

AGENDA RELATED
October 10, 2017
21. 2017-0357

From: Bill Tippetts [<mailto:billtippetts@gmail.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, October 3, 2017 5:16 PM

To: Lesley Nishihira; Mike McCoy; Jim Peugh; Joy Williams; Sophie Wolfram; George Courser; Lesley Handa; Paloma Aguirre; Pam Heatherington; Don Wood

Subject: Comments on the Port Master Plan Update and Treatment of Wetlands

Dear Ms. Nishihira:

On behalf of the eight signatory groups, I am submitting the attached letter (with Exhibits) to be included in the formal administrative record for the Port Master Plan Update (PMPU). Also, please include it in the agenda package for the October 10 Board of Port Commissioners' meeting section that will address the PMPU.

The focus of our letter is wetlands (which includes subtidal, intertidal and emergent wetland habitats) and how that critical natural resource should be conserved - and increased - via the PMPU. Wetlands are an essential natural resource of San Diego Bay, a resource that has been vastly reduced in extent and diversity over the years. That loss negatively affects marine fisheries, shoreline communities' environmental and aesthetic value, the bay's potential to capture carbon (i.e., greenhouse gas reduction/absorption), protect shorelines from erosion, and other elements.

All of our groups request that our ideas and proposal be given serious consideration by the Port and - to the maximum extent - be made part of the PMPU's Natural Resources Element/Goals/Policy Concepts and implementation plan.

Thank you,

Bill Tippetts



Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association

700 Seacoast Drive, Suite 108

Imperial Beach, CA 91932

3 October 2017

Board of Port Commissioners and Port Master Plan Update Staff

San Diego Unified Port District, Planning and Green Port

3165 Pacific Hwy

San Diego, CA 92101

Attention: Lesley Nishihira (lnishihi@portofsandiego.org)

(submitted 3 October 2017 via email to lnishihi@portofsandiego.org)

Subject: A Proposal to Increase San Diego Bay's At-risk/Depleted Wetland Habitats – An Essential Component of the Port of San Diego Master Plan Update's (PMPU) Natural Resources Element

Dear Port of San Diego Board of Commissioners and PMPU Staff:

Introduction

San Diego Bay has lost thousands of acres of important wetland habitats, particularly shallow subtidal, intertidal, and saltmarsh - and miles of soft shorelines. Wetlands can play a significant role in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, serve as nursery areas for many marine fish

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species, and can moderate effects from sea level rise (SLR) and storm surge. The PMPU must address those losses and propose goals, policies and concepts to create/restore/enhance wetland habitats. In addition, the PMPU must provide a methodology or rating system to identify and prioritize areas around the bay that have highest potential for creating/restoring/enhancing wetland habitats. One of the positive aspects of returning habitats along the bay/shoreline is that the bay waters serve as a means for "connecting" habitats, even when they are otherwise isolated from other habitat areas. And, they support and improve adjacent/nearby development.

Key State Legislation

The Port of San Diego manages the tidelands and submerged lands as public trust resources for the State (specifically, the State Lands Commission). Public Resources Code (PRC), Division 6 (Section 6000 et seq.) provides trust land obligations and guidance for grantees: "Tidelands and submerged lands granted by the Legislature to local entities remain subject to the public trust, and remain subject to the oversight authority of the state by and through the State Lands Commission)" ... "Tidelands and submerged lands granted by the Legislature to local entities remain subject to the public trust, and remain subject to the oversight authority of the state by and through the State Lands Commission....and "management must ensure development and management of...the granted tidelands and submerged lands as the corpus of the trust."

Regarding leasing of trust lands, "Each form of lease shall contain such terms and conditions as the commission deems to be for the best interests of the state. (Section 6501.2)"

The San Diego Unified Port Act of 2016, Section 87 (PURPOSES FOR USE OF TIDE AND SUBMERGED LANDS HELD IN TRUST BY DISTRICT), includes the specific provision: "For the establishment and maintenance of those lands for open space, ecological preservation, and habitat restoration."

AB 691 (Muratsuchi, 2013) requires the Port of San Diego to produce a full assessment of projected sea level rise and flooding effects by July 2019 - which is about a full year after the Port has proposed to release its full draft PMPU - that must include:

(1) An assessment of the impact of sea level rise on granted public trust lands, as described in the Resolution of the California Ocean Protection Council on Sea-level Rise and the latest version of the State of California Sea-Level Rise Guidance Document.

