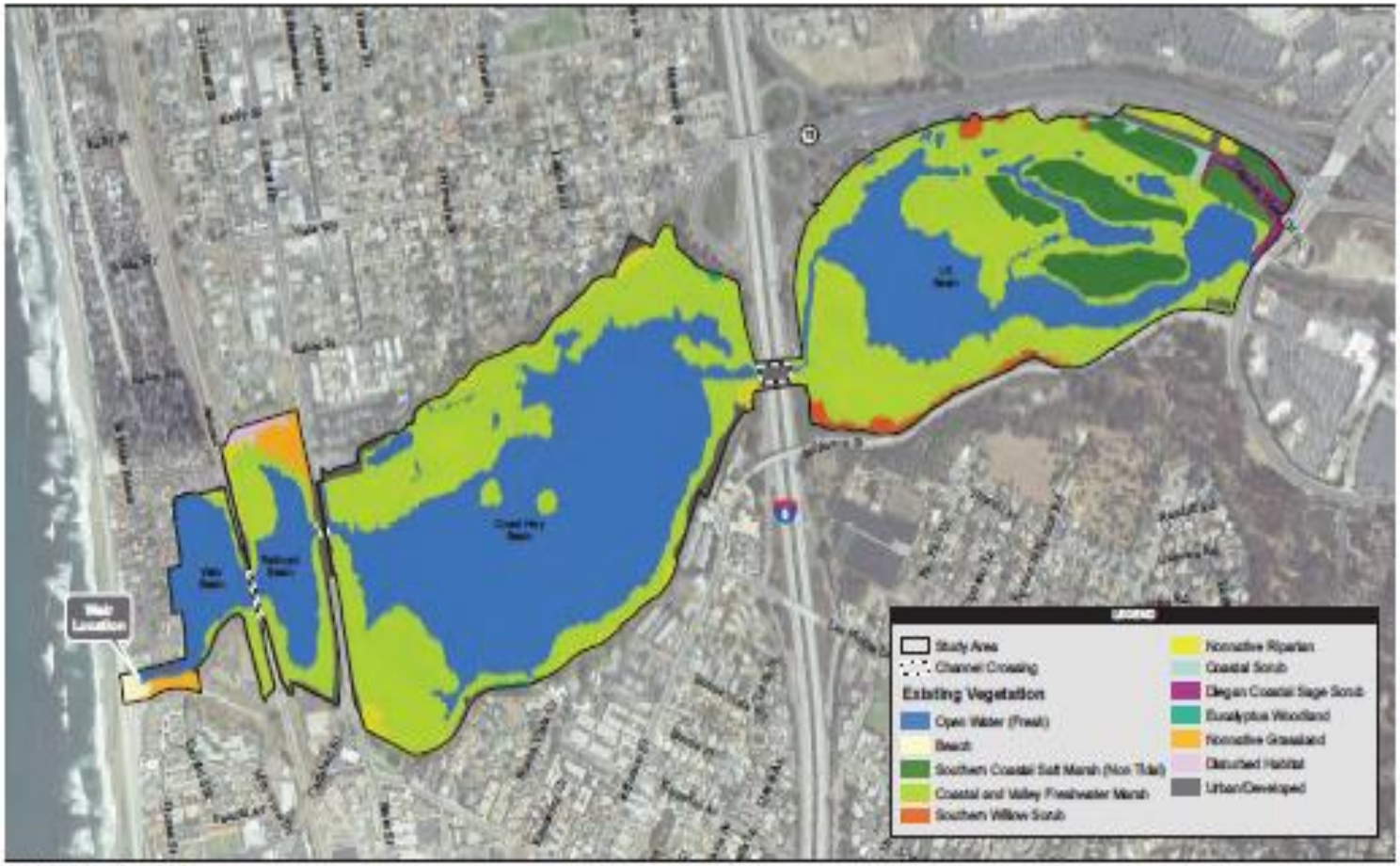



Figure 2-2
Project Location and Existing Habitat Distribution Map

**Prior to the installment of the weir, the lagoon fluctuated between saltwater and freshwater, depending on weather conditions. This photo shows the lagoon in the early part of last century.**

