

## CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

SAN DIEGO COAST AREA  
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Staff: EL-SD  
Staff Report: February 16, 1996  
Hearing Date: March 12-15, 1996

STAFF REPORT: CONSENT CALENDAR**Fr 5a**

Application No.: 6-95-150

Applicant: California Department of  
Parks and Recreation

Agent: Ronilee A. Clark

Description: Construction of a nature trail system and enhancement of native vegetation on a vacant, forty-acre parcel of public parkland leased from the Navy, including resurfacing an existing trail to ADA specifications, constructing other portions of trail and boardwalk, constructing two observation decks with interpretive signage, and planting native plants.

Lot Area	approx. 40 acres
Pavement Coverage	approx. 1/3 acre
Zoning	CU-OS
Plan Designation	Civic Use - Open Space

Site: East side of Route 75, just north of the Crown Cove/Bayside portion of Silver Strand State Beach, Coronado, San Diego County. APN 615-030-03

Substantive File Documents: CCC Files #6-87-558; #6-90-71

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The staff recommends the Commission adopt the following resolution:

I. Approval with Conditions.

The Commission hereby grants a permit for the proposed development, subject to the conditions below, on the grounds that the development will be in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 of the California Coastal Act of 1976, will not prejudice the ability of the local government having jurisdiction over the area to prepare a Local Coastal Program conforming to the provisions of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act, and will not have any significant adverse impacts on the environment within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act.

II. Standard Conditions.

See attached page.

III. Special Conditions.

The permit is subject to the following conditions:

1. Final Plans. Prior to the commencement of construction, the applicant shall submit to the Executive Director for review and written approval, final plans for the nature trail system and native vegetation enhancement in substantial conformance with the preliminary plans and project description herein approved. In addition to information shown on the preliminary plans, the final plans shall document the revised surfacing materials for all trails, delineate the 25-acre native reseeding area, identify all temporary or permanent irrigation systems, identify any required construction staging area, and document any minor project modifications made during the construction bidding process.

2. Interpretive Signage. Prior to the installation of the interpretive panels, the applicant shall submit final plans documenting the design, placement and elevations of the interpretive panels proposed for the two observation decks. Said plans shall be subject to the review and written approval of the Executive Director.

IV. Findings and Declarations.

The Commission finds and declares as follows:

1. Detailed Project Description. The applicant is proposing improvements to a vacant, forty-acre parcel of land to create a nature trail system and enhance native coastal dune vegetation. The site is located along the Silver Strand, south of the village of Coronado; it is bordered on the east by San Diego Bay, on the south by an improved portion of Silver Strand State Beach (Crown Cove/Bayside), on the west by Highway 75 and on the north by a Navy housing complex. The property is owned by the U.S. Navy, but is under a long-term lease to the California Department of Parks and Recreation. The site has been informally used over the years for passive recreation and as access to the San Diego Bay shoreline. In addition, the Commission several years ago approved Coastal Development Permit #6-87-558 for construction of a tent and trailer campground on the site; the campground was never built due to funding problems, although some dune enhancement activities were completed.

The site is currently vacant, and there are a number of dirt pathways criss-crossing the parcel, and an existing fence running east-west along the parcel's southern boundary, separating the site from the improved Silver Strand State Beach day-use area to the south. That fence will be removed as part of the proposed project, and an existing, paved maintenance road in the adjacent Crown Cove state park area will be extended northeastward across a disturbed area on the subject site and connected with an existing east-west trending trail, terminating in the uplands just west of the bay. Much of the

proposed trail system makes use of the existing pathways, with minor smoothing and surfacing improvements to make them more accessible for bicyclists, skaters and the handicapped. In addition, two observation decks will be included at either end of the main north-south trail and interpretive panels are proposed for these locations. Since the signs are still being designed, Special Condition #2 requires submittal of final plans prior to their installation.

The native vegetation enhancement portion of the project includes the killing of existing exotic species within a 25-acre portion of the site and replanting with native coastal dune species. The exotics consist mainly of *Carpobrotus edulis* (Hottentot Fig) and non-native grasses. These will be treated with appropriate herbicides, then raked away from the site. Seeds are being gathered for the native replanting and will be applied through both broadcast and hydroseeding methods. Some container stock may also be planted if necessary, and an irrigation system will be installed to promote rapid plant growth. Since the exotic plants are not considered significant vegetation under the Coastal Act, their removal is not development that requires a coastal development permit. Thus, exotics removal may begin whenever the applicant chooses. Likewise, seed gathering for future restoration purposes is not development, since the native plants are not removed or damaged by this procedure. These specific features have only been described herein to present a full picture of the overall project.

