



Office of the City Manager

February 15, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: *DWR* Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager  
Re: Update on Aquatic Park

We want to provide you with an update on Aquatic Park, where we have looked into the recent deaths of some leopard sharks and bat rays at Aquatic Park, where, apparently, the historic January rains changed the salinity in an unprecedented and deadly fashion for certain saltwater creatures.

This artificial lagoon created as part of the construction of I-80 in the 1930s combines storm water run-off along with water from the Bay, creating brackish water that has hosted a wide variety of marine life. Thanks to the repair of the five tide tubes, completed in 2022 as one of our T1 projects, we now see more fish and other creatures in the lagoon than before.

City staff from three departments – Parks, Recreation and Waterfront; Health Housing & Community Services; and Public Works – as well as a contracted environmental consultant have been looking into this issue since last week. We have also been working with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

We have been told that the marine life that has died in the lagoon – leopard sharks and bat rays – are more dependent on high salinity. The January rains were among the most severe in history, and the experts and agencies that we have been consulting with have identified the changed salinity from the storm runoff as the likely cause.

There are no water quality concerns at this time.

The repair of the tide tubes was timely. In the past, the failed tubes meant that we regularly saw flooding during heavy rains. The tube restoration required coordination with five agencies and extensive prep work, which was led by PRW. This year, during rains that some believe have not been seen for a century, we did not see any flooding at the lagoon. We have also not seen widgeon grass nor algae. We will have to continue to observe how this transformed habitat evolves.

City Staff continues to work with state fish and wildlife to better understand the issue.

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Re: Aquatic Park Update

cc:

LaTanya Bellow, Deputy City Manager  
Scott Ferris, Director, Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront  
Lisa Warhuus, Director, Health Housing & Community Services  
Liam Garland, Director, Public Works  
Jenny Wong, City Auditor  
Mark Numainville, City Clerk  
Matthai Chakko, Assistant to the City Manager