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(2) Maps showing the areas that may be affected by sea level rise in the years 2030, 2050, and 2100. These maps shall include the potential impacts of 100-year storm events. A local trustee may rely on appropriate maps generated by other entities.

(3) An estimate of the financial cost of the impact of sea level rise on granted public trust lands. The estimate shall consider, but is not limited to, the potential cost of repair of damage to and the value of lost use of improvements and land, and the anticipated cost to prevent or mitigate potential damage.

(4) A description of how the local trustee proposes to protect and preserve natural and manmade resources and facilities located, or proposed to be located, on trust lands and operated in connection with the use of the trust lands. The description shall include, but is not limited to, how wetlands restoration and habitat preservation would mitigate impacts of sea level rise.

(e) In addressing the impacts of sea level rise, a local trustee shall collaborate with its lessees, appropriate local, state, and federal agencies, and other users of the granted public trust lands.

These specific citations are only a partial list of key legislative requirements that direct the Port of San Diego, through its PMPU, to develop and manage its public trust lands. As we describe and document in this letter, the current goals, policies and concepts in the early phases of the PMPU have not demonstrated sufficient attention to natural resources conservation and management (i.e., open space, ecological preservation, and habitat restoration) to meet the obligations incumbent on the Port as trustee for these public lands. Especially with reference to wetland habitats, the PMPU effort to date has not provided sufficient analyses of and proposals to address sea level rise (i.e., AB 691).

This letter outlines critically important information that the Port must incorporate into its development of the PMPU, provides the rationale for conserving and increasing wetland habitats, and proposes a process for identifying the potential for increasing wetland habitats and recommends preliminary acreages of key wetland habitats to be added to (by creation, restoration, enhancement) San Diego Bay. Open space, whether designated to include recreational or only resource conservation purposes, provides substantial benefits to adjacent developments and uses. In the case of bay-marine waters, recreational and conserved open spaces directly support fisheries (sport and commercial), tourism (particularly environmental tourism), aesthetics, and help reduce climate changing greenhouse gas emissions (serving as “sinks” that absorb and retain GHGs).

Background

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Estimates of the historical amounts of bay wetlands and recent calculations current wetland habitat acreages were provided for San Diego Bay in the San Diego Bay Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan that was approved by the US Navy and San Diego Port District in 2013 (Table 2-5. San Diego Bay: Comparison of 1999 Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan 2000), 2007, and historical habitat acreages –excerpted and revised below).

Notes:

- a. Historic figures are based on an 1859 chart. Current figures are based on a 1995 aerial photo taken at MLLW and bathymetry from 1859 versus current chart.
- b. All depths based on MLLW.
- c. Vegetated shallows is a subset of shallow subtidal, so is not included in the totals.
- d. 2007 acres/hectares include minor additions of habitat after 1999, as reported in Table 2-5.

Habitat Types	2007 Acres/Hectares	1859 Acres/Hectares	Loss or Gain	
Deep Subtidal (> -20 feet)	4395/1783 (28% of total)	2212/895 (12% of total)	+99%	
Moderately Deep Subtidal (-12 to -20 feet)	2219/898 (14%)	954/386 (5%)	+133%	
Shallow Subtidal (-2.2 to -12 feet)	3768/1525 (24%)	6400/2590 (35%)	-41%	
Vegetated Shallow Subtidal	1065/431 (7%)	Unknown	Unknown	
Intertidal (+2 to -2 feet)	984/398 (6%)	6148/2488 (33%)	-84%	
Artificial hard substrate Shoreline	45.4 miles	0 miles	+74% of shoreline	
Saltmarsh	843/343 (5%)	2785/1127 (15%)	-70%	
Upland Transition	2308/934 (15%)	Unknown	Unknown	
Riparian	7/3 (<1%)	Unknown	Unknown	
Freshwater Marsh	1/0.4 (<1%)	Unknown	Unknown	

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Rationale for Including Wetland Habitat Creation/Restoration/Enhancement in the PMPU