Although part of the original submittal last November, a small amount of grading to recontour portions of the site has since been eliminated from the proposed project. Based on very recent telephone conversations, even the minor soil compaction identified in the applicant's January 11th letter to prepare one trail for a hard-resin emulsion surface has been dropped as part of the bidding contract for budgetary reasons. Since the details of all aspects of this project are still being further refined, Special Condition #1 requires the submittal of final plans for all project components prior to the start of construction. The final plans are to incorporate the most recent project modifications, but still be in substantial conformance with the preliminary plans submitted with the application.

2. Environmentally Sensitive Habitats. Section 30240 of the Coastal Act provides that "environmentally sensitive habitat areas shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values" and that "development in areas adjacent to environmentally sensitive habitat areas and parks and recreation areas shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts which would significantly degrade those areas, and shall be compatible with the continuance of those habitat and recreation areas." There is a small existing area of salt marsh in the southeast corner of the project site. However, the only proposed improvement anywhere near that area is the extension of the existing maintenance road, which currently terminates approximately 200 feet west of the marsh. As proposed, the new portion of road will be no closer than 129 feet from the wetland boundary at its closest point, maintaining an adequate buffer from the environmentally sensitive habitat. Moreover, most of the maintenance road improvements, including those closest to the wetland, consist only of resurfacing an existing dirt road in an already disturbed area.

More importantly, the overall purpose of the proposed development is to improve an existing vacant park site. The project will protect and enhance the native species already on-site, through removal of exotic, invasive vegetation and replanting with native stock. In addition, the provision of an improved trail system will channel pedestrians, bicyclists, etc. and thus discourage human encroachment into the sensitive habitat areas. Finally, the proposed observation decks and interpretive panels will provide a passive recreational experience and nature study opportunity for the public. Therefore, the Commission finds the project, as proposed, fully consistent with Section 30240 of the Act.

3. Public Access/Parking. Many Coastal Act policies address the provision and enhancement of public access to and along the shoreline and public recreational opportunities, including Sections 30210, 30211, 30212 and 30214, 30220 and 30223. As stated previously, the site has been used over the years for passive recreational pursuits (walking, jogging, etc.) and as an access point to the waters of San Diego Bay. The proposed development will continue and enhance these opportunities by providing an improved trail system and observation decks. It is the applicant's stated intent that these activities not only be ultimately enhanced, but that public access to the site be maintained throughout the construction period. Thus, the Commission finds the proposal consistent with the cited Coastal Act policies.

In addition, Section 30252 addresses public access from the perspective of requiring new development to provide adequate parking. The proposed project will not develop any new parking spaces to serve the enhanced trail system. However, there are currently four day-use parking lots on the ocean side of Highway 75, serving all segments of Silver Strand State Beach. These lots include a total of more than 1700 parking spaces, and are estimated to be less than half full on typical weekends. The western parking lots are connected to the existing and proposed amenities on the east side of the highway by tunnels, which are extensively used already by pedestrians, bicyclists and skaters. It is expected that the trail system would require, at a maximum, thirty to fifty spaces, even allowing for the site's use by school classes and other large groups. Thus, existing parking facilities are more than adequate to serve the proposed nature trail system.

It is often the case with park projects that significant impacts to public access are incurred during the construction phase, even though the built project may represent an access improvement. However, construction of the proposed trail system is only estimated to take 35 days, and the project's grant funding expires at the end of June, 1996, such that the project must be completed no later than that date. At this time, the applicant estimates that construction will occur from April through early May, thus avoiding the summer beach season between Memorial Day and Labor Day, when public use of the state beach is at its highest. The vegetation enhancement activities have begun with seed collection in January and will continue through June. As discussed previously, the seed gathering and herbicide treatment of non-native vegetation does not require a coastal development permit; it is only the replanting phase, and other project components, which are the subject of this permit.

