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UC SANTA BARBARA
Cheadle Center for Biodiversity & Ecological Restoration

Restoration Register

January 2026



Devereux Slough on December 2nd, 2025. Photo by Bill Dewey.

Updates

Oak Group at the UCSB Library

The Oak Group, Santa Barbara's premier plein air painting group, will have an exhibition at the UCSB Library from February through June. This collaborative exhibition brings together the Oak Group, the Cheadle Center for Biodiversity & Ecological Restoration, and the Coal Oil Point Reserve to support the conservation of Devereux Slough through art and science.

Oak Group artists are passionate about nature and dedicated to preserving local lands by documenting threatened landscapes, raising awareness, and supporting preservation efforts through exhibitions. Visit

the Oak Group website for more information on their history, artists, and past events.



Storm Over Dilling's Link **by Rick Drake.**

Campus Lagoon Wildflowers

Our Campus Lagoon steward, Chris Berry, has been hard at work clearing the controlled burn areas on Lagoon Island in preparation for a flush of native wildflowers following this season's heavy early storms. These burn areas are expected to bloom by the end of the month and continue through the spring. Lagoon Island will soon host a vibrant display, as the burn areas are rich in native wildflower diversity.

Visitors may spot red maids (*Calandrinia ciliata*), California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), seaside fiddleneck (*Amsinckia spectabilis*), common popcorn flower (*Cryptantha clevelandii*), miniature suncups (*Camissoniopsis micrantha*), blue toadflax (*Nuttallanthus texanus*), Nuttall's snapdragon (*Antirrhinum nuttallianum*), and common phacelia (*Phacelia distans*), among others.

More information about the burn plots and native wildflower restoration at the Campus Lagoon can be found in the article Controlled Burns on Lagoon Island and the video Fire Followers: Superbloom on Lagoon Island.



California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) carpet Lagoon Island. Photo by Susan Cook.

NCOS Hydrology



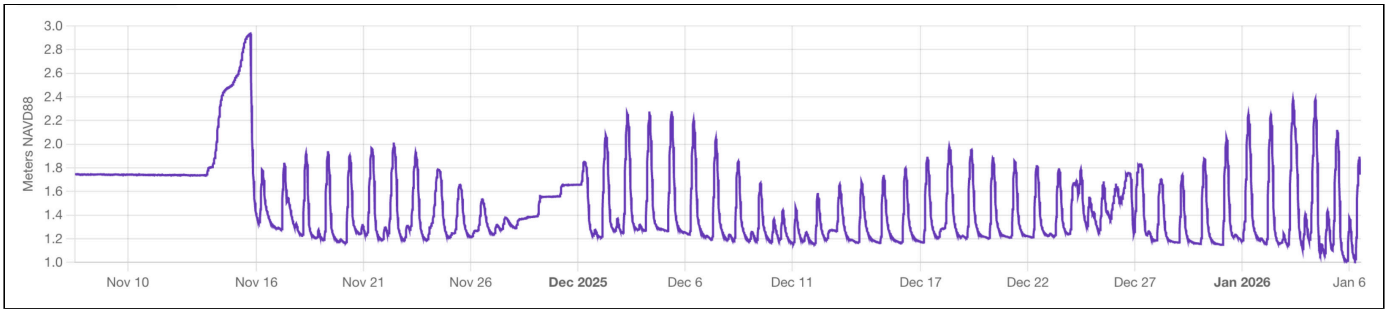
Full vernal pools on the NCOS Mesa on December 26th, 2025.

The 2026 water year has gotten off to an exceptionally wet start in Santa Barbara, with early storms delivering well above average rainfall. Countywide, rainfall totals currently stand at 320% of normal to date and 107% of average annual rainfall.



Long-billed Curlews and Whimbrels make use of exposed mudflats in the eastern salt marsh at NCOS on January 6th, 2026.

