

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

45 FREMONT STREET, SUITE 2000
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2219
VOICE AND TDD (415) 904-5200

**W 14b****STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION****ON CONSISTENCY DETERMINATION**Consistency Determination No. **CD-140-96**

Staff: JRR-SF

File Date: 11/22/96

45th Day: 1/6/97

60th Day: 1/21/97

Commission Meeting: 1/8/97

FEDERAL AGENCY: National Park Service**DEVELOPMENT****LOCATION:**

Cabrillo National Monument, Point Loma, San Diego
(Exhibit 1 and 2)

DEVELOPMENT**DESCRIPTION:**

Tidepool protection, education, and restoration program

SUBSTANTIVE FILE DOCUMENTS:

1. CD-105-95, Consistency Determination by the National Park Service for Cabrillo National Monument's Management Plan
2. General Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, Cabrillo National Monument, February 1996

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Park Service (Park Service) submitted a consistency determination for Tidepool Protection, Education, and Research Program at Cabrillo National Monument, Point Loma. The findings of a six-year tidepool monitoring study indicate that the biological health of the tidepools has deteriorated in recent years. The monitoring study provides evidence that human visitation and exploration of the tidepools are one of the major factors affecting the biological health of the tidepools. The Park Service developed the proposed program in response to the monitoring study. The program combines increased education and on-site personnel to inform the public and enforce policies protecting resources. Additionally, the Park Service will close one third of the tidepools to general public use to allow natural restoration and scientific study.

The proposed project is consistent with the marine resource policies of the California Coastal Management Program (CCMP), because the measures proposed by the Park Service will improve habitat values to the tidepools and reduce adverse effects from public use. The project is also consistent with the access and recreation policies of the CCMP, because access restrictions are necessary to protect habitat values and the program includes measures that will minimize the access impact.

STAFF SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION:

I. Project Description.

The Park Service proposes to implement a series of management actions, known as the "tidepool protection, education, and restoration program" at Cabrillo National Monument, Point Loma. The purpose of the program is to restore the intertidal area within this National Monument while permitting continued visitor enjoyment of these habitat areas. The National Park Service based its management actions on a six-year monitoring study of the tidepools.

The management program has three parts. Part one emphasizes educating park visitors and enforcing park regulations aimed at protecting habitat values. The Park Service plans to increase the number of park rangers and volunteers in the intertidal areas during low tides. This will enable the Park Service to educate visitors about the safest and least harmful way to explore the tidepools, and help visitors understand how the plants and animals relate to and depend on one another for survival. The increased presence of rangers and volunteers will also deter collecting and other inappropriate behavior. The second part involves continued monitoring of the tidepools. Twice a year, in the fall and spring, Park Service staff and scientist will record data from 99 separate plots in three zones in the tidepools. The Park Service will analyze the data to determine if the number

of plants and animals has increased, decreased, or remained the same. The third part of the program involves designation of the southernmost and least visited part of the tidepools as critical habitat and close it to public entry during the low tide season, November 9, 1996, through June 30, 1997, to allow it to recover. Closing this area will allow the Park Service to compare the data from this zone against data from the other areas and will help the Park Service determine if regional environmental factors, such as pollution, are affecting the tidepools.

II. Status of Local Coastal Program.

The standard of review for federal consistency determinations is the policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act, and not the Local Coastal Program (LCP) of the affected area. If the Commission certified the LCP and incorporated it into the CCMP, the LCP can provide guidance in applying Chapter 3 policies in light of local circumstances. If the Commission has not incorporated the LCP into the CCMP, it cannot guide the Commission's decision, but it can provide background information. The San Diego LCP is fully incorporated into the CCMP.

III. Federal Agency's Consistency Determination.

The National Park Service has determined the project to be consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the California Coastal Management Program.

IV. Staff Recommendation:

The staff recommends that the Commission adopt the following resolution:

A. Concurrence.

The Commission hereby concurs with the consistency determination made by the National Park Service for the proposed project, finding that the project is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the California Coastal Management Program.

VI. Findings and Declarations:

The Commission finds and declares as follows:

A. Marine Resources. Section 30230 of the Coastal Act provides that:

Marine resources shall be maintained, enhanced, and where feasible, restored. Special protection shall be given to areas and species

of special biological or economic significance. Uses of the marine environment shall be carried out in a manner that will sustain the biological productivity of coastal waters and that will maintain healthy populations of all species of marine organisms adequate for long-term commercial, recreational, scientific, and educational purposes.