In summary, the proposed development is intended to enhance both the coastal dune habitat and public access to the site, through the development of a trails system which will minimize public incursions into the native habitat areas and provide nature study opportunities. Adequate parking for the proposed passive recreational uses is provided in the existing day-use parking areas. The trail improvements will be completed prior to Memorial Day weekend, thus providing an enhanced facility in time for the summer beach season and minimizing construction impacts on existing public use. Therefore, the Commission finds the proposed development, as conditioned for final plans, consistent with the cited Coastal Act policies and with all other public access and recreation policies as well, as required in Section 30604(c) for all projects occurring between the sea (San Diego Bay) and first coastal roadway (Highway 75).

4. Visual Resources. Section 30251 of the Act provides for the protection of scenic coastal areas and for the compatibility of new and existing development. The proposed site is part of the overall Silver Strand State Beach complex, and its undeveloped state currently allows views across the site from the Highway 75, which runs north-south down the middle of the Strand and is a major coastal access route. However, due to elevational differences, the shoreline itself is not currently visible from the highway along this stretch of the Strand. The proposed development will not result in any significant modifications to the overall appearance of the area, although existing exotic vegetation will be replaced with native species and a ground-level trail system will be improved. Since no existing public views will be reduced or eliminated through project implementation, and the site will remain compatible with the low-level park improvements on the adjacent Crown Cove/Bayside portion of Silver Strand State Beach, the Commission finds the project, as conditioned for final plans, consistent with Section 30251 of the Act.

5. Local Coastal Planning. Section 30604(a) also requires that a coastal development permit shall be issued only if the Commission finds that the permitted development will not prejudice the ability of the local government to prepare a Local Coastal Program (LCP) in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act. Such a finding can be made for the subject proposal, as conditioned.

Although this site is within the geographic boundaries of the City of Coronado, which has a fully-certified LCP, it is within an area of original jurisdiction, where permit authority remains with the Commission and the standard of review is Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act. As demonstrated in previous findings, the project, as conditioned, is consistent with all applicable Coastal Act policies. In addition, it is consistent with the open space designation shown on the City of Coronado's land use maps. Therefore, the Commission finds that approval of the project, as conditioned, will not prejudice the ability of the City of Coronado to continue implementation of its certified LCP.

6. Consistency with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Section 13096 of the Commission's Code of Regulations requires Commission approval of coastal development permits to be supported by a finding showing

the permit to be consistent with any applicable requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Section 21080.5(d)(2)(i) of CEQA prohibits a proposed development from being approved if there are feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impact which the activity may have on the environment.

As discussed herein, the proposed project will not cause significant adverse impacts to the environment. Specifically, the project has been found consistent with the public access/recreation, visual resource and sensitive habitat policies of the Coastal Act. The only condition required is one for the submittal of final plans, since the bidding process may result in minor changes to the preliminary plans herein approved. There are no feasible alternatives or mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impact which the activity might have on the environment. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed project is the least environmentally damaging feasible alternative and can be found consistent with the requirements of the Coastal Act to conform to CEQA.

STANDARD CONDITIONS:

1. Notice of Receipt and Acknowledgement. The permit is not valid and development shall not commence until a copy of the permit, signed by the permittee or authorized agent, acknowledging receipt of the permit and acceptance of the terms and conditions, is returned to the Commission office.
2. Expiration. If development has not commenced, the permit will expire two years from the date on which the Commission voted on the application. Development shall be pursued in a diligent manner and completed in a reasonable period of time. Application for extension of the permit must be made prior to the expiration date.
3. Compliance. All development must occur in strict compliance with the proposal as set forth below. Any deviation from the approved plans must be reviewed and approved by the staff and may require Commission approval.
4. Interpretation. Any questions of intent or interpretation of any condition will be resolved by the Executive Director or the Commission.
5. Inspections. The Commission staff shall be allowed to inspect the site and the development during construction, subject to 24-hour advance notice.
6. Assignment. The permit may be assigned to any qualified person, provided assignee files with the Commission an affidavit accepting all terms and conditions of the permit.
7. Terms and Conditions Run with the Land. These terms and conditions shall be perpetual, and it is the intention of the Commission and the permittee to bind all future owners and possessors of the subject property to the terms and conditions.

