

WETLANDS

Public meeting to consider future of Bolsa Chica site

By Ann Pepper

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HUNTINGTON BEACH — The future of what is believed to be the largest fragment of wetlands habitat left in the state will be discussed today at a public meeting held by the US Army Corps of Engineers at City Hall.

The corps plans to study several proposals outlining how to restore part of the 1,670-acre Bolsa Chica wetlands and build houses on the rest. It is seeking the public's views on what should be included in the study.

"This meeting will be of enormous value," said Shirley Detloff, former president of Amigos de Bolsa Chica, a group formed to protect the wetlands. "The public will be able to name issues they consider should be studied before any final decisions are made."

Issues at the meeting, which will be held from 2 to 5 and 7 to 10 p.m., might include potential geologic hazards in the marshland, housing densities, and how a project will affect traffic and air quality, Det-

loff said.

In Huntington Beach, a compromise proposal worked out in 1989 after decades of debate has the most support. It would restore the damaged marsh, keep 1,020 acres as wetlands and allow the property owner to build up to 5,700 homes on about 400 acres.

Signal Landmark Inc., a subsidiary of Henley Properties Inc. of New Hampshire, owns most of Bolsa Chica, which lies inland from Pacific Coast Highway south of Warner Avenue.

Other alternatives the corps will examine allow less or no housing to be built. One permits as many as 7,300 homes on the site.

The study also will scrutinize proposals to regenerate the wetlands by cutting a non-navigable inlet across the highway and through Bolsa Chica State Beach, allowing natural tidal flow to return to the marshlands.

The corps' jurisdiction over waterways such as the inlet brought it into the Bolsa Chica planning process, said Hal Simmons, a senior planner for the city.

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