



Santa Ana River Mouth Monitoring Project January-June 2021 Report



Orange County Coastkeeper (Coastkeeper) is a nonprofit clean water organization that serves as a proactive steward of our fresh- and saltwater ecosystems. We work collaboratively with diverse groups in the public and private sectors to achieve healthy, accessible, and sustainable water resources for the region. We implement innovative, effective programs in education, advocacy, restoration, research, enforcement, and conservation.

The Santa Ana River Mouth Monitoring Project (SAR Project) enlists volunteers, community groups and local government to monitor human, dog and bird activity in the Santa Ana River Mouth area, a 13.2 acre parcel of land that is owned by four agencies including the California State Lands Commission, California State Parks, the County of Orange, and the City of Newport Beach. Due to the fragmented ownership of the area management of activities and law enforcement

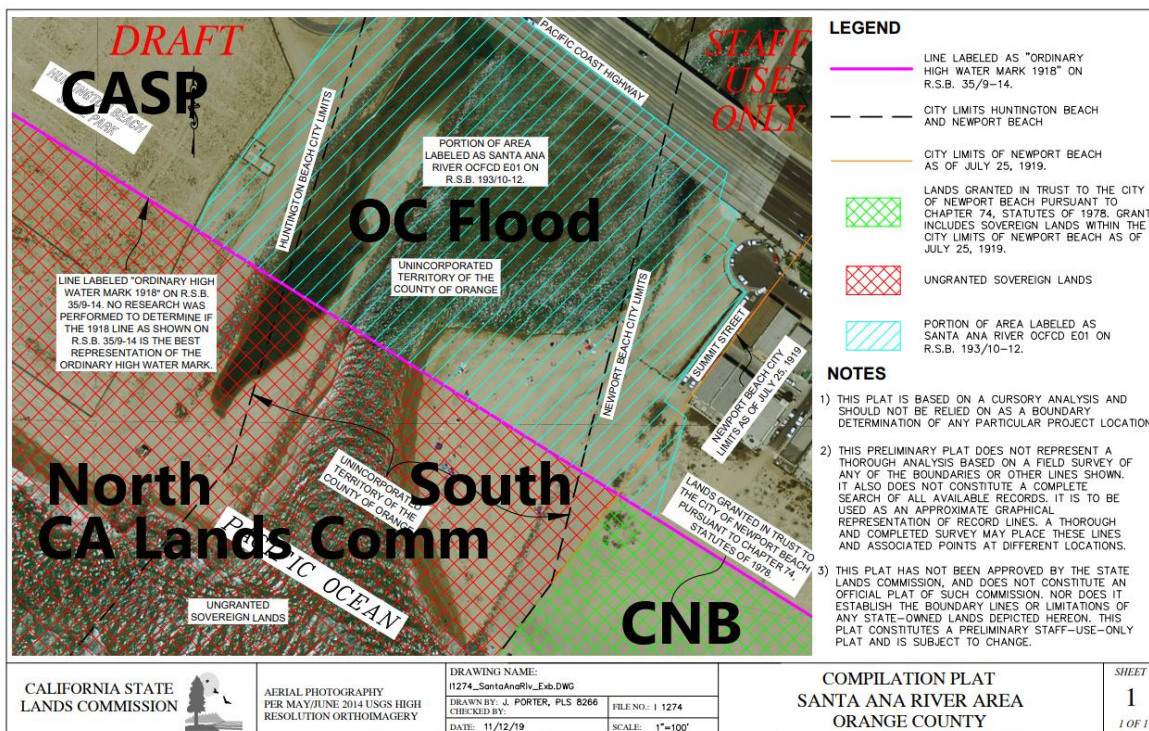
in the area have been difficult. The initial six months of the SAR Project covered in this report January 2021 and June 2021 was run as a pilot program by Orange County Coastkeeper (OCCK) with funding from the City of Newport Beach. The project is continuing with funding from the City of Newport Beach Community Grants Program and the Rose Foundation. The goal of the SAR project is to monitor human, dog and bird use of the area and to provide education and outreach to residents and visitors about the Wildlife Management Area at the Santa Ana River Mouth and the endangered species that reside within it.

Executive Summary

After initial program development of the pilot study monitoring of the area began on February 9th, 2021. Final revisions of the study protocol were completed by March 23rd, 2021 and all subsequent surveys followed a standard protocol that is used for all surveys.

