



ORANGE COUNTY
COASTKEEPER®

Santa Ana River Mouth Monitoring Project January-December 2022 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.

Project Description

The Santa Ana River Mouth area is 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. Coastkeeper enlists volunteers, community groups, and local government to monitor human, dog, and bird activity in the area. Due to the fragmented ownership of the area, management of activities and law enforcement in the area have been difficult. The Santa Ana River Mouth Monitoring Project (SAR Project) is run as an ongoing project by Coastkeeper with funding in 2022 coming from the California Coastal Conservancy and City of Newport Beach. 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.

Volunteer Training

Project training took place with two components; Volunteers watched a one hour training video and training documents were distributed to new volunteers. Then, volunteers completed a one on one or small group field training with Coastkeeper staff at the Santa Ana River Mouth to go over the monitoring protocol and the property map in person. Volunteers were trained to monitor human, dog, and bird activities and location. Additionally, they were instructed to fill out the data sheet to track other uses including drones, disturbances to birds (where birds are approached by humans or dogs and leave the area), and to denote law enforcement officer presence.

Data Summary

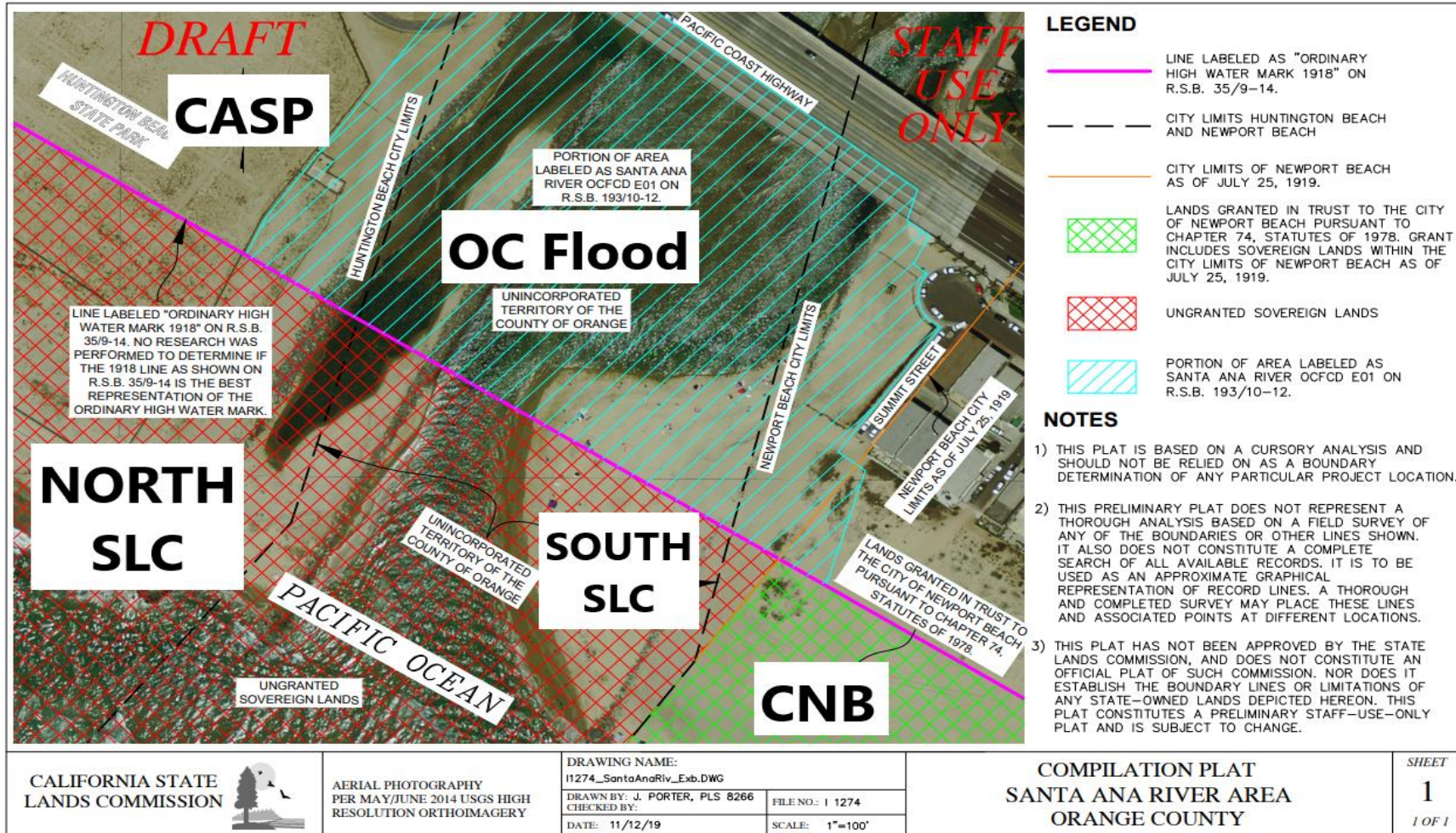
Between January 1st and December 16th 2022, 1,275 surveys at the Santa Ana River Mouth were completed by 36 trained volunteers. During the surveys 20,100 people and 2,424 dogs were observed. Of the dogs, 1,723 were off-leash and 701 on-leash. Dog's off-leash accounted for 71 percent of the dogs observed. Law Enforcement Officers were present 326 times during surveys completed in this time period. No citations were observed to be issued, though warnings were given to dog owners by the City of Newport Beach Animal Control Officers when present.

