

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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June 29, 2015

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County of San Mateo – Department Of Public Works
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RE: Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration Butano Creek at Pescadero Creek Road
Sediment Removal Project

Dear Mr. Schaller and Mr. Chow:

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to comment on the May 2015 Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration prepared by Horizon Water and Environment for the County of San Mateo's proposed Butano Creek sediment removal project at Pescadero Creek Road in Pescadero. The proposed project involves the removal of approximately 1,445 cubic yards of sediment from 100 linear feet of the Butano Creek channel under the Pescadero Creek Road Bridge. Project sediment removal would extend from 30 feet up-stream from the up-stream face of the bridge to approximately 40 feet downstream of the downstream face of the bridge. The proposed project also includes the disposal of the dredged sediment at either of two locations within the Coastal Zone in proximity to Butano Creek Bridge. Our comments are provided below.

Jurisdiction

The proposed project comprises elements that include: 1) a possible disposal site located to the north and east of the bridge, on 0.6-acre area of land on private property (that is used for agriculture); 2) a possible disposal site on County-owned property (a former airstrip) located southwesterly of the bridge; 4) a staging location on 2.38 acres of County-owned property off of Bean Hollow Road; and 5) the removal of sediment from within the channel bed of Butano Creek. All elements of the proposed project would occur within the Coastal Zone and are under the permit jurisdiction of San Mateo County. The proposed sediment removal and associated project activities would be conducted within 100 feet of the stream (Butano Creek) thus the project is appealable to the Coastal Commission.

Project Description

The discussion of potential impacts to dusky-footed woodrat further states that "bridge rehabilitation" would result in direct mortality of woodrat. Please clarify and describe what bridge work would be involved with the proposed project as this is not included in the project description.

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Coordination efforts between regulatory agencies have been conducted for the development of plans to improve the health of the aquatic ecosystem of Pescadero Marsh. There has been collaboration between various entities, including the Army Corps of Engineers and NOAA among others, to develop an integrated solution to the flooding at the proposed project location. Efforts are under consideration for the restoration of Butano Creek to its historic floodplain at the Butano Farms property owned by POST in Pescadero. The proposed project is a near-term solution to the flooding at the Butano Creek Bridge. The IS/MND needs to include a discussion of potential impacts the proposed project could have downstream of the bridge location. How would removal of the sediment affect downstream conditions at Pescadero Marsh and Pescadero State Beach? Potential long-term solutions to the flooding are identified in Appendix E of the Biological Assessment (prepared by H. T. Harvey and Associates). These include upland sediment control activities to reduce the amount of sediment delivered to the site, restoration/reconnection of floodplains to absorb sediment and flood water energy; creation of additional flow capacity at the road either through construction of a causeway and or dredging the channel; and restoration or creation of a stable open channel. The IS/MND should better describe or discuss how the proposed project fits in with the potential long-term solution. Will some amount of sediment removal still be necessary in the long-term, as mentioned above with the solution that would entail creation of additional flow capacity?

The proposed project also includes an annual maintenance plan for the sediment removal over the next five years. According to the IS/MND a work plan for proposed maintenance activities and a report following completion of annual activities documenting work for that year will be prepared by the County. We respectfully suggest that the Coastal Commission be included on the distribution list for the report as we have an interest in such activities and what is occurring in the Butano Creek and Pescadero Creek watersheds.

Biological Resources

The proposed project area contains sensitive habitat, as defined by the Local Coastal Program (LCP) Policy 7.1 and designated as such under LCP Policy 7.2 as the project area contains riparian corridors, wetlands and areas that contain or support the federally threatened Central California Coast Steelhead Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), federally and state-listed as endangered, Coho Salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), federally-listed as threatened and state species of special concern, California red-legged frog (CRLF), the federal and state endangered San Francisco Garter Snake (SFGS), San Francisco Dusky-Footed Woodrat, a state species of special concern, and Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) a state species of special concern.

LCP Policy 7.3 prohibits any development or land use which would have a significant adverse impact on sensitive habitat areas and LCP Policy 7.4 limits uses to resource dependent uses as further identified for specific habitat types in LCP Policies 7.9, 7.16, 7.23, 7.26, 7.30, 7.33, and 7.44. Only project activities consistent with those listed in LCP Policy 7.4 shall be allowed in the corresponding sensitive habitat areas. In addition, the proposed project should include mitigation measures to avoid and or minimize impacts to sensitive species and habitats and comply with U.S. Fish and Wildlife and State Department of Fish and Game regulations consistent with the requirements of LCP Policies 7.3 and 7.5. The proposed project should also comply with the more

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specific requirements for wetlands (LCP Policies 7.14-7.21), riparian corridors (LCP Policies 7.7-7.13) and rare and endangered species habitats (LCP Policies 7.32-7.42) outlined in the LCP as applicable.