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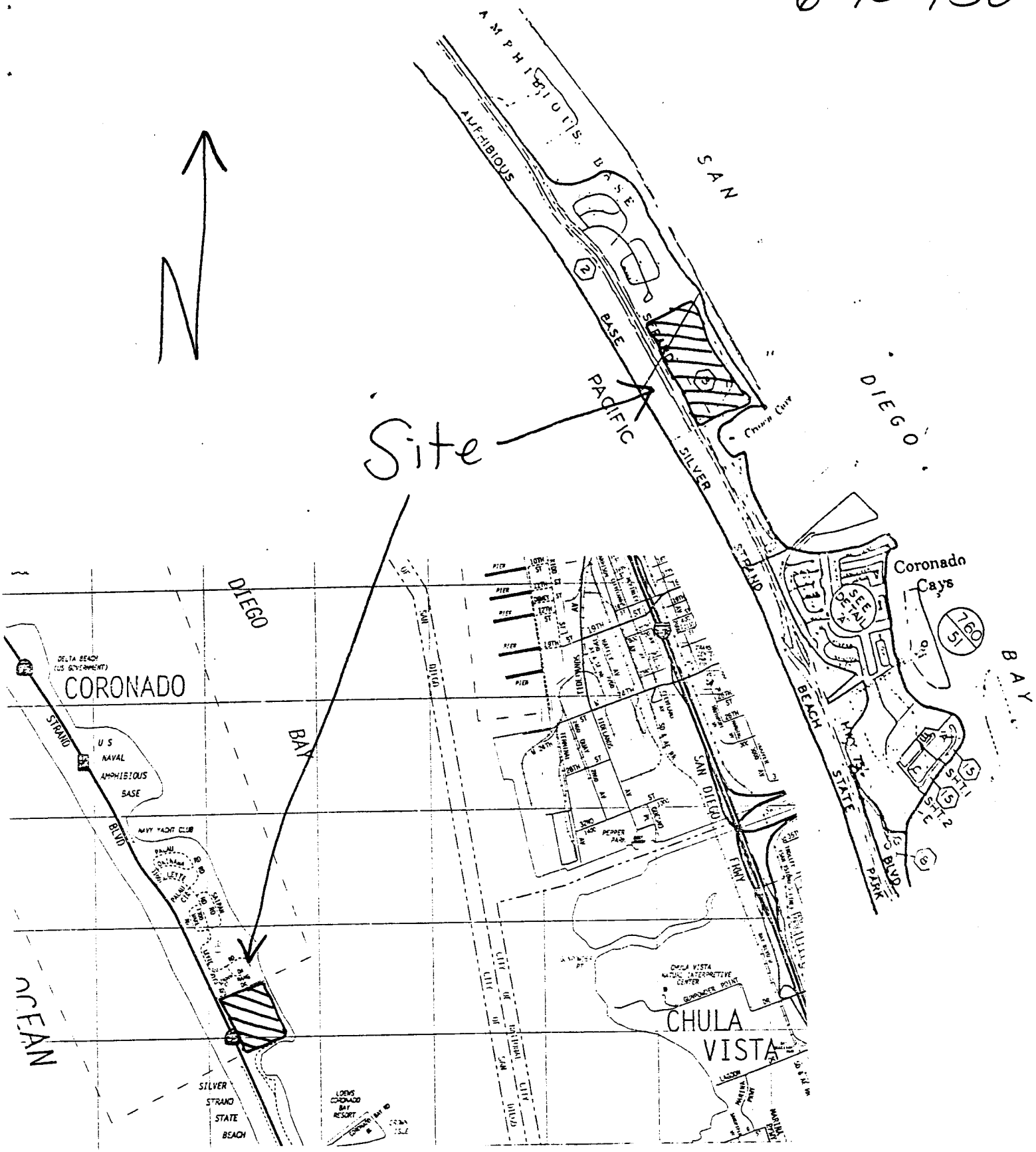
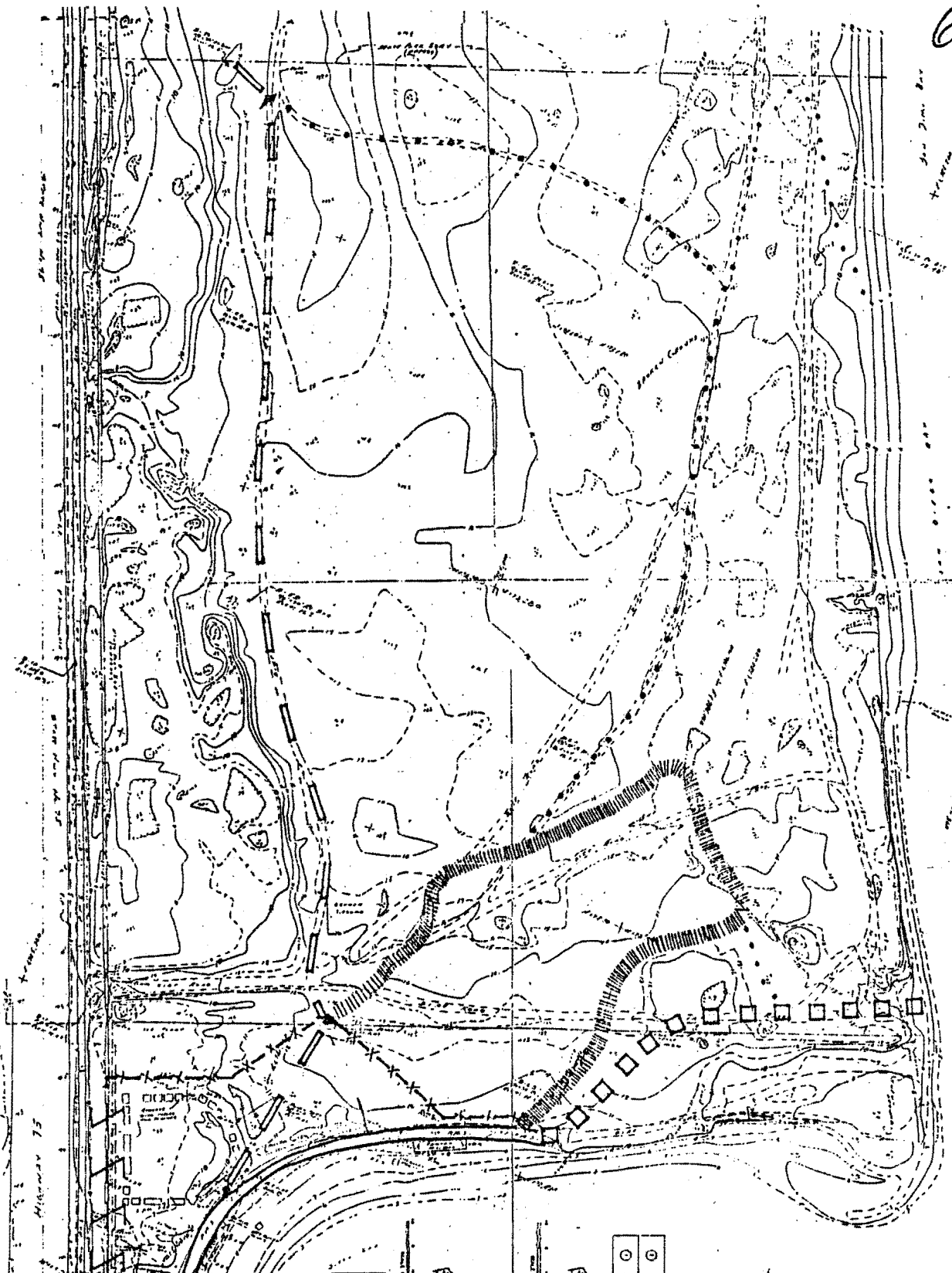