The intermittently tidal nature of Devereux Slough has been on full display for nearly two months following a breach on November 15. These tidal fluxes create a dynamic wetland habitat, where water levels are constantly changing, providing a variety of deeper-water habitats as well as exposed mudflats for bird species such as Long-billed Curlews and Whimbrels, pictured above.



Graph showing water level in the Devereux Slough over the past two months. The breach event is clearly shown on November 15th, when water levels reached a maximum of 9.52 feet above sea level. This graph is courtesy of UC Davis Coastal Oceanography Group and can be accessed on their website.



NCOS salt marsh viewed from Venoco Bridge during high tide on January 2nd, 2026.



NCOS eastern salt marsh during high tide on January 2nd, 2026.



NCOS western salt marsh arm during high tide on January 2nd, 2026.

Shoreline Adaptation Project



The cliffs adjacent to Lagoon Road, from the Marine Science Facilities to the edge of Goleta Beach, present significant vulnerabilities and adaptation challenges.

Launched in spring 2025 and funded by the California Coastal Conservancy, the UCSB Shoreline Adaptation Project supports implementation of the University's Sea Level Rise Adaptation Strategy through early 2027. The project focuses on the Campus Lagoon shoreline and Lagoon Road corridor, advancing a phased, science-based approach to sea level rise that protects campus infrastructure, public coastal access, sensitive habitats, and cultural resources while also allowing natural coastal processes to continue.

The Cheadle Center is part of the project's planning process, contributing ecological expertise, and a public community meeting was held on December 4th 2025 to gather input and share updates on proposed adaptation pathways. A video of the public meeting will be available soon on the Community Engagement webpage.



The berm at Campus Point Beach is a crucial part of public access that could be lost if sea level rise and erosion continue unabated.

Feature Story

Ellwood Marine Terminal Restoration Underway



EMT site on November 17th, 2025.

Over the past 18 months, the Cheadle Center has been conducting outreach centered around the Ellwood Marine Terminal project with local residents, and with the Chumash community over the longer term. At the same time, our partners have been demolishing the oil facilities, cleaning up any oil they have found in the soil, and have initiated a cleanup plan with the Water Board to address the large pond on site. That pond is referred to as the "ballast pond" because of its original function of

holding ballast water from offshore tankers, which was displaced as oil flowed into the boat hulls from the Ellwood Marine Terminal tanks.



Video showing demolition of oil facilities and site grading.

One goal of the outreach was to identify a name for the site that honored the Chumash coastal connection. The members of several of the smaller, coastal Chumash bands identified local place names from historic records and proposed a name for the site that would honor its history. The name "s'o'hil xus", pronounced: "s-oh heel hoos" means water ('o') of the bear (xus), or Bear Spring, and reflects the unique wetland feature on the site and provides an indication of the value that the Chumash placed in honoring nature and putting nature first. We feel it is a fitting name for the project and have been working to develop some visual images to celebrate the name.



Design elements feature Chumash bear paw petroglyphs, culturally important wetland plants, and an outer ring motif seen across Chumash rock art, with the Channel Islands visible in the distance. Design by Kelly Ann Campbell.

This design incorporates Chumash petroglyphs of bear paws, wetland plants that are important in Chumash culture for basket weaving, boat and home construction and more, and the outer ring design is found across many Chumash rock painting sites throughout their historic territory. You can see the Channel Islands across the ocean in the distance as they appear from this local coastal high point. Thanks to a donation from Carol Geer, former Director of CAPS, we will be able to print shirts and share them with donors, volunteers, staff and student workers on the project.