The Cabrillo National Monument is located along the southern tip of Point Loma in the City of San Diego. The western boundary of the Monument and the southern of Point Loma contains one of the best-preserved, publicly available Pacific tidepool ecosystems in southern California (General Management Plan, p. 6). A variety of marine algae and vascular plant species occur here, along with vertebrate and invertebrate animal species. Researchers have identified 109 plant species and 160 invertebrate animal species in six habitats in the intertidal area at Cabrillo National Monument (General Management Plan, p. 84).

In 1990, the Park Service began a six-year monitoring program to determine the ecological health of the tidepools. The study concluded that the overall health of these tidepools has degraded over the years and that degradation is associated with human activities. The Park Service describes the study as follows:

The findings of the Davis-Engle Study cited above indicate that the health of the monument's tidepools has declined dramatically over the past 20 years. According to marine biologists Davis and Engle, seven of the thirteen key indicator species have either declined significantly or are completely absent from the tidepool ecosystem. California mussels have declined 87%, thatched barnacles 75% and feather boa kelp 84%. While other species, such as owl limpets and gooseneck barnacles have not declined as dramatically, 23% and 29% respectively, abalone and ochre sea stars have virtually disappeared. The [Park Service] suspects that human factors, such as trampling, collecting and rock turning by the 70,000 to 90,000 people who visit the tidepools annually contribute to the loss of species. (Consistency Determination, p. 3)

In response to the six-year monitoring study that indicates that public use of the tidepools is adversely affecting the habitat, the Park Service proposes the above-described "Tidepool Protection, Education, and Restoration Program." The program contains three elements, which are fully described above: (1) increased presence of rangers and volunteers; (2) continued monitoring; and (3) closure of a portion of the tidepools from public use between November 9, 1996, and June 30, 1997 (the Park Service acknowledges that any additional closures may require additional federal consistency review by the Commission). The intent of these management efforts is to reduce human impacts to the tidepools. The Park Service will focus on education as a way to inform the

public about the sensitivity of the habitat. Additionally, the increased presence of Park Rangers and volunteers will allow increased enforcement of park regulations aimed at protecting the habitat. The Second component of the management plan would close a portion of the habitat to public uses for one low tide season (ending in June 1997). This will allow some natural restoration to occur. Finally, the Park Service proposes to continue monitoring the status of the ecosystem. This monitoring will allow the Park Service to determine if the management measures are effectively protecting the habitat values or if additional management measures are necessary. The Commission finds that the management approach described in the Park Service's consistency determination will at a minimum maintain the habitat values of the tidepools and will likely result in some restoration of these values. The Commission additionally finds that the monitoring is necessary not only to document the existing status of the tidepools but to determine the effectiveness of the proposed management program. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed tidepool management plan is consistent with the Marine Resource policies of the CCMP.

B. Access and Recreation Resources. Section 30210 of the Coastal Act provides that:

In carrying out the requirement of Section 4 of Article X of the California Constitution, maximum access, which shall be conspicuously posted, and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse.

The tidepools at Cabrillio National Monument are a popular destination point attracting between 70,000 to 90,000 visitors per year. As described above, this high level of use has resulted in degradation of habitat values of the tidepools. The Park Service proposes tidepool management measures, including the closure of approximately one third of the tidepools. Although the proposed project requires shoreline restrictions, the project is consistent with the access and recreation policies of the CCMP. The Park Service determined that the closure is necessary to protect the tidepools from over use. This type of restriction on public access to and recreational use of the shoreline is clearly allowable under Section 30210 of the Coastal Act.

Additionally, the Park Service designed the tidepool management program to minimize adverse effects on access. Specifically, the management program includes provisions for increased education and enforcement. Through these measures, the Park Service will reduce the adverse effect on habitat values from public use, and may reduce the need for future closures. Additionally, the Park Service selected the least used tidepool area to close. The area selected for closure is the furthest from parking lots and accounts for approximately ten percent of the public use. Finally, the Park Service has limited the

closure to one "low-tide season," ending on June 30, 1997. At the end of this period, the Park Service will review the monitoring and management measures to determine the effectiveness of the program. This monitoring may indicate that additional closures are necessary. If this is the case, the Park Service will coordinate with the Commission pursuant to the requirements of the Coastal Zone Management Act.

In conclusion, the Commission finds that the proposed tidepool closures are necessary to protect the habitat from overuse and that the Park Service has incorporated measures to minimize the adverse effect on access and recreational resources. Therefore, the Commission finds that the project is consistent with the access and recreational policies of the CCMP.