**A naturally formed sand bar would build up at the lagoon mouth and washed out when rains flooded the lagoon; then the lagoon opened up to the ocean. This phenomena continues today, although the weir constrains how much water exits the lagoon.**

**When the lagoon was closed off to the ocean by the sand bar, a salt flat formed in the middle of the lagoon. Salt marshes formed at the edges; water ponded behind the sand bar, creating perennial pools. (1928 photo)**

**In the 1980s, the consequences of closing the lagoon to tidal circulation became evident: sewage, mosquitoes, and sediment from erosion became problematic.**

**In addition, freshwater-loving cattails began taking over the Lagoon.**

**The result was a stagnant lagoon with little biological diversity.**

**It took three decades for a solution to develop. In 2012, SANDAG led efforts to address the deteriorating Lagoon with the Buena Vista Lagoon Enhancement Project and created an Environmental Impact Report containing three alternatives for pathways to improving the lagoon: keeping the weir in place (Freshwater), removing the weir (Saltwater), and a combination of both (Hybrid).**

**BVAS strongly supports removing the weir and restoring the Lagoon to a saltwater estuary.**

Saltwater marshes contain a diversity of habitats influenced by tidal flows, including saltwater-dependent plants and mud flats, which are important foraging areas for shorebirds.

We are rapidly losing mud flats and salt marshes from development and sea level rise; thus, restoring these ecosystems is increasingly urgent.

An estuary open to the ocean also provides habitat for young marine life for parts of their life cycles.

**Ultimately, a “Modified Saltwater” alternative was created and chosen as a compromise due to disagreement between stakeholders who wanted to keep the weir and those who wanted it removed.**
**The Modified Saltwater option has less mud flats and more open water and allows part of the lagoon (the weir basin, which is owned by homeowners at the lagoon mouth) to remain full of water.**
**However, it still does entail removing the weir and allowing the lagoon to re-connect with the ocean.**

# Modified Saltwater Alternative

**Updated plan as of April 2024**

**Currently, SANDAG has acquired funding for the initial studies, surveys and partial funding for the design. SANDAG continues the studies and surveys and is seeking funding to continue the project.**

**For more information:**
**https://bvaudubon.org/bv-lagoon-enhancement/**

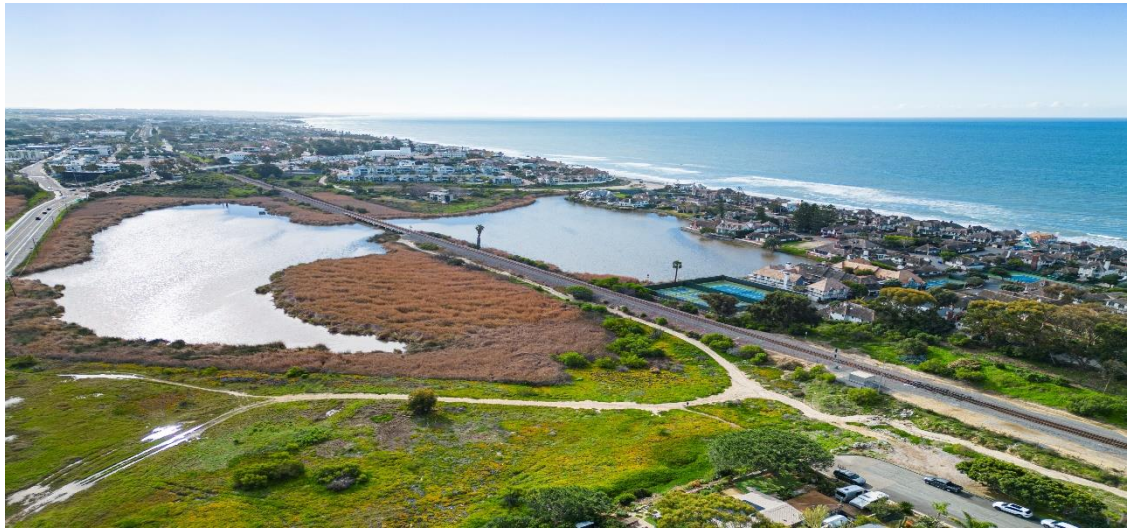


**Photo by Sydney Walsh/National Audubon Society**