Mitigation

The wetland delineation conducted by H. T. Harvey and Associates, dated March 2015 indicates a total of 1.17 acres of wetlands as defined by the Coastal Commission. The IS/MND states that the sediment removal element of the proposed project would result in 0.11 acre of “temporary impacts” to riparian habitat; and as mitigation for such impacts proposes a mitigation ratio of 1:1. The environmental document also indicates that 0.13 acre of jurisdictional waters would be affected by the proposed project, further stating on page 3-28 a total of 0.24 acre jurisdictional wetland impacts. Page 3-23 indicates a total of 0.28 acre of wetland impacts. Coastal Commission defines temporary impacts as impacts that don’t involve vegetation removal or ground disturbance. Mitigation Measure BIO-6 requires a Riparian Mitigation Plan for the creation of riparian habitat. The removal of vegetation and or ground disturbance in a defined wetland is considered a permanent impact. We suggest that the riparian mitigation plan require a higher mitigation ratio, such as 3:1, for permanent impacts to the riparian habitat and 4:1 for permanent impacts to wetlands.

The document states that there is an “unknown 10-inch dbh assumed to be native species” tree. Please clarify whether or not this can be better identified in order to appropriately mitigate for its removal.

Mitigation Measure BIO-2 requires the preservation and management of 0.56-acre area off-site as permanent conservation land for California red-legged frog and San Francisco garter snake; and to compensate for all impacts to wetland, aquatic, and riparian habitat. The County proposes to prepare and implement a “Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan” for the conservation easement. According to the IS/MND the County will begin implementing the HMMP within 90 days of U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s and California Department of Fish and Wildlife approval. We suggest that the California Coastal Commission also be included as a reviewer for the subject HMMP as the sediment removal will be conducted in the Coastal Zone, within 100 feet of the stream channel in an area that is appealable to the Commission.

Traffic

LCP Public Works policies (2.48, 2.49, and 2.57) regulate road capacity, desired level of service, and protect road capacity for visitors in coastal areas. The primary road access to the coast in San Mateo County is via Highway 1. Studies show that the current volume of traffic on Highway 1 exceeds its capacity and that even with substantial investment in transit and highway improvements, congestion will only get worse in the future. This proposed project will temporarily generate additional traffic and will likely use Highway 1 during peak hours.

LCP policy 2.57 protects the public’s ability to access the coast, but the extreme traffic congestion on Highway 1 interferes with the public’s ability to access the area’s substantial public beaches and other visitor serving coastal resources. The transportation/traffic analysis in the IS/MND indicates that there will be a temporary increase in roadway traffic volumes on Highway 1 and Pescadero Creek Road during construction. The bicycle lane on Pescadero Creek Road would be out of

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service and conflicts between bicycle and vehicular traffic could increase during construction. Construction is proposed to occur between June 1 and October 15, Monday – Friday 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM and 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Saturdays. The IS/MND Mitigation Measure TRA-1 requires preparation and implementation of a traffic control plan to reduce traffic impacts on Pescadero Creek Road and traffic safety hazards, and ensure adequate access for emergency responders, and construction vehicles. We suggest that the Traffic Control Plan also include specific mitigation measures to reduce and or avoid impacts to bicyclists. As there would be an increase in traffic on Highway 1 please provide/discuss measures that would be undertaken to address traffic impacts on Highway 1, which is used by the public to access the coast for recreational purposes during the summer months. We suggest that construction activities not be conducted during the weekends or on any holidays to the extent feasible.

Disposal

The proposal, as mentioned above, considers the disposal of the dredged material at either of two locations within the Coastal Zone. It would be put to beneficial re-use at the Curry site/property as a soil amendment to enhance crop production. The other option is to stockpile it on County-owned property and then dispose of it at a landfill or upland facility. We suggest that disposal be at an approved location consistent with LCP policies and in compliance with other waste discharge requirements.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide you with our comments. Please feel free to contact me via e-mail at rananda@coastal.ca.gov or call me at 415-904-5292 if you have questions or need clarification of these comments.

Sincerely,



Renée Ananda, Coastal Program Analyst
Coastal Commission
North Central Coast District

MEMORANDUM

COUNTY OF SAN MATEO PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

DATE: July 8, 2015
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Mike Schaller, Senior Planner
SUBJECT: Response to comments from the California Coastal Commission
(PLN 2015-00204)

Subsequent to the completion and publication of the staff report for this project, Staff received comments from the California Coastal Commission (CCC) on the environmental document for this project. Below is a summary of the Commission's comments and County responses:

Comment #1: Project Description

CCC comment: *The discussion of potential impacts to dusky-footed woodrat further states that "bridge rehabilitation" would result in direct mortality of woodrat. Please clarify and describe what bridge work would be involved with the proposed project as this is not included in the project description.*

Staff's response: Staff reviewed the draft Initial Study and could not find the specific passage cited by the CCC above. However, Staff did clarify with the applicant (DPW) that no bridge work is proposed nor anticipated at this time. Potential impacts to the woodrat because of sediment removal were identified in the Initial Study and measures to reduce the potential for direct mortality were proposed in the document. Those measures were carried over as conditions of approval in Attachment A of the staff report.

