

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

CENTRAL COAST DISTRICT OFFICE 725 FRONT STREET, SUITE 300 SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060 (831) 427-4863

Th 8c



RECORD PACKET COPY

Filed: 01/17/01 49th day: 03/07/01 Staff: RB Staff Report: 01/25/01 Hearing Date: 02/15/01

STAFF REPORT PERMIT AMENDMENT

Application Number	4-84-71-A2	
Applicant	Department of Parks & Recreation, San Simeon District	
Project Location	Hearst Castle Visitor Center (one quarter mile north of Highway 1), San Simeon, San Luis Obispo County (APN 011-242-011)	
Project Description	Expand existing parking area by approximately 80,000 square feet; related visual screening	
File Documents	San Luis Obispo County LCP; Coastal Development Permit 4-84-71	

PROCEDURAL NOTE

The Commission's regulations provide for referral of permit amendment requests to the Commission if:

- 1. The Executive Director determines that the proposed amendment is a material change,
- 2. Objection is made to the Executive Director's determination of immateriality, or
- 3. The proposed amendment affects conditions required for the purpose of protecting a coastal resource or coastal access.

In this case, the Executive Director has determined that the proposed amendment constitutes a material change.

SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the coastal development permit amendment request with the following standard and special conditions.



I. STAFF RECOMMENDATION ON PERMIT AMENDMENT

MOTION: I move that the Commission approve the proposed amendment to

Coastal Development Permit No. 4-84-71 pursuant to the staff

recommendation.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION OF APPROVAL:

Staff recommends a YES vote. Passage of this motion will result in approval of the amendment as conditioned and adoption of the following resolution and findings. The motion passes only by affirmative vote of a majority of the Commissioners present.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE A PERMIT AMENDMENT:

The Commission hereby approves the coastal development permit amendment on the ground that the development as amended and subject to conditions, will be in conformity with the policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act and will not prejudice the ability of San Luis Obispo County from carrying out a Local Coastal Program conforming to the provisions of Chapter 3. Approval of the permit amendment complies with the California Environmental Quality Act because either 1) feasible mitigation measures and/or alternatives have been incorporated to substantially lessen any significant adverse effects of the amended development on the environment, or 2) there are no feasible mitigation measures or alternatives that would substantially lessen any significant adverse impacts of the amended development on the environment.

II. STANDARD CONDITIONS

- 1. Notice of Receipt and Acknowledgment. The permit amendment is