

# Pond 20 I.B. project near completion

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Construction workers add the final touches of wildlife art to the Pond 20 fence — *Misael Virgen*

IMPERIAL BEACH — A decade-old joint project between the Port District and San Diego and Imperial Beach to beautify a future redevelopment site beginning with a new artistically designed fence is on track for completion this week.

The Port began this month installing the custom fence, which sits at the gateway to Imperial Beach, to replace the dilapidated chain-link one at the south San Diego site known as Pond 20.

The old fence had long been an eyesore for both communities, and the immediate area was seen as community blight. The rusting fence was replaced with a stainless steel wire-mesh one decorated with silhouettes of birds and a surfboard theme.

“The new fence is like a face-lift for Pond 20 and should help us encourage investment in this area,” said Cindy Gompper Graves, president and CEO of the South County Economic Development Council. “This is the first major step in improving Palm Avenue, which is the gateway to South County beaches.”

While the fence functions to protect Pond 20 from trash and debris, it must also be visually appealing, relatively maintenance-free and meet Caltrans fence requirements.

The 950-foot fence runs within the Caltrans right of way along Palm Avenue. The 95-acre site sits between Palm Avenue and the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge.

The new fence was designed with significant input from the community. Officials gave presentations to community groups, planning committees and environmental groups.

“I am grateful to Port of San Diego Chair Dan Malcolm, the entire board of the port and (San Diego Councilman) David Alvarez for their leadership and support for installing a beautiful wildlife art fence at the gateway to Imperial Beach,” said Imperial Beach Mayor Serge Dedina.

Imperial Beach council members gave their preference to the port on the design of the new fence last year with concept renderings created by consultants hired by the port.

The designs were also presented to the port’s tidelands advisory committee.

They chose a wave-type design in light blue with beige at the bottom to replicate the sky and sand. The fence ranges in height from 4 to 6 feet. The artwork incorporates local flora, fauna and surfboards.

Port commissioners voted in October on a contract with Greenfield Fence Inc. after a competitive bidding process.

The port approved \$300,000 in its capital improvement budget for design, construction and installation of the fence in 2012.

Pond 20 was originally a salt pond bought by the port in 1998 as part of an 836-acre acquisition, mostly to lessen environmental damage caused by the expansion of Lindbergh Field. The remaining acreage was set aside for future development.

The port will continue exploring options for using the Pond 20 land.

The project is part of a larger overall effort to improve the Palm Avenue/Highway 75 corridor and south San Diego Bay.

In January 2012, a memorandum of understanding was approved between the port and Imperial Beach and San Diego to move forward with exploring future uses.

The port is now examining those proposals and other options for Pond 20.

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