

# Colorado Lagoon Restoration Study Starts

**By Kurt Helin**

Editor

The engineers have formally been selected and now a long-awaited study of what it will take to restore Colorado Lagoon will get underway.

Tuesday night, the City Council unanimously approved a \$200,000 contract with Long Beach-based Moffatt & Nichol to conduct the study.

“Moffatt & Nichol has always had a good record of being able to give us quality work,” said Third District Councilman Frank Colonna. “I’m very excited to have them on board.”

Members of Friends of the Colorado Lagoon (FOCL), the activist organization that has pushed for this study as well, have also backed the selection.

Now the hard work begins. This is the first time the lagoon has been studied since 1972, Colonna told the City Council.

Finding ways to improve the water quality and animal habitat at the Colorado Lagoon has been a goal of many inside and outside of City Hall for years. However, what needs to be done and how it should be done has sparked controversy in the past, often with city officials on one side and FOCL on the other.

The study will include public meetings and outreach in an effort to help set the priorities, officials said.

This study will look at the existing conditions and ways to improve the water and sediment quality of the lagoon, how to manage the storm water that flows into it and ways to use the lagoon as a location to teach youth about the importance of the environment.

Likely the most difficult part of the study — and what has been most controversial in the past — is how to balance the lagoon as a wetlands area and its function as a storm-drain runoff location for five different drains.

Much of the efforts to improve the lagoon, and the founding of FOCL, came about because of plans to expand the Termino Avenue Storm Drain by Los Angeles County. The \$13 million expansion of an existing storm drain that starts near Redondo Avenue and Anaheim Street and eventually empties into Colorado Lagoon sparked protests from neighbors who said they wanted better for the lagoon. Currently, a second, court-ordered environmental report on the project is being worked on.

The money for the study comes from a grant from the State Coastal Conservancy, which was approved last year. Both the city and FOCL had applied to the state agency looking for the money.

While Moffatt & Nichol has done a number of other feasibility and environmental studies for the city, the relationship between the two sides has not always been positive. Last year, the city took Moffatt & Nichol to court and eventually got the company to return \$700,000 for an environmental study of the new sports park proposal that the city said was unsatisfactory