1. The PMPU process has not directly described and discussed the losses and fill of historic wetland habitats; it must acknowledge and explicitly address the tremendous losses of historical wetlands and natural shorelines around the bay, as summarized above and described in detail in Table 2-5 of the 2013 Port/USN Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP). See Exhibits 1 and 2.
2. The PMPU must include a commitment to create/restore/enhance bay (wetland) habitats consistent with its own SD Bay INRMP that calls for restoring depleted natural resources throughout the bay (Chapter 4) and the findings and recommendations of its Integrated Planning Vision Process and Framework Report (including the Planning Principles to honor the water, guarantee the public realm and celebrate nature and ecology). As reported in the Vision Process, infrastructure and facilities have been developed mostly in the absence of a clear policy, and most of the current infrastructure and facilities will need to be replaced within the next 50 years. That finding provides the Port a clear justification and opportunity to substantially re-think and restructure the developed portions of its tidelands.
3. In light of the historical losses of all types of wetlands and shoreline/mudflats around the bay, opportunities for creating/restoring/enhancing those habitats must consider and where that habitat increase may be feasible, across the entire bay, not just South Bay.
4. At the recent Port Workshop #3, the Port indicated it planned to allocate about 35-37% of tidelands (almost 1900 acres) to recreation open space (ROS), conservation open space (COS) and intertidal open space (IOS). In total, the Port's tidelands include about 1800 acres of land and 3600 acres of water. Given that the Port currently (as identified in the Integrated Planning phase documents) has only about 8% (144 acres) of its lands in Parks, how and where will the Port determine to locate those additional 1756 acres; and, what criteria are to be used to allocate among ROS, COS and IOS?
5. Projected sea level rise (SLR) assessments have not yet been explicitly incorporated into the PMPU planning, and the Port has yet to begin its required AB 691 assessment. That assessment must evaluate the potential impacts on built and natural tideland assets from SLR and flood events, including Year 2100 SLR projections with 100-year flooding. The assessment must also evaluate the costs of losing, removing/relocating, and protecting those assets. The rigorous assessment required by AB 691 should be a critical driver of the PMPU. We believe that the draft PMPU, which is proposed to be completed by February 2018, must incorporate sufficient information derived from that level of assessment to allow the public to understand whether the proposed PMPU is adequately addressing and planning for those impacts.

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6. Sea level rise and flooding projections, such as the USGS Coastal Storm Modeling System (CoSMoS) model (and NOAA projections), indicate moderate projected flooding inundation around San Diego Bay by Year 2050 and severe potential flooding inundation by Year 2100. By 2100, SLR-flooding inundation is projected to affect thousands of acres. See Exhibits 3 and 4.

In light of those projections, the PMPU must propose how it will identify and prioritize locations where protection and retreat (i.e., facilities and infrastructure relocation and removal) are anticipated to occur. This approach must also incorporate plans to limit the terms/tenure of leases so that tenants can properly plan for and assess the economic value of their developments and investments on Port tidelands. Many areas of the bay may be suitable for transition and/or conversion to wetland habitats - from shallow subtidal to saltmarsh.

7. The PMPU, in addition to and based on the AB 691 assessment and other relevant/related information developed by and/or provided to the Port, must include an explicit process and method for identifying and prioritizing all areas where wetland/shoreline/mudflat habitat could be located.

8. In light of the huge losses of historical wetland habitats and the potential that sea level rise/flooding present for establishing new bay wetlands - and the Port's expressed intention to allocate 35-37% (nearly 1,900 acres of tidelands) to various open space designated lands and waters - we submit the following proposal for how to effectively incorporate natural resource/wetland habitat creation/restoration/enhancement goals and specific habitat acreages into the PMPU:

PROPOSAL: The PMPU shall establish a goal of increasing shallow subtidal, intertidal and saltmarsh habitat acreages by at least 10% for shallow subtidal (+377 acres); at least 20% for intertidal (+197 acres); and at least 20% for saltmarsh (+169 acres). Those numbers are computed based on the 2007 (1999) wetland habitat acreages reported in Table 2-5 of the INRMP; these wetland habitat acres would be in addition to any/all wetland habitat acreage additions undertaken after the 2007 (1999) reporting period by the Port, US Fish and Wildlife Service, by outside parties' fulfillments of their mitigation requirements, as required by the Chula Vista Bayfront, etc. These acreages would be achieved over time and be located in areas of projected sea level rise/flooding that support low/lower value development and infrastructure, and as guided by an implementation timetable to be included in the PMPU. In the future, additional wetland creation areas may become feasible, and should be added in subsequent versions of the PMPU. Wetland habitat enhancement/restoration/creation would begin once the PMPU is approved by the Board and certified by the Coastal Commission. These acres comprise about 44% of the 1756 acres that have been identified during the PMPU

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planning process to be added as ROS, COS and IOS land-water use types (see Comment #4 above).