The data used to produce the graphs below show:

- The highest amounts of visitors were in State Lands and the City of Newport Beach
- There were more dogs off leash in the project area than on leash
- Most of the dogs recorded off leash were in State Lands and the City of Newport Beach
- Most of the dogs recorded on leash were in City of Newport Beach
- Most bird disturbances were in the County of Orange area
- Most law enforcement activity was by the City of Newport Beach



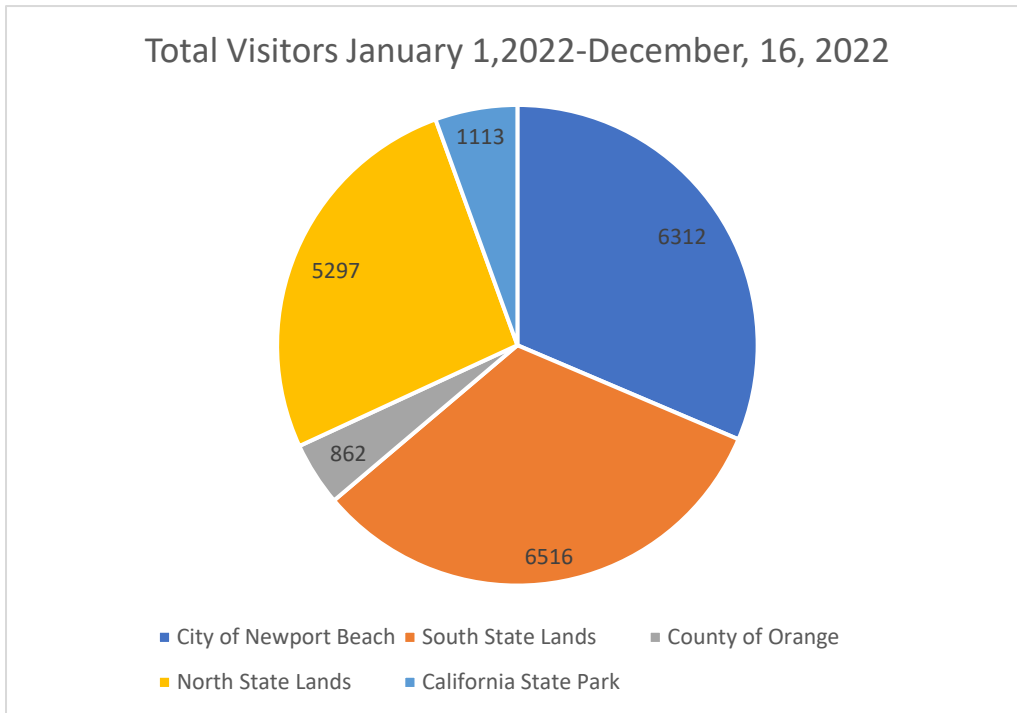
Project Area Map