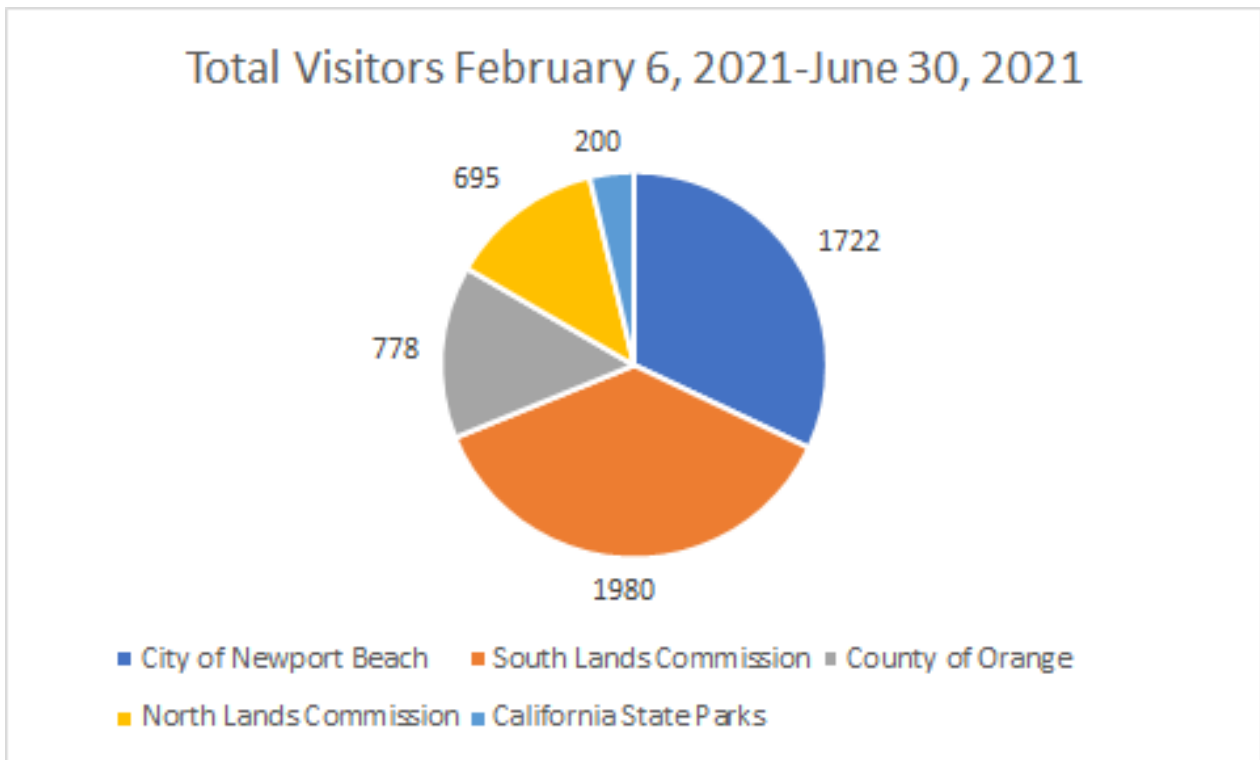
As of June 30, 2021 151 surveys at the Santa Ana River Mouth were completed by 26 trained volunteers. In the 151 surveys collected, 5,375 humans and 1,096 dogs were observed, of the dogs 894 were off-leash and 202 on-leash. Two drones were observed and all but eight surveys documented dogs in the Santa Ana River Mouth. Dogs off-leash accounted for 82 percent the dogs observed. No citations were observed to be issued by Law Enforcement. California State Parks Law Enforcement was called out by staff once for repeated bird flushing on 6/18/2021 on County of Orange and California State Parks Property by a dog owner and their dog.