We strongly support the Port of San Diego's efforts to prepare a PMPU that effectively addresses the natural resource element needs of San Diego Bay by incorporating our proposal. That goal can be integrated with the other major PMPU goals for its economic development, mobility, recreation/coastal access, resilience/safety, land and water use, and planning district elements.

Please have PMPU staff contact Bill Tippetts (billtippetts@gmail.com), who is acting as our primary contact, to discuss this issue.

Sincerely,

Michael A. McCoy SWIA President
Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Assoc.

Bill Tippetts, Board of Directors
SWIA

Nicole Capretz, Executive Director
Climate Action Campaign

Jim Peugh, Conservation Chair
SD Audubon Society

George Courser, Conservation Chair
Sierra Club, San Diego Chapter

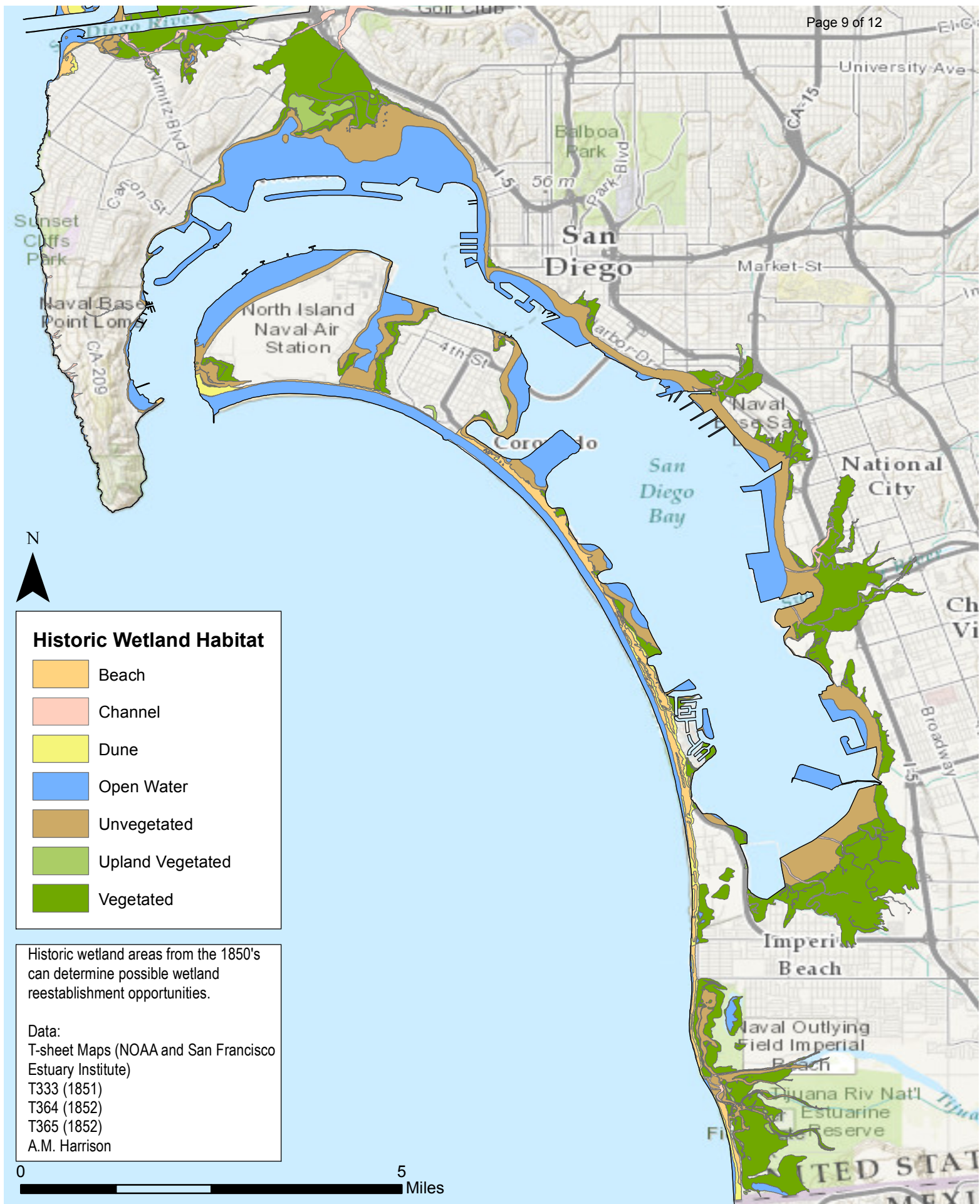
Pamela Heatherington, Board of Directors
Environmental Center of San Diego

