



## **San Elijo Lagoon restoration designed to combat sea level rise**

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ENCINITAS, Calif. (KGTV) – Local leaders revealed plans for a \$102 million restoration of the San Elijo Lagoon Wednesday morning.

The project has been nearly 20 years in the making according to Doug Gibson, the executive director of the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy.

“We just got our last permit a couple hours ago,” said Gibson at the groundbreaking ceremony.

The San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy has led the charge on the restoration but the project was made possible with funding from SANDAG and the state, much of it through SB 1, which created multi-billion dollar transportation fund.

That money became available because the restoration coincided with the North Coast Corridor program (NCC), a set of transportation, environmental and coastal access projects from Solana Beach up to Carlsbad.

Gibson claimed a partnership like this “hasn’t been done anywhere,” in which conservation was a primary goal of an infrastructure project.

Another factor that makes it unique: the restoration has been designed with sea level rise in mind. “20 years ago, we weren’t really talking about that,” said Gibson.

But with findings from environmental impact reports and community input, the project will incorporate elements to combat the effects of climate change.

“There’s a very fine band that plants and animals that live in a tidal estuary are evolved to inhabit,” explains Megan Cooper, the Deputy Regional Director for the California Coastal Conservancy.

She says the restoration project will create what’s known as “upland habitat,” so that as sea levels rise, the existing plants have a space to migrate instead of being covered by water.