GRAPHS AND MAP

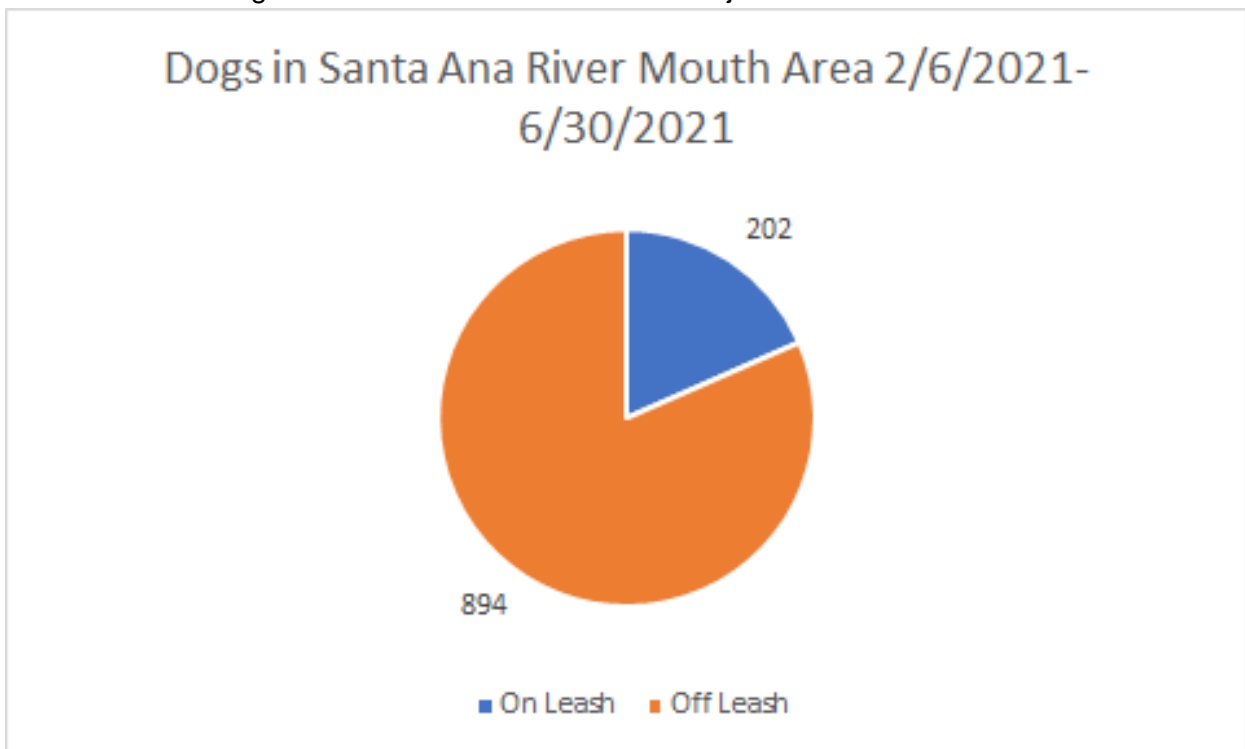


(Map of Santa Ana River Mouth with property names overlaid. California State Lands Commission property was split into North and South portions of the map after March 23rd divided by the location of the river mouth during surveys, to improve our ability to understand access use in the area better.)

Total number of visitors based on location:

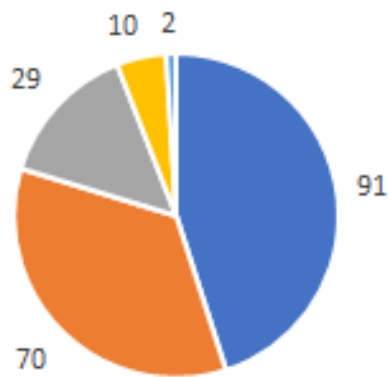


Total number of dogs in the Santa Ana River Mouth Project Area:



Locations of dogs recorded on leash:

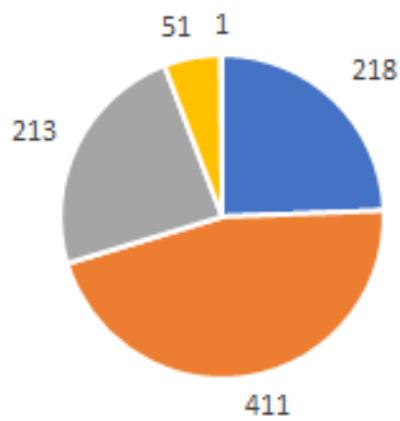
Dogs On-Leash By Land Manager Organization 2/6/2021-6/30/2021



■ City of Newport Beach
 ■ South Lands Commission
 ■ County of Orange
■ North Lands Commission
 ■ California State Parks

Locations of dogs recorded off leash:

