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Controller Yee Urges Port Support for Wetlands Preservation, Stronger Commitment to Air and Water Quality

SACRAMENTO—State Lands Commission (SLC) chair Betty T. Yee today urged the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to help fund critical ongoing needs at the Bolsa Chica Lowlands, a southern California ecological treasure preserved and restored through the decades-long efforts of local activists Amigos de Bolsa Chica. Chairwoman Yee also urged the ports to work in concert with environmentalists to cement a formal policy that minimizes port impacts on air and water quality.

Amigos de Bolsa Chica were recognized at today's SLC meeting in San Pedro for two milestones they are celebrating in 2016: the 40th anniversary of their organization and its tireless advocacy, and the 10th anniversary of the completion of the Bolsa Chica Lowlands Restoration Project. The restoration opened the full tidal basin to the Pacific Ocean more than a century after the inlet was closed off by the Bolsa Chica Gun Club, creating additional marine habitat that has been a boon to both marine species and migratory shorebirds who traverse the Pacific Flyway. The basin now serves as a nursery for several species important to our state's commercial fishing industry.

Approximately \$2 million to \$3 million a year will be required to preserve these hard-fought gains. Chairwoman Yee envisions splitting those costs between the state and SLC public trust land grantees. In a July letter to Port of Los Angeles (POLA) executive director Gene Seroka, Yee wrote that an agreement by POLA to contribute \$250,000 a year would send a strong message to other grantees about the importance of sustaining the success of the largest wetland restoration project in southern California.

Yee reiterated that message at today's hearing and remains hopeful POLA will come on board.

"I am hopeful the port will honor this minimal commitment to supporting an environmental treasure it helped make possible in the first place," said Chairwoman Yee. "It would be a monumental failure of our commitment to the public trust to allow these gains to be short-lived."

The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach both reported to SLC today on their efforts to mitigate air quality impacts resulting from their operations. Chairwoman Yee was encouraged by signs of progress but called on SLC staff to work with both ports and the Coalition for Clean Air—all of whom participated in creating the SLC's five-year [strategic plan](#)—to develop a sound policy that implements the public trust doctrine for air and water quality as it relates to port operations.

Joe Lyou of the Coalition for Clean Air thanked Chairwoman Yee for pushing the ports to engage in this process and encouraged the Commission to focus on results and "be demanding."

As the chief fiscal officer of California, Controller Yee is responsible for accountability and disbursement of the state's financial resources. The Controller also safeguards many types of property until claimed by the rightful owners, and has independent auditing authority over government agencies that spend state funds. She is a member of numerous financing authorities, and fiscal and financial oversight entities including the Franchise Tax Board. She also serves on the boards for the nation's two largest public pension funds. Elected in 2014, Controller Yee is the tenth woman elected to a statewide office in California's history. Follow the Controller on Twitter at [@CAController](#) and on Facebook at [California State Controller's Office](#).

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