Lesley Handa, Handa Ornithology Lab

Paloma Aguirre, Coastal and Marine Director
Wildcoast

Joy Williams, Research Director
Environmental Health Coalition

Attachments (Exhibits 1-4)



**Exhibit 1: Historic Wetland Habitat
in San Diego Bay**

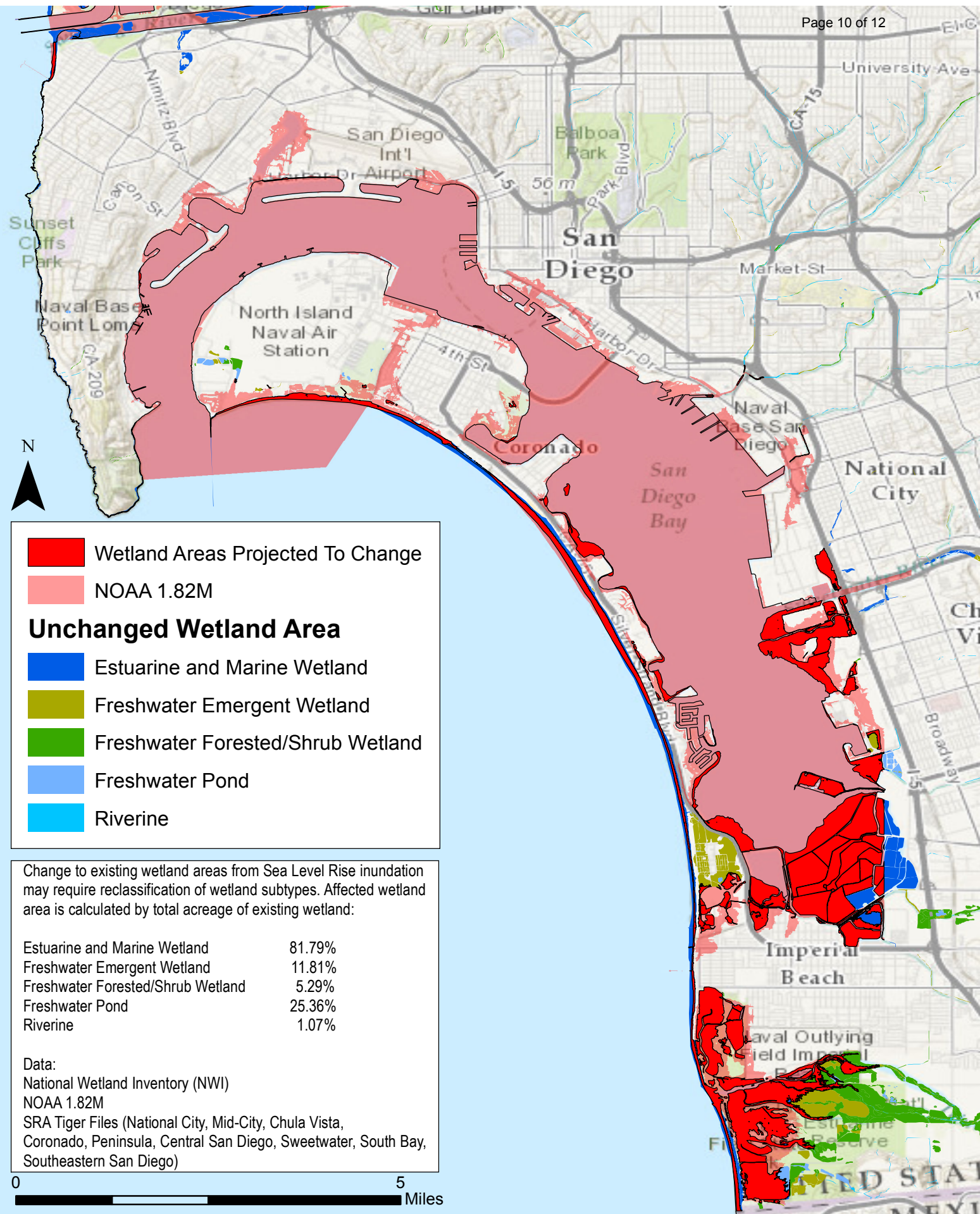


Exhibit 2: Sea Level Rise in San Diego Bay Existing Wetland Area Projected to Change