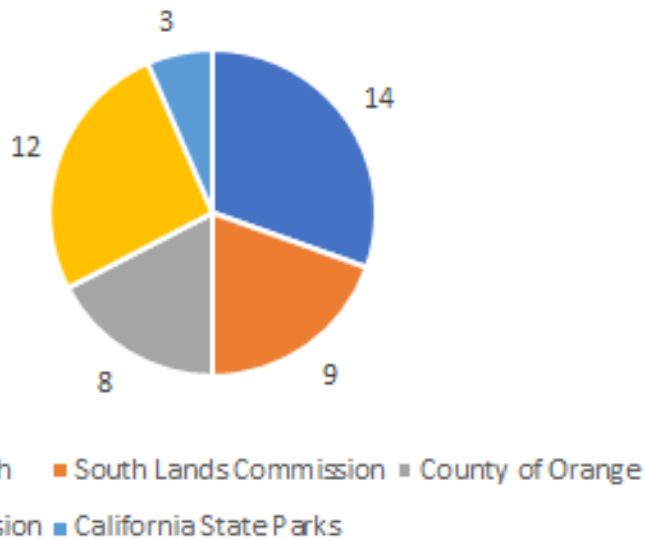
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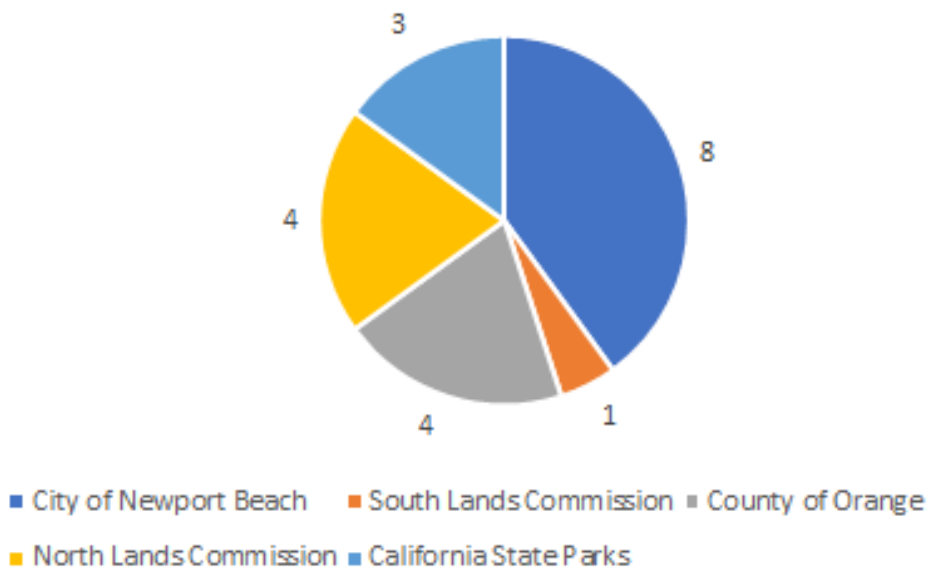
Recorded disturbances:

Total Number of Instances of Bird Disturbance by Land Owner 2/6/2021-6/30/2021



(Bird disturbance defined as when birds are present on a part of the beach and are approached by humans and/or dogs and they depart the beach.)

Law Enforcement Officers Present by Land Area



Training

Training took place with two components, an online one hour Zoom training that took place in February 2021 was recorded and distributed to new volunteers who were unable to attend the initial Zoom training session. Volunteers then met with Volunteer Coordinator Suzanne Welsh at the

Santa Ana River Mouth to go over the monitoring protocol and to go over the property map in person. Volunteers were trained to monitor human recreation use, dog use, and were instructed how to fill out the data sheet to track other uses like drones, disturbances to birds (where birds are approached by humans or dogs and leave the area), and to denote law enforcement officer presence.

Outreach Table



During this project Orange County Coastkeeper was able to conduct an outreach table for beach visitors. Visitors were given pamphlets detailing information about California Least Terns and Western Snowy Plovers. Additional information about the laws regarding dogs in the area and free biodegradable waste bags were provided to visitors as well. Between May 15th, 2021 and June 30th, 2021 the outreach table was set up five times and one virtual outreach event was held as well. Overall OC Coastkeeper has engaged 387 visitors with its outreach table and virtual outreach event.

COVID-19 Impacts

The greatest impact to this project was a delay in implementing the outreach table due to COVID-19 restrictions and vaccine availability. Staff was able to begin the outreach program in May after full vaccination status was met.

Next Steps

Our next steps in this project include additional volunteer recruitment from the local community as well as a continuation of the outreach table.