

NEWS

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ENDANGERED CALIFORNIA LEAST TERNS THRIVE AT THE PORT OF LOS ANGELES



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SAN PEDRO, CA – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has ranked the Port of Los Angeles second in the state for its reproductive success of the California least tern with more than 960 nests in 2003.

In continuing this project for the endangered species the Los Angeles Board of Harbor Commissioners recently approved a three-year extension of a grant agreement for the protection, and maintenance of the least tern's 15-acre nesting area, located on Pier 400.

Such an agreement between the Port of Los Angeles, California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been in place since 1984. The grant outlines the responsibilities toward the protection of the California least tern during its nesting season, which occurs from April to September.

The number of fledglings thriving at the Port of Los Angeles nesting site increased approximately 600% in one year, climbing from 45 chicks in 2002 to over 650 in 2003. Approximately 25% of the fledglings produced in the State of California took place at the Port of Los Angeles. Nesting pairs sighted in Los Angeles accounted for 15% of the state's total population.

Larry Keller, Port of Los Angeles Executive Director, commented, "The least tern nesting site is a living example of the Port and its customers taking a cooperative and active approach for environmental preservation.

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Thriving California least terns

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The Port is pleased to be a part of the solution to increase nest production and ultimately population recovery of these endangered birds.”

Kathy Keane with Keane and Associates, a monitoring agent made possible through the grant, stated, “This is truly phenomenal. When I first started monitoring the nesting site in 1986, there were less than 100 nests and now there are 960 nests. The Port and Pier 400 staffs protect the birds. It’s an amazing effort.”

Since 1997, 15 acres of Pier 400 has been designated as a protected nesting site for the least terns. Every year, the Port of Los Angeles prepares the nesting site by grading and removing vegetation, and providing chick shelters. The nesting site is monitored each day by Keane’s team of licensed specialists, who monitor the safety and health of the least terns.

The California least tern is one of the smallest members of its family, averaging only nine inches in length. The California least tern was federally listed as endangered in 1970, and by the state in 1971.

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