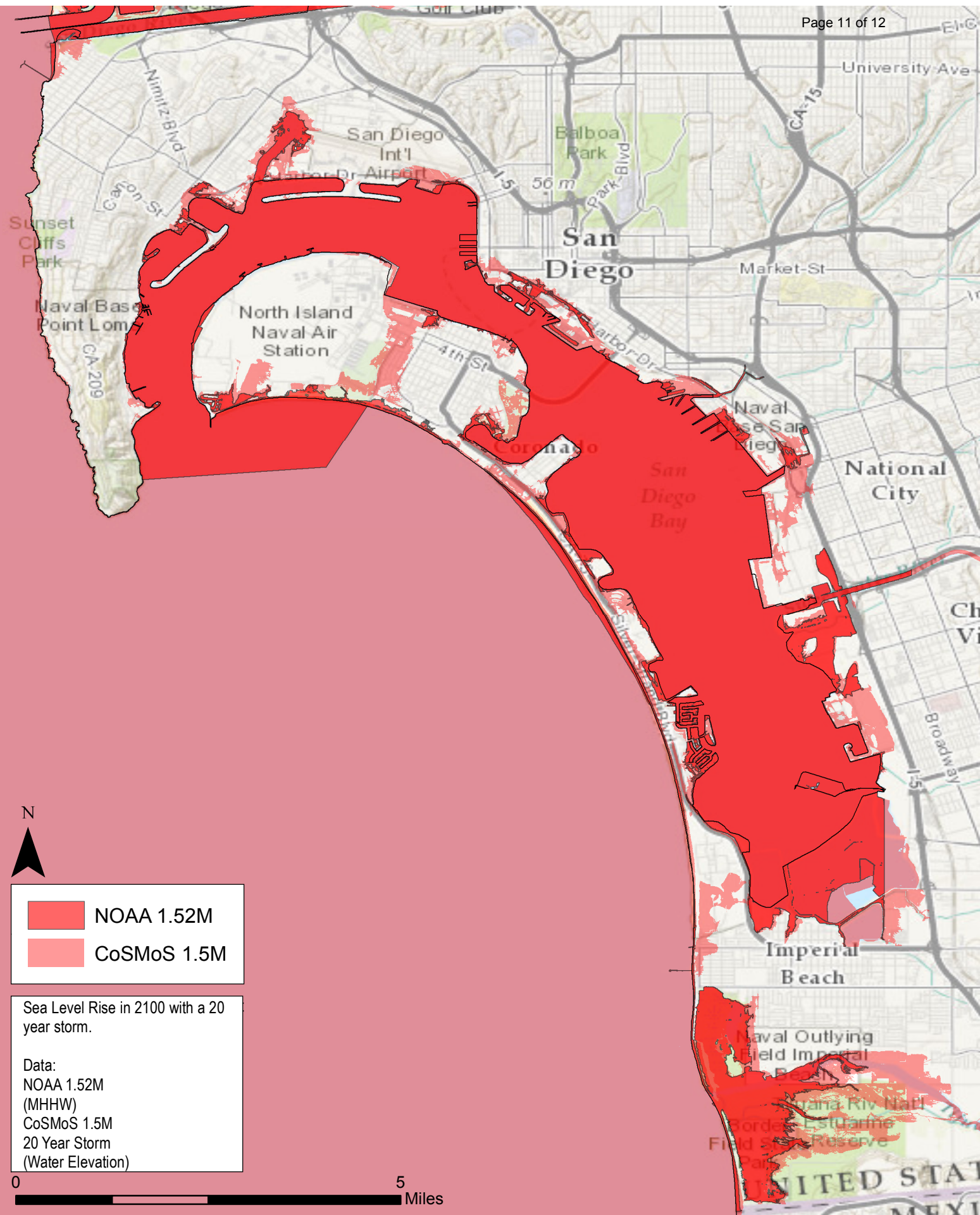
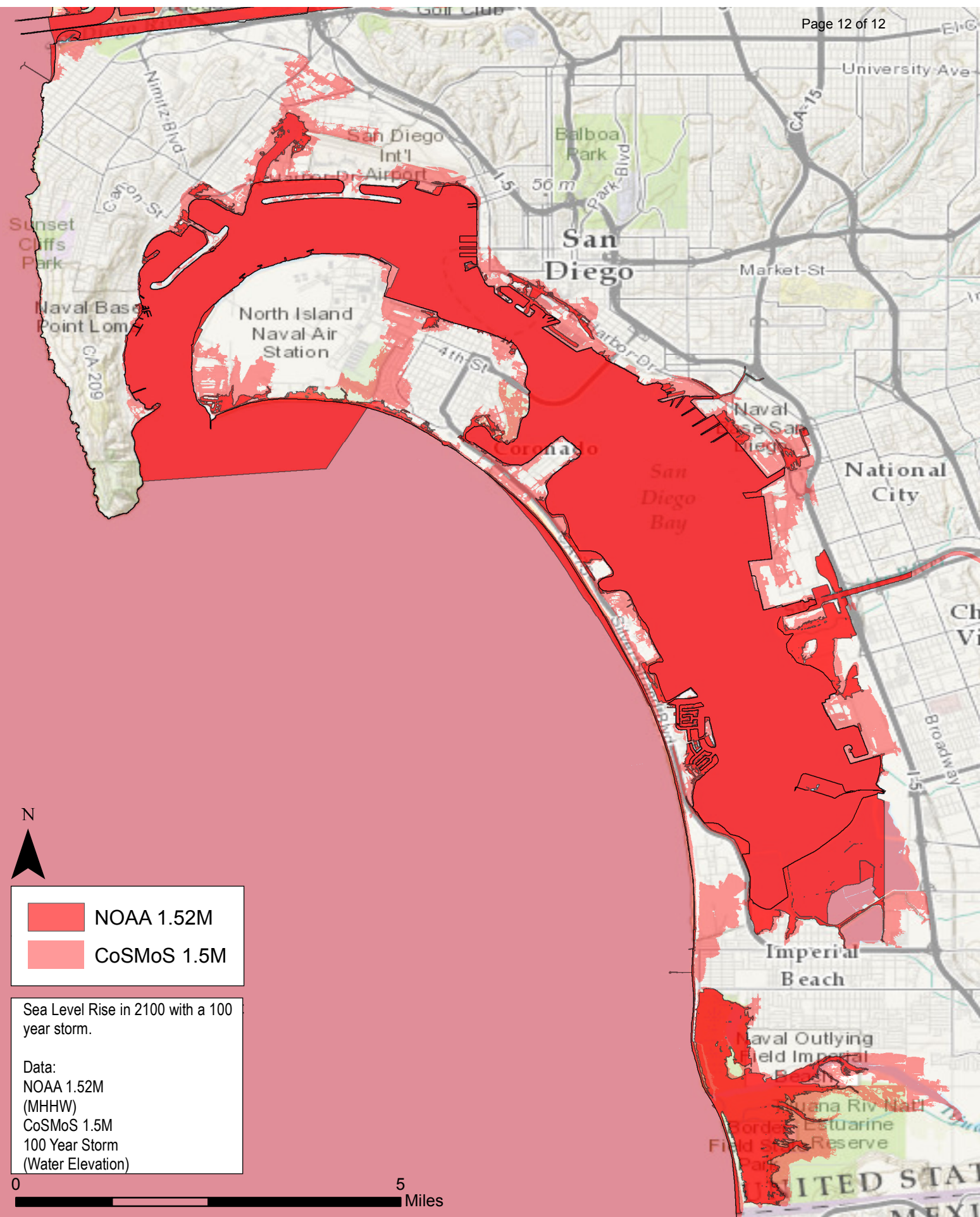


Exhibit 3: Sea Level Rise in San Diego Bay 20 Year Storm Projection for 2100



**Exhibit 4: Sea Level Rise in San Diego Bay
100 Year Storm Projection for 2100**