

Crowd celebrates purchase of wetlands

Nature Conservancy will direct restoration for Ormond Beach area

By Charles Levin

clevin@VenturaCountyStar.com

Oxnard Mayor Tom Holden took the walk on Ormond Beach. So did council members Andres Herrera, Dean Maulhardt and John Zaragoza.

They viewed the wetlands at Ormond Beach at the behest of Jean Harris, who was lobbying to protect the sensitive habitat from numerous development proposals.

Harris was persuasive. She gave hundreds of walks — and won over everyone who took them.

“That walk really helped change the des-

tiny of Ormond Beach,” Holden said Wednesday to a crowd of more than 100 dignitaries, including Harris, state and local elected officials, environmentalists and community activists.

The crowd gathered near the beach to celebrate the recent purchase of 276 acres of wetlands; laud Harris and her late friend and partner in protecting the area, Roma Armbrust; and view tentative plans to restore the sensitive habitat.

The city of Oxnard and the Metropolitan Water District sold the land for \$12.9 million. The state Coastal Conservancy supplied the cash. The Nature Conservancy

On the Web

For more on the Ormond Beach project, see the link at www.VenturaCountyStar.com.

holds the title and will direct a restoration plan.

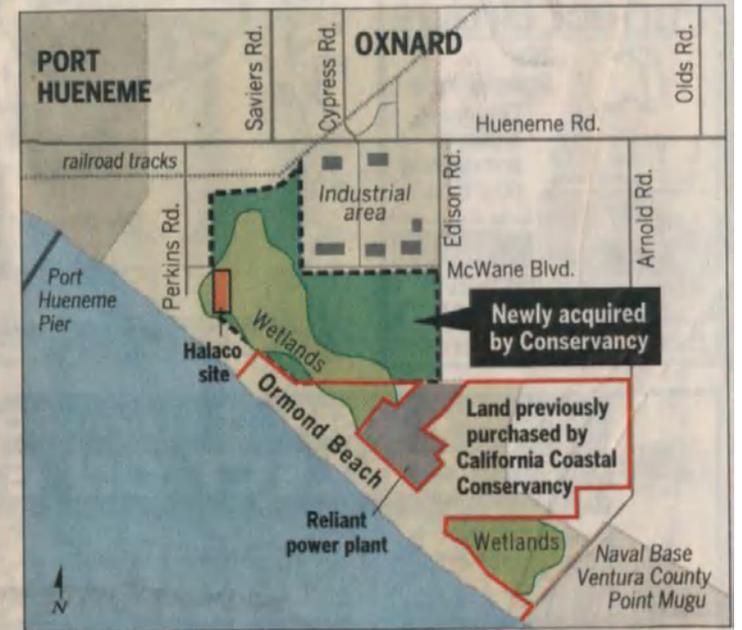
This land joins an additional 265 acres that the Coastal Conservancy purchased earlier for \$9.7 million from Southern California Edison. Officials hope to buy about 200 more acres.

The purchases will protect a large portion of the wetlands there, provide needed habitat for threatened species and migratory birds, and boost efforts to create a healthy coastal environment, officials said Wednesday.

Harris and Armbrust, who died in 2003, took up the cause more than two decades ago. On Wednesday, a score of speakers praised the two women for their dogged pursuit.

“I’m very moved,” Harris said.

See ORMOND BEACH on B2



Steve Greenberg / Star staff