MAP 2: FACILITIES AT Cabrillo National Monument

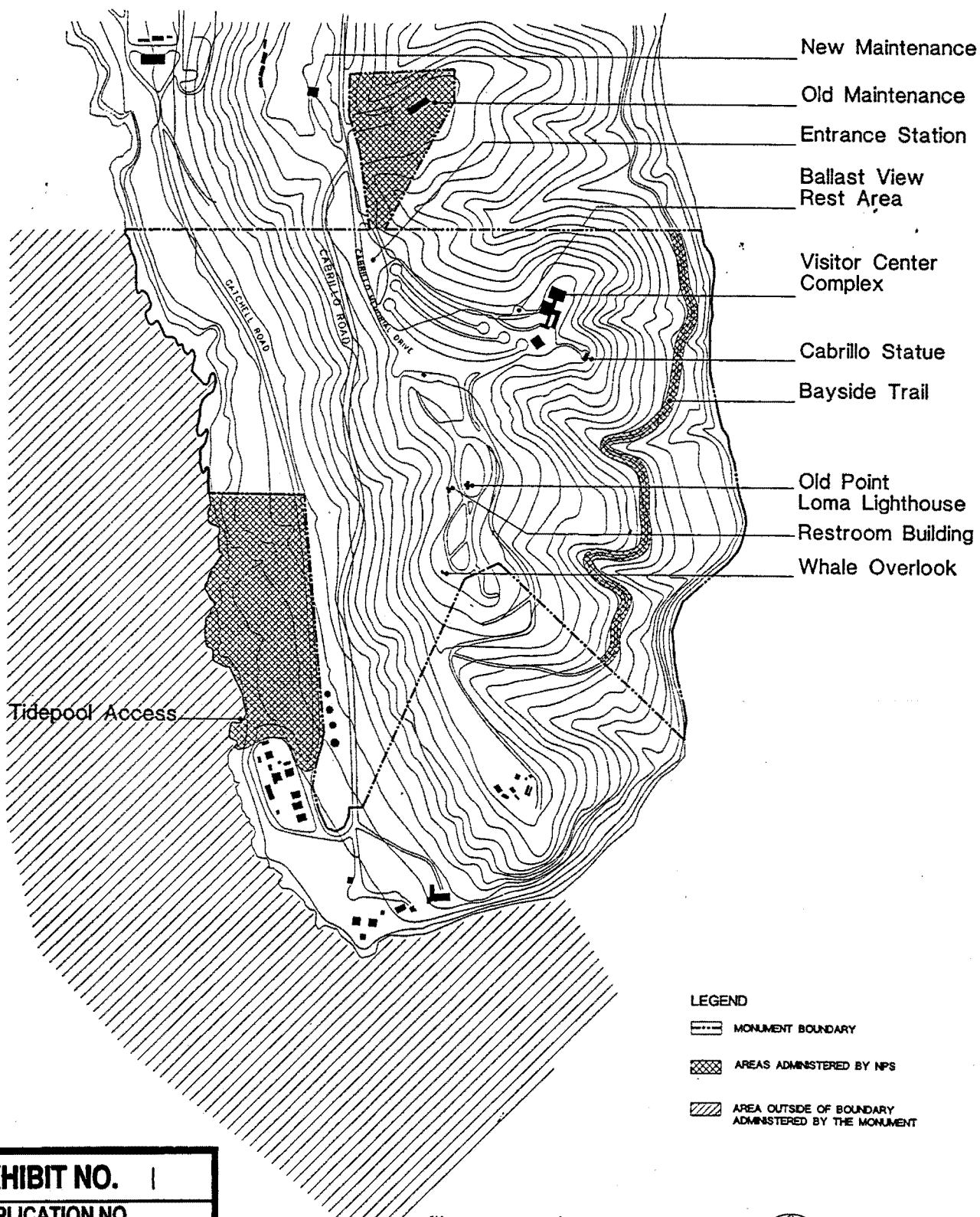
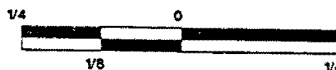


EXHIBIT NO.	1
APPLICATION NO.	
	CD-140-96



SCALE IN MILES



342/80,030
WRO-RP/MAY 1995

CABRILLO NM GMP/FEIS, FEBRUARY 1996

Tidepool Access Trail

Zone I

Zone II

Zone III

USCG Lighthouse

EXHIBIT NO. 2

APPLICATION NO.

CD-140-96

Cabrillo National Monument Tidepools