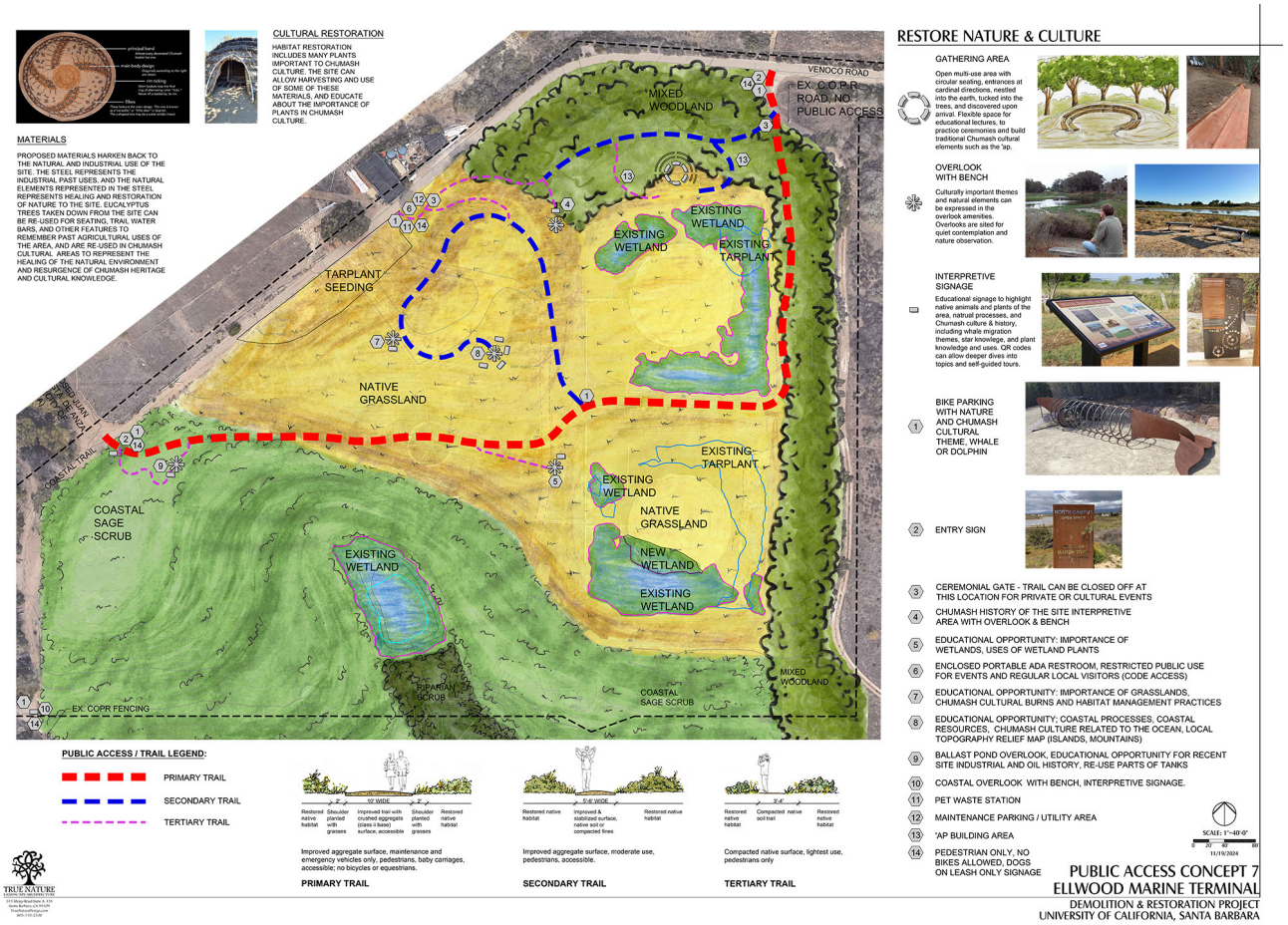
Freshly planted coast live oaks on the eastern edge of the site.

On the ecological restoration side, we've already drill-seeded native bunchgrasses and coastal sage scrub species using locally collected seed, and we're really excited to see what emerges after the historic rainfall we've had! We will be planting mixed oak woodland along the northern and eastern portions of the site and planting coastal sage scrub on the south facing slopes with grasslands on the upper portions of the site to retain views and support this locally rare habitat.