Comment #2: Project Description

CCC comment: *How would removal of the sediment affect downstream conditions at Pescadero Marsh and Pescadero State Beach?*

Staff's response: The "Pescadero Road Flood Solutions Report" prepared under contract for the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District (included as Attachment H of the staff report) includes a detailed discussion of the anticipated short and long term impacts of the proposed dredging. In summary, the report predicts that:

"The frequency and duration of chronic flooding will be reduced, at least initially until sediment fills in the dredged area. While the frequent flooding of the road would be reduced, adjacent floodplain areas to the north and south of the road would still flood, although to a lesser extent.

The volume of sediment removed to create this capacity is small relative to the average amount of sediment currently being transported to the marsh each year; as such it should not be expected to persist for long periods.

In addition, habitat connectivity with the lagoon will not be addressed by dredging at this location, and therefore this component would not improve fish passage restrictions.”

The report concludes that the proposed sediment removal will have little to no affect downstream of the bridge. In particular, this single action (dredging under the bridge) will not achieve the larger goal of restoring Butano Creek as viable habitat for Coho salmon and steelhead.

Comment #3: Project Description

CCC comment: *Will some amount of sediment removal still be necessary in the long-term, as mentioned above with the solution that would entail creation of additional flow capacity?*

Staff’s Response: Again, the “Solutions” report has the following to say about the long-term results of this project:

This component (dredging under the bridge) alone will only provide relief from the frequent chronic flooding immediately after dredging. However, the road will likely flood again after sediment is deposited in the dredged area following the first significant storm event (i.e., a 2-year event or larger). With this in mind, for this action to be a component of a long-term solution to flooding at the road, the dredging would have to be repeated as needed, annually, if not even more frequently. It is possible that dredging would not be required after a dry year without any significant floods (e.g., as occurred in the 2014 water year); however, it should be expected that in some wetter years dredging could be required following each significant storm event in order to provide adequate capacity for subsequent events. In other words, in some years dredging could be needed multiple times to reduce the potential for frequent flooding of the road.

Comment #4: Project Description

CCC comment: *According to the IS/MND a work plan for proposed maintenance activities and a report following completion of annual activities documenting work for that year will be prepared by the County. We respectfully suggest that the Coastal Commission be included on the distribution list for the report as we have an interest in such activities and what is occurring in the Butano Creek and Pescadero Creek watersheds.*

Staff’s Response: The applicant has stated that the CCC will be added to this distribution list.

Comment #5: Mitigation

CCC comment: *We suggest that the riparian mitigation plan require a higher mitigation ratio, such as 3:1, for permanent impacts to the riparian habitat and 4:1 for permanent impacts to wetlands.*

Staff’s Response: The applicant has been advised and will adjust their plans accordingly.

Comment #6: Mitigation

CCC comment: *We suggest that the California Coastal Commission also be included as a reviewer for the subject Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan as the sediment removal will be conducted in the Coastal Zone, within 100 feet of the stream channel in an area that is appealable to the Commission.*

Staff's Response: The applicant has stated that the CCC will be added to this distribution list.

Comment #7: Traffic

CCC comment: *The IS/MND Mitigation Measure TRA-1 requires preparation and implementation of a traffic control plan to reduce traffic impacts on Pescadero Creek Road and traffic safety hazards, and ensure adequate access for emergency responders, and construction vehicles. We suggest that the Traffic Control Plan also include specific mitigation measures to reduce and or avoid impacts to bicyclists.*

Staff's Response: The applicant has been advised and will adjust their plans accordingly.

Comment #8: Traffic

CCC comment: *As there would be an increase in traffic on Highway 1 please provide/discuss measures that would be undertaken to address traffic impacts on Highway 1, which is used by the public to access the coast for recreational purposes during the summer months. We suggest that construction activities not be conducted during the weekends or on any holidays to the extent feasible.*

Staff's Response: The Commission notes the impaired traffic conditions on Highway 1, which is true for the portion of Highway 1 between Half Moon Bay and Montara. However, the segment of Highway 1 around the intersection with Pescadero Creek Road is not impaired. It is estimated that the project will require 10 workers during the approximately two week dredging operation. Equipment transportation to the site will only occur once (delivery and removal). As discussed in the Initial Study, traffic impacts will be primarily limited to the immediate area of work on Pescadero Creek and Bean Hollow Roads. There is no evidence to suggest that the project will have a significant impact upon Highway 1. While the Initial Study does reference the potential for work to occur on Saturdays, this will most likely not occur except in an emergency situation.