

The San Dieguito Lagoon serves as the western gateway to the San Dieguito River Park, a remarkable 55-mile course that stretches from the mountains to the coast.

Subtheme 1

Once viewed as wasteland, the lagoon now is protected and being restored, thanks to the vision and efforts of many key individuals, agencies, and organizations.

Subtheme 2

After years of degradation, the San Dieguito Lagoon once again is becoming a complex ecosystem that benefits wildlife and people.

Subtheme 3

Preserving the entire San Dieguito River corridor ensures preservation and protection of sensitive habitats, wildlife, cultural resources, open space, and water quality.

Messages:

San Dieguito Lagoon was once the home of San Dieguito Paleo-Indians and more recent American Indians, as well as territory within 19th c. Rancho San Dieguito. It underwent significant transformation in the 1900s as a golf course, WWII naval facility, airport, and site of various developments, inc. racetrack and fairgrounds.

Recent activity has further degraded the lagoon. Constriction of freshwater flows upstream, blockage of tidal flow, habitat fragmentation due to road construction, habitat destruction due to agriculture and suburban development, and pressure of invasive species all have taken a toll.

The San Dieguito River Park was created first in response to concerns about commercial development in the San Dieguito Lagoon. Decades of commitment and active involvement by citizens saved the lagoon and led to preservation of open space in the San Dieguito River Valley.

Individual stewardship is integral to the restoration effort. Citizen science—scientific projects in which volunteers team with scientists to provide real data—is important to ensure project success over the long term.

Messages:

Restoration of the San Dieguito Lagoon, once the largest lagoon in the county, is the result of a SCE mitigation project.

Successful wetlands restoration requires monitoring, maintenance, and vigilance on everyone's part.

Compared to restoration, conservation is a more prudent, cost-effective way to save habitats. Restoration is an expensive, long-term experiment.

Challenges, including probable effects of global climate change on the lagoon, lie ahead.

People benefit directly and indirectly from the ecosystem services provided by the lagoon. These services include flood control, water purification, "nursery" support for commercially important fisheries, and the provision of wildlife watching and other recreational and educational opportunities.

The lagoon is located along the Pacific Flyway. As such, it offers a waystation for birds migrating annually between the Arctic and Central and South America.

Messages:

The San Dieguito River Park follows the river course from its source east of Volcan Mountain to the San Dieguito Lagoon to the west.

The San Dieguito River Park is comprised of a variety of habitats ranging from salt marsh, tidal lagoon, and mudflat to coastal sage scrub, grasslands, and riparian woodland to oak woodland and southern mixed chaparral.

By protecting habitat, the River Park protects wildlife. This region is rich in diversity and home to rare and threatened plants and animals.

The River Park plays an important role as a natural wildlife corridor that allows animals to move between habitats to access resources (food, nesting space, etc.).

By protecting the region's watershed—the land and waterways that drain into the San Dieguito River—the River Park protects water quality.

The River Park conserves valuable open space, an increasingly rare commodity in Southern California. People benefit from the natural and cultural resources whose protection is ensured.