Video showing drill seeding.

We will be finalizing the public access plan this month (see below) to reflect the final grading plan and will be writing grants to fund the trail, bench, overlook and signage for the site. We are excited to be working with Ernestine Ygnacio DeSoto, tribal elder, to gather stories from long ago when "animals were people", as told to her by her grandmother Lucrecia Garcia, great grandmother Luisa Ygnacio, and great uncle Tomas Ygnacio. We hope to honor the Chumash relationship to the natural world as one of mutual respect and caring. We are also considering ideas that would integrate the paved road heading up to s'o'hil xus with some sort of embedded designs or other creative ideas. We welcome your input (please reach out to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu).



EMT public access plan.

We are excited about the project and the opportunity to share these beautiful views and sacred feeling of the site with all of you. It provides an opportunity to honor the Chumash ancestors who did such a wonderful job managing the coast for thousands of years.

We look forward to involving the local community in restoring the site. Join us on Saturdays this winter and spring for tree planting, or any day of the week to help with other planting and restoration work. Please email ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu to RSVP for our Second Saturday volunteer days or to set up an independent volunteer event. Hope to see you out at the site!

Volunteer Opportunities



Second Saturday Volunteer Day at NCOS

January 10, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Please RSVP to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu

Help us restore and create NCOS with plants and more! Meet at 6969 Whittier Drive at 9:00 a.m. Bring water and sunscreen, and wear a hat, clothes, and shoes that are suitable for outdoor work.



Greenhouse Transplanting

Thursdays 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Come help transplant seedlings of native plants with the Cheadle Center team. To join, please send an email to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu.

Community Photos

We are interested in any observations of wildlife activity from our management areas, as well as plants and landscapes. Please send your observations, with or without photos, to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu. Thank you!



Tropical Kingbird at the Campus Lagoon on December 27th, 2025. Widespread across Middle and South America, Tropical Kingbirds have also become regular fall visitors to the Pacific Coast, where a small number of wandering, mostly immature individuals are found nearly every year. Across their broader range, they occur from sea level to elevations above 10,000 feet. Photo by Lynn Scarlett.



Lesser Scaup pair at the Campus Lagoon on December 27th, 2025. Lesser Scaup are the most abundant diving duck in North America and feed primarily on aquatic invertebrates, including mollusks, insects, and crustaceans. Photo by Lynn Scarlett.



The Red-breasted Merganser, or “sawbill,” is a shaggy-headed diving duck with a thin, serrated bill perfect for gripping slippery fish. This individual was seen at the Campus Lagoon on December 27th, 2025. Photo by Lynn Scarlett.



Turkey Vultures sunning themselves at NCOS on November 20th, 2025. This posture, known as the horaltic pose, helps them thermoregulate and warm their bodies after nights, when turkey vultures can lower their body temperature by as much as 11°F to conserve energy in response to an often unpredictable food supply. Turkey vultures also spread their wings during very hot days to help dissipate excess heat, and after rainfall to dry their feathers. Photo by Sally Colman.



Belted kingfisher after a successful hunt in the Devereux Slough at NCOS on January 6th, 2026. These ragged-crested birds nest in burrows along earthen banks and feed almost entirely on aquatic prey, diving to catch fish and crayfish with their heavy bills. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



Song sparrow singing at sunrise near the NCOS Visitor Plaza on December 26th, 2025. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



Tiny egg of the Baja California Treefrog (*Pseudacris hypochondriaca hypochondriaca*) seen in the wetland channel at the NCOS Visitor Plaza on January 6th, 2026. Females lay eggs in loose clusters attached to vegetation in shallow water, which hatch in 2–3 weeks. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.

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For more information on the North Campus Open Space Restoration Project, Click here**, or email** ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu

To support our work click here

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NORTH CAMPUS OPEN SPACE

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