

CHAPTER 3

LAND USE

3.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1.1 Introduction/Region of Influence

This section discusses current land use in and surrounding the proposed project area. In addition, local policies relating to land use are summarized. The region of influence (ROI) for the projects includes the project area and surrounding land that would directly interact with or be influenced by the components of the projects.

3.1.2 Regulatory Considerations

The proposed projects are within Santa Cruz County and are subject to policies and programs of the General Plan and Local Coastal Program (LCP) (Santa Cruz County 1994b). The General Plan provides the land use planning framework against which all proposed developments are measured. The projects are within the Live Oak Planning Area of the County and are designated in the General Plan as “Existing Parks and Recreation,” with lands immediately adjacent designated as “Urban Residential, Medium Density.” A narrow strip of land designated “Parks and Recreation” tracks the shoreline upcoast from Pleasure Point to the City of Santa Cruz. Lands designated as “Parks and Recreation” and “Resource Conservation” also bound Moran Lake upcoast from the project area (see Figure 1-2). “Neighborhood Commercial” lands are located along 41st Avenue between Portola Drive and the City of Capitola, and along Portola Drive between 41st Avenue and 35th Avenue. A small area designated “Neighborhood Commercial” is also located at the intersection of Pleasure Point Drive and East Cliff Drive, near Pleasure Point Park.

Chapter 2, (Land Use) of the General Plan (Santa Cruz County 1994b) contains the following objectives and policies associated with land use to which the proposed projects would be subject:

Policy 2.22.1 Priority of Uses within the Coastal Zone

Maintain a hierarchy of land uses within the Coastal Zone:

- First Priority: Agriculture and coastal dependent industry

- Second Priority: Recreation, including public parks; visitor serving commercial uses; and coastal recreation facilities
- Third Priority: Private residential; general industrial; and general commercial uses.

Policy 2.22.2 Maintain Priority Uses

Prohibit the conversion of any existing priority use to another use, except for another use of equal or greater priority.

Policy 2.23.2 Designation of Priority Sites

Reserve the sites listed in Figure 2-5 (of the County General Plan) for coastal priority uses, as indicated. Apply use designations, densities, development standards, access, and circulation standards, as indicated.

Chapter 6 of the County Plan, Public Safety and Noise, addresses shoreline protection measures:

Policy 6.2.16 Structural Shoreline Protection Measures

Allows (but also limits) the construction of bluff protection projects to locations where they are needed to protect existing structures that are threatened, and to protect public works, public beaches, and coastal dependent uses.

The Pleasure Point Park site, at East Cliff Drive and 32nd Avenue, and the East Cliff Drive overlook and parking area, at East Cliff Drive and 41st Avenue (The Hook), are listed in Figure 2-5 of the General Plan as Coastal Priority Sites. Specific standards for development and requirements for circulation and public access are listed in the General Plan for these sites, as discussed below.

Development standards for Pleasure Point Park include locating any private development west of the parcel to preserve coastal access and views. Circulation and access requirements for Pleasure Point include improving and dedicating the area for public use.

The proposed projects are within the designated Coastal Zone of Santa Cruz County and are therefore subject to the California Coastal Act of 1976 (California Public Resources Code § 30001 et seq.). In accordance with the Coastal Act, Santa Cruz County must prepare a LCP Land Use Plan for land within the Coastal Zone of the County. Santa Cruz County has developed an LCP, which is part of the General Plan, and the California Coastal Commission has certified it (Santa Cruz County 1994b). Certification of the LCP grants permitting authority to the County for development actions within the Coastal Zone. In accordance with this permitting authority, these projects, which involve construction and movement of earth material within the Coastal Zone, would require a Coastal Zone Permit and Grading Permit from the County.

Coastal Zone Management Act

Because of the location of the project, within the coastal zone, the Coastal Zone Management Act requirements apply (16 USC §§ 1451 et seq.). The County would issue a coastal development permit for the development of the parkway, and would obtain a permit from the California Coastal Commission for the construction of the bluff protection structure. Because the Corps'

involvement is now limited to issuing a permit for construction, no coastal consistency determination would be required.

State Lands Trust

Special consideration would be taken regarding that portion of the project that would take place in State Tidelands Trust land, which is defined as that area water ward of the mean high tide line. For activities in those areas, the State Lands Commission would need to approve a special lease and the California Coastal Commission would be consulted regarding special permit requirements (Cal. Public Resource Code §§6103, 30600.5, 30601).

