



July 28, 2009

Mr. E. David Merk
Environmental Services Department
San Diego Unified Port District
P.O. Box 120488
San Diego, CA 92112-0488

Light-footed Clapper Rail Propagation & Sweetwater Marsh Nesting Enhancement Project Progress Report – Document No. 53889

Dear Mr. Merk,

The Chula Vista Nature Center is pleased to provide you with this brief status report for the activities supported by the funds requested for Light-footed Clapper Rail captive propagation and artificial nest platform deployment.

2009 Breeding and Release Activities

The Nature Center is housing two clapper rail pairs for educational exhibition and captive breeding. So far these two pairs have produced multiple clutches of chicks, resulting in 21 clapper rails for release into the wild. The Nature Center and its staff are still responsible for the transition process for all rails produced by SeaWorld and the San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park, which have produced and additional 11 rails released this year – bringing the current total to 32 endangered Light-footed clapper rails released in 2009 so far. The season is not over. All three breeding institutions have more eggs or chicks, making 2009 a very productive year.

Artificial Nest Platforms

As of January 2009, five artificial nest structures were deployed into Sweetwater Marsh. Three nests were deployed into the southern portion of the marsh (south of the Nature Center complex) to offer protection for a known wild rail pair who hatched chicks in 2007, 2008, and 2009. Wild rail adults and chicks have been seen in the vicinity of two structures this spring and summer. Additional platforms were deployed and in the vicinities of other known rail pairs and are being monitored for use. The nest structures are a new design that will offer increased protection from predators, primarily raptors. They are constructed and installed to float on the high tides and then return to their original position during low tides. Nature Center staff has constructed 5 more nest structures, and more are being built, for deployment in the fall of 2009.

The Nature Center is continuing to grow, attendance up 36% for the fiscal year. Paid visits and school programs will result in over 60,000 visitors learning about the clapper rail first-hand. Additionally, the Nature Center is now home to Muller Elementary School's 7th and 8th grade science classes. A teacher from Mueller will use the Nature Center exhibits and the surrounding San Diego Bay Shore to conduct science and ecology lessons.

Thank you for your continued assistance.

Regards,

Charles Gailband
Curator of Animals

cc: Eileen Maher