EXHIBIT NO. /
APPLICATION NO.
6-95-150
Location Maps
California Coastal Commission

6-95-150



TRAIL SYSTEM  
SITE PLAN

EXISTING DRAINAGE FEELS

X-X SPLIT RAIL SPALING  
(EXISTING FENCE REMOVED)

VEGETATION LOAD EXTENSION  
PAVED W/ REBAR ENCLASSED  
10' WIDE

BIVULS/FEET PATH  
PAVED W/ REBAR ENCLASSED  
8' WIDE

NATURAL SCULPTURE FOOTPATH  
(MADE W/ ROCKS - CABLE)

BOARDWALK  
10" W/ 2" DEEP JOINTS SPACED

INTERPRETIVE  
OBSERVATION CELLS  
(APPROX 30' x 15')

KEY TO SYMBOLS

EXHIBIT NO. 2
APPLICATION NO. 6-95-150
Site Plan
California Coastal Commission



6-95-150

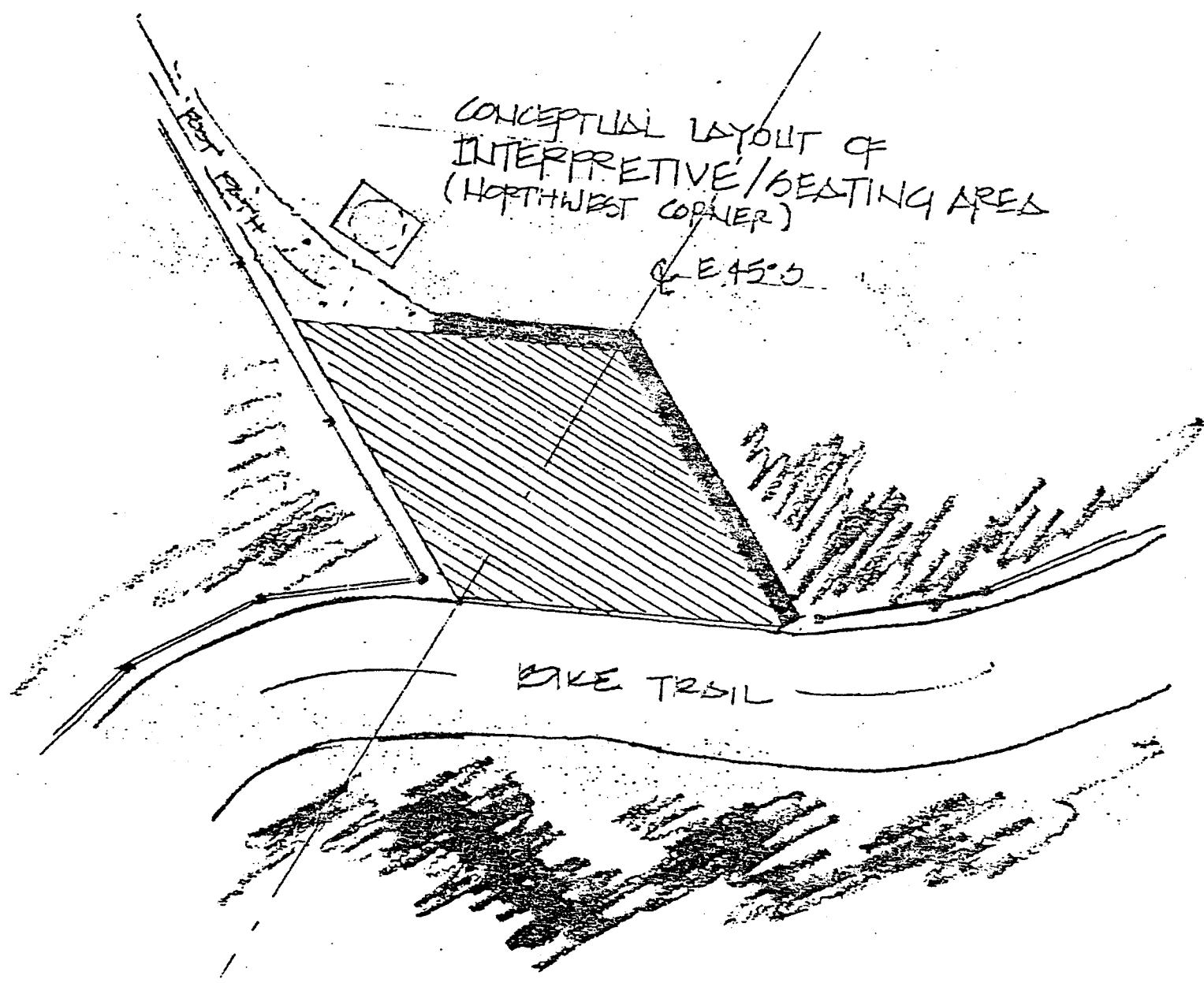


EXHIBIT NO.	3
APPLICATION NO.	6-95-150
Typical Observation Deck	
California Coastal Commission	