Clouds, then sun
High of 61 at the
coast, 63 inland. **C10**

VENTURA COUNTY
STAR

B4   **Saturday, Jan. 20, 2007**

Grant to aid wetlands preservation
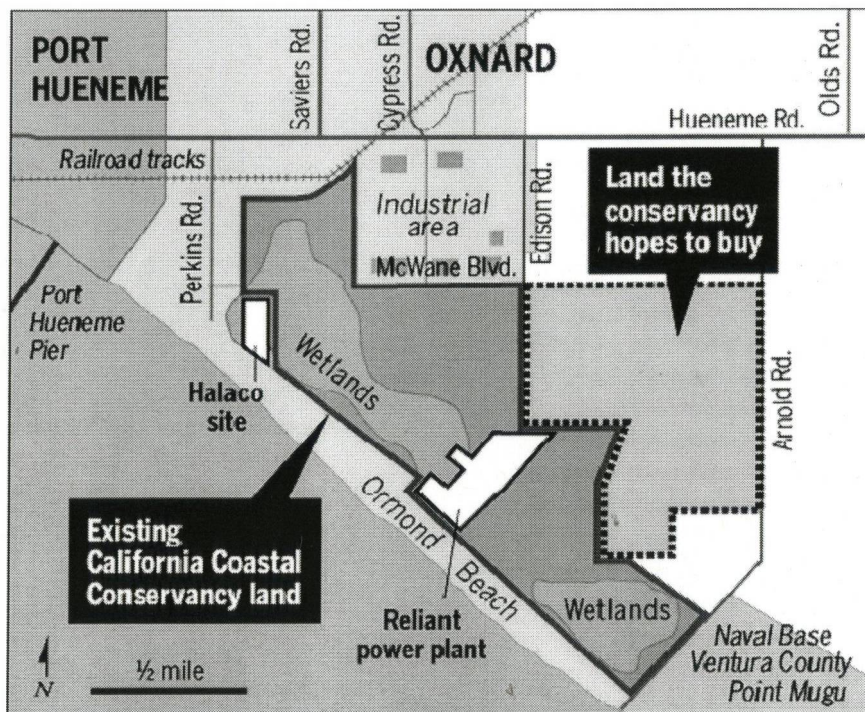
By Kevin Clerici
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An ongoing effort by the California Coastal Conservancy to preserve an additional 340 acres of wetlands at Ormond Beach in Oxnard received a $1 million boost Friday.

The nonprofit conservancy was among those named to receive U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grants to conserve coastal wetlands in 14 states, Deputy Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett announced in Washington.

The $1 million grant will be used as leverage to try to secure additional millions from public and private sources to buy the Ormond Beach property for restoration, Scarlett said. One potential source is Proposition 84, a $5.4 billion bond measure approved by California voters in November for water, park and coastal improvements.

The Coastal Conservancy already has spent more than $22

Steve Greenberg / Star staff

million to acquire 541 acres of the sensitive habitat. The most recent purchase of 276 acres came in 2005 for $12.9 million.

The conservancy's goal is to acquire and restore a total of 750 to 1,000 acres of the wetlands, said Peter Brand, a senior project manager for the group.

The 340 acres that the con-

servancy is now eyeing is a sod farm on Arnold Road. The conservancy has had only initial talks with the landowner.

"We don't know the exact acreage or sale price," Brand said Friday.

The wetlands restoration project would significantly expand habitat for four bird, one fish and two plant species listed as threatened or endangered, federal officials said. A visitor center and nature center also are planned to provide environmental education programs.

Although the land purchase is not final, Ormond Beach preservationists hailed Friday's announcement.

"This is wonderful news," said Jean Harris, who has lobbied for years to protect the habitat from numerous development proposals.

On the Net:
http://www.fws.gov/coastal/
CoastalGrants