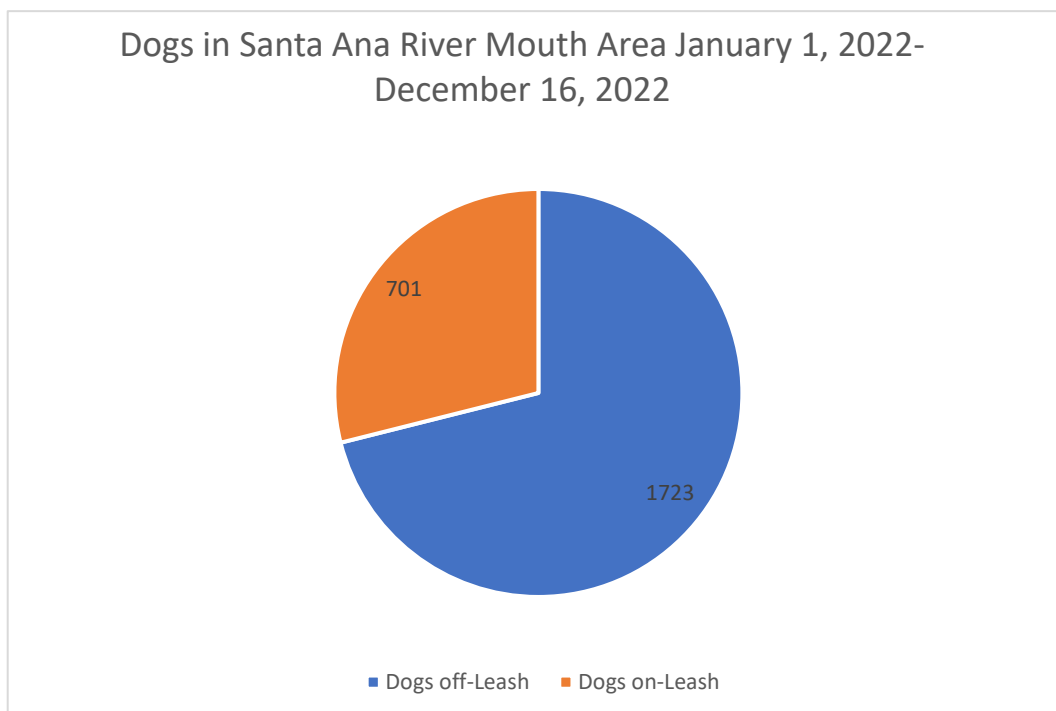
(Map of Santa Ana River Mouth with property names overlaid to correlate with data sheets. California State Lands Commission property was split into North and South portions, divided by the location of the river mouth during surveys, to improve our ability to understand access use in the area better. **CASP**=California State Parks; **OC Flood**= Orange County Flood Control Channel; **CNB**= City of Newport Beach; **NORTH SLC** = North State Lands Commission; **SOUTH SLC**= South State Lands Commission).