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

The MBNMS management plan states that the highest priority management goal for the Sanctuary is the “protection of its marine environment, resources and qualities.” (NOAA 1992). While permitted sanctuary uses include but are not limited to recreation, education and interpretation, and scientific research, the Director of the MBNMS has the discretionary authority to permit activities that are normally prohibited in National Marine Sanctuaries (15 CFR 922.48).

Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail

The Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail is a recreational and interpretive coastal pathway that links existing and new trail segments into a continuous coastal trail around Monterey Bay. It is designed to provide linkages between, and access to, existing parks, public places, recreational areas, coastal access areas, and Sanctuary view points or overlooks and may eventually encompass other public amenities, such as the Union Pacific rail line, as they are procured.

3.1.3 Current Land Use

The project area is in unincorporated Santa Cruz County, approximately four miles downcoast from the City of Santa Cruz and one mile upcoast from the City of Capitola (Figure 1-1). The area is within the coastal residential neighborhood known as Pleasure Point and within the jurisdictional boundary of the Santa Cruz County Redevelopment Agency. The project area is on and adjacent to East Cliff Drive and extends from the intersection of East Cliff Drive and 32nd Avenue/Pleasure Point Drive (the Pleasure Point Park location) to the intersection of East Cliff Drive and 41st Avenue (The Hook park location).

Land use immediately adjacent to the project area is entirely single-family and small multi-family residential units, except for a small grocery store on the corner of East Cliff Drive and Pleasure Point. Businesses serving the neighborhood are located along 41st Avenue and Portola Drive, approximately a half mile inland from East Cliff Drive.

The project area consists of a coastal bluff and beach area that serves water-oriented recreational uses (recreational uses are discussed in detail in Chapter 4). The beach area contains no developed facilities, except stairs. The bluff portion of the project area consists of developed and undeveloped recreational uses along the edge of the bluff and residential uses inland from East Cliff Drive. Developed recreational facilities include stairways for beach access at 35th Avenue, 38th Avenue, and The Hook, as well as abandoned restrooms adjacent to the 35th Avenue stairs. Residences in the surrounding neighborhood are located primarily along the inland side of East

Cliff Drive, approximately 50 feet from the top of the coastal bluff. Three residences are on the ocean side of East Cliff Drive, one near 35th Avenue and two between 38th Avenue and Larch Lane.

The Pleasure Point Park overlook is largely undeveloped, consisting of small tables and benches, and minor landscaping. The Hook is more developed and includes picnic tables, benches, a wood fence at the overlook, and a parking area for approximately 64 cars across East Cliff Drive that includes restrooms and outdoor shower facilities.

3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Potential impacts on resources are discussed and evaluated, and measures to mitigate or reduce the level of significance of each impact are provided, where applicable. Included in each resource area are the impact methodologies and the NEPA/CEQA significance criteria used to evaluate potential impacts. Because some impacts are common to the alternatives, only the differences are described for alternatives to the proposed action.

Impact Methodology

Available information pertaining to land use was obtained from the County General Plan (Santa Cruz County 1994b), from Santa Cruz County staff, and from a visit to the project area by Tetra Tech staff on June 20, 2001. Potential impacts on land use from the proposed projects described in Chapter 2 were assessed based on the consistency of project activities with the relevant objectives and policies of the General Plan, as summarized in section 3.1, and based on the compatibility of the proposed project area modifications with the existing and proposed land uses in the surrounding area.

Thresholds of Significance

The evaluation of potential impacts on land use is based on the alternative's potential to conflict with existing or proposed land uses in the project area. In this analysis, an alternative is considered to have a significant impact on land use if it would result in any of the following:

- Conflict with or be incompatible with the land use objectives, policies, or guidance of the County General Plan and the LCP;
- Substantially conflict with existing or planned land use at the project area; or
- Substantially conflict with existing or planned adjacent land uses.

3.2.1 Full Bluff Armoring (Alternative 1)

Beneficial Impacts

Consistency with General Plan and LCP

The proposed projects would be consistent with and, in many cases, would implement specific programs in Chapter 2 of the General Plan and LCP, as outlined in Section 3.1.2 of this EIS/EIR. The sponsor of the projects would maintain the recreational priority use for the project area (*Policy 2.22.2 Maintain Priority Uses*) and would reserve coastal priority sites and implement specific programs for these designated sites (*Policy 2.23.2 Designation of Priority Sites*).

Alternative 1 would have a beneficial impact on the fulfillment of objectives and policies of the General Plan and LCP.

