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COASTAL COMMISSION, DEL MAR FAIRGROUNDS REACH HISTORIC AGREEMENT

Chula Vista, CA, March 8, 2012 – In a step broadly considered to mark the opening of a new chapter for the Del Mar Fairgrounds, the California Coastal Commission today unanimously approved a settlement with the 22nd District Agricultural Association, which owns and operates the Fairgrounds. The settlement ends nearly two decades of dispute between the two state agencies over several hundred acres of land near the mouth of the San Dieguito River, in the City of Del Mar. The land, some of which is a seasonal wetland, has been used for parking and other activities without the required permits.

"I am pleased to see this resolution come to the Commission, particularly so quickly after we made it clear as a Commission that the longstanding issues on the site needed to be addressed," said Coastal Commission Vice-Chair Mark Stone, who chaired the hearing. "This is the sort of result that we really appreciate: a consensual resolution focused on the enhancement and protection of sensitive resources. It shows that working out such disagreements can benefit all parties, as well as the public and, result in the protection of vital coastal resources, such as vanishing wetlands. We really appreciate the cooperation of the 22nd Ag and their Board and look forward to working with them in the future."

The Commission's action was finalized in a public hearing, during which the Commission expressed optimism that the resolution will lay the framework for a more cooperative, and environmentally aware relationship between the two agencies, and many members of the public expressed their support for the action. Under the settlement, the Fairgrounds has agreed to: 1) delineate and dedicate permanent conservation easements to protect buffer areas along the San Dieguito River west of Jimmy Durante Blvd and along Stevens Creek; 2) remove rock rip rap that was installed in two places along the banks of the San Dieguito River, and restore the impacted river-bank with native plants; 3) restore and dedicate a permanent conservation easement over 100-foot buffers along the San Dieguito River east of Jimmy Durante Blvd; and 4) undertake immediate measures to protect river and wetland habitat such as shielding temporary lights and providing development buffers from sensitive riparian areas while the Fairgrounds applies for permits to resolve existing violations.

"Today marks the beginning of a new era of cooperation between our sister state agencies," said Adam Day, President of the 22nd District Agricultural Association. "I am pleased that we can

move forward with protection of environmental resources while at the same time providing a first class venue for entertainment to the millions of visitors we host each year.”

If the Commission approves the Fairgrounds development on a vacant lot along Jimmy Durante Blvd, the Fairgrounds will restore the southernmost vacant lot to functioning wetlands. The southernmost dirt lot, which has historically been used for overflow parking, is also a seasonal wetland with sensitive plants and animals. Wetlands are extremely rare and important ecosystems, and play an increasingly important role of providing a buffer, in light of climate change and sea level rise. Southern California has already lost more than 75% of its original coastal wetlands.

"We are very pleased with the new spirit of cooperation between the Commission and the 22nd AG District," said Charles Lester, Executive Director of the Coastal Commission. "This settlement shows the benefits of working collaboratively to protect and enhance our sensitive coastal environment for all Californians while recognizing the significant visitor-serving uses at the Del Mar Fair Grounds."

The timing and content of this settlement, particularly the wetland and habitat restoration along the river, are particularly significant given the recent completion of the restoration of 150 acres of the San Dieguito River and adjacent wetland. Funded by Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas and Electric, these restored wetlands are just beginning to recover. By agreeing to restored buffers and wetlands the Fairgrounds will help support San Dieguito River restoration efforts and improve water quality.

The Fairgrounds has agreed to sponsor a San Dieguito Riverpark Cleanup and incorporate coastal and wetlands education into their operations to educate residents and visitors of the importance of wetlands and watershed health. As part of the new management effort, the Fairgrounds will also undertake regular trash removal on their property along the popular Coast to Crest Trail.

For further information and background, the Staff Report and Orders can be obtained at this location:

<http://documents.coastal.ca.gov/reports/2012/3/Th8-s-3-2012.pdf>