Graphs

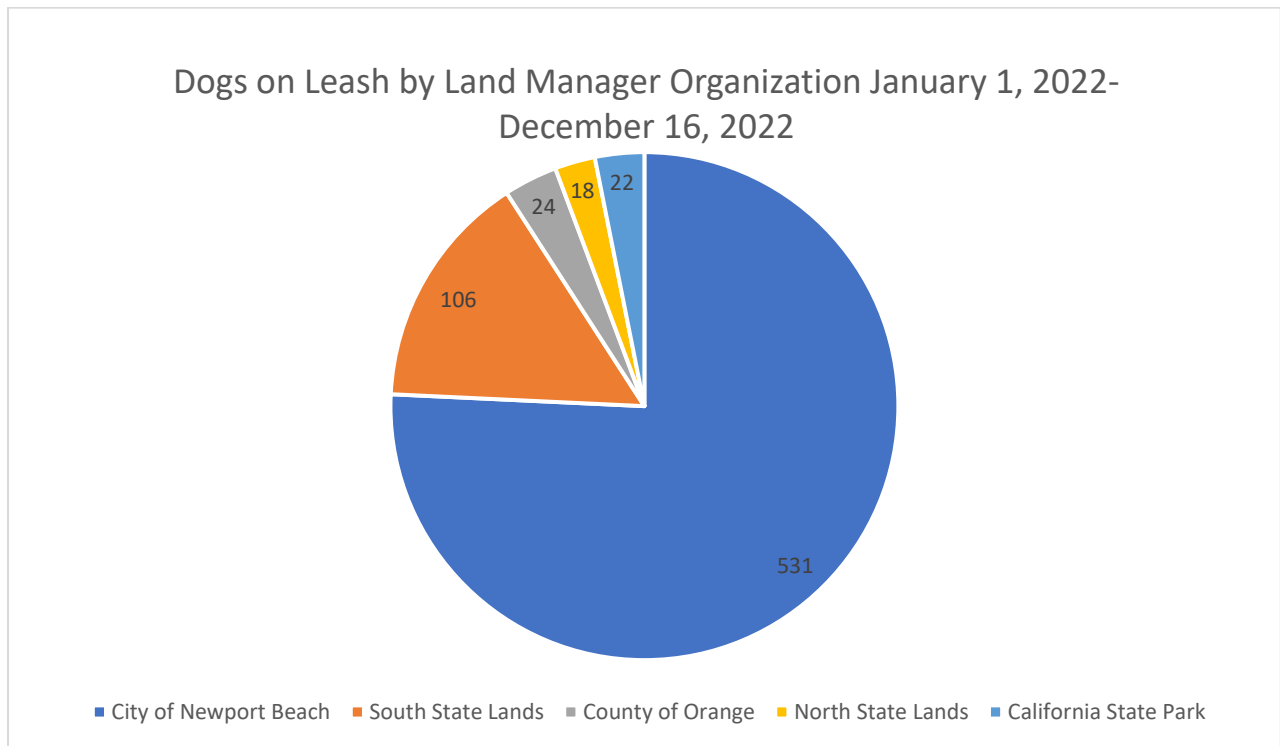
Total number of visitors based on location:



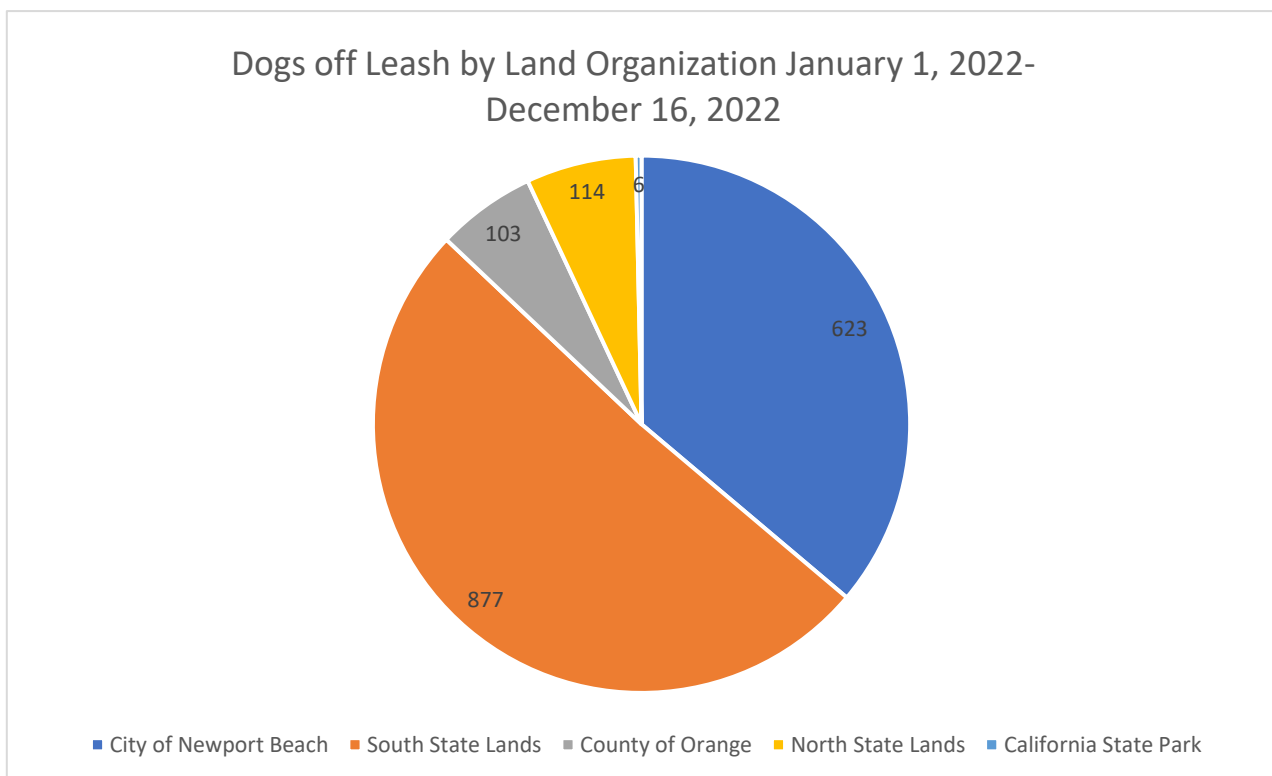
Total number of dogs in the SAR Project Area:



Locations of dogs recorded on leash:



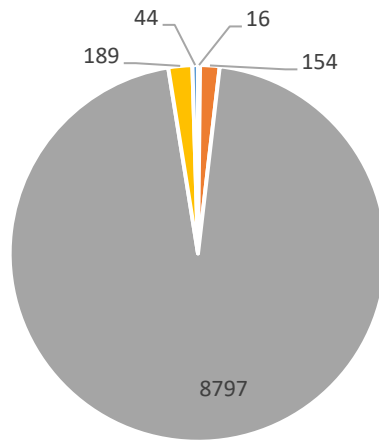
Locations of dogs recorded off leash:



Recorded Bird Disturbances:

(Bird disturbance is 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.)

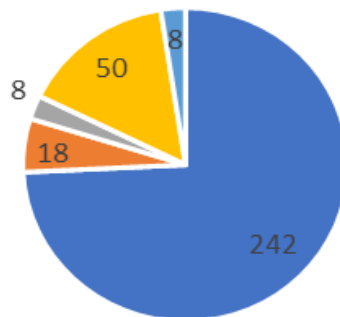
Total Number of Instances of Bird Disturbance by Land Organization January 1, 2022- December 16, 2022



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

Law Enforcement Prescience

Law Enforcement Officers Present By Land Area January 1, 2022-December 16, 2022



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

Outreach Table

Orange County Coastkeeper was able to conduct extensive onsite public outreach through tabling at the site. 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. In addition to our onsite public outreach events, we created a webpage for the project and posted project information on our social media outlets.



Other Impacts

The main challenge for our project was a dredging and sand nourishment project that resulted in heavy machinery being used in the survey area during the spring and fall of 2022. This resulted in heavy machinery occupying the beach in the survey and outreach area Monday-Friday from 8 AM to 5 PM. This activity displaced beach visitors, dogs, and wildlife, and prevented weekday outreach table events from occurring during those times. Coastkeeper staff was able to conduct surveys during the dredging.

Next Steps

We are thrilled to have received additional funding from the California Coastal Conservancy to continue the project. Our next steps in this project include recruiting additional volunteers, continuing the outreach table, and gathering more surveys. We will also expand our off site outreach through the creation of videos and other tools to educate the public about this important wildlife and recreation area.