Compatibility with Uses in the Project Area

The activities proposed under Alternative 1 would be consistent with the “Parks and Recreation” designation for the area in the General Plan. Alternative 1 provides the most bluff stability and therefore would best support and preserve the planned park and road improvements to the area. Further, Alternative 1 provides for improving pedestrian and bicycle paths and therefore would enhance recreational use of the project area and would have a beneficial impact on its current and planned use.

Compatibility with Adjacent Uses

Alternative 1 would develop facilities that would be compatible with adjacent residential or commercial uses. Enhancing recreational use in the project area and stabilizing the road would have a beneficial impact on the current and planned use of adjacent areas.

3.2.2 Partial Bluff Armoring with Full Improvements (Alternative 2)

Beneficial Impacts

Consistency with General Plan and LCP

Impacts under Alternative 2 would be similar but less beneficial than those described for Alternative 1. Due to the incomplete stabilization of the bluff and therefore the long-term potential for loss of the parkway, Alternative 2 would be less likely to fulfill the objectives and policies of the General Plan and LCP. Alternative 2 would include other improvements and would still have a beneficial impact on the fulfillment of objectives and policies of the General Plan and LCP.

Compatibility with Uses in the Project Area

Impacts under Alternative 2 would be similar to those described for Alternative 1. Long-term beneficial impacts may be somewhat less than under Alternative 1 because the bluff stabilization measures proposed under this alternative would afford less protection to land uses in the project area.

Compatibility with Adjacent Uses

Impacts under Alternative 2 would be similar to those described for Alternative 1.

3.2.3 Partial Bluff Armoring with Limited Improvements (Alternative 3)

Beneficial Impacts

Consistency with General Plan and LCP

Impacts under Alternative 3 would be similar but less beneficial than those described for Alternative 1 or 2. Due to the incomplete stabilization of the bluff and therefore the long-term potential for loss of the parkway, Alternative 3 would be less likely to fulfill the objectives and policies of the General Plan and LCP. Alternative 3 would include other improvements and

would still have a beneficial impact on the fulfillment of objectives and policies of the General Plan and LCP.

Compatibility with Uses in the Project Area

Impacts under Alternative 3 would be similar to those described for Alternative 1. Long-term beneficial impacts may be somewhat less than under Alternative 1 or Alternative 2 because the bluff stabilization measures proposed under this alternative would afford less protection to land uses in the project area.

Compatibility with Adjacent Uses

Impacts under Alternative 3 would be similar to those described for Alternative 1.

3.2.4 Groins and Notch Infilling (Alternative 4)

Beneficial Impacts

Consistency with General Plan and LCP

Impacts under Alternative 4 would be similar to those described for Alternative 2.

Compatibility with Uses in the Project Area

Impacts under Alternative 4 would be the similar to those described for Alternative 2.

Compatibility with Adjacent Uses

Impacts under Alternative 4 would be similar to those described for Alternative 2.

3.2.5 No Action Alternative

Consistency with General Plan and LCP

The No Action Alternative would not create direct conflicts with objectives and policies in Chapter 2, Land Use, of the General Plan and LCP, as outlined in Section 3.1.2 of this EIS/EIR, but it also would not promote uses fully consistent with these policies. While the project area's recreational priority use for the area would be maintained (*Policy 2.22.2 Maintain Priority Uses*), the General Plan and LCP objectives to reserve coastal priority sites and expand these sites for public benefit would not be fulfilled (*Policy 2.23.2 Designation of Priority Sites*). Additionally, failure to protect the bluff would result in trail gaps and therefore would interfere with the goals and uses of the Sanctuary Scenic Trail. As described in Chapter 1, the project area is expected to degrade over time, resulting in portions of the project area eventually being lost to erosion. Santa Cruz County would address bluff erosion along East Cliff Drive through emergency repairs, where feasible. However, segments of the road, including public overlooks, utilities, and trails, would eventually be lost.

Compatibility with Uses in the Project Area

Under the No Action Alternative, recreational use of the project area would continue to be compatible with current and planned uses. However, continued erosion of the project area under the No Action Alternative would not be compatible with the planned, long-term recreational use of the project area. Public access along the top of the bluff would be reduced over time. Public

facilities, such as stairways and bathrooms would eventually be lost to erosion and access to the beach would become less safe.

Compatibility with Adjacent Uses

Under the No Action Alternative, recreational use of the project area would continue to be compatible with current and planned uses of the adjacent area. However, continued erosion of the bluffs would result in the eventual loss of public right-of-way and utilities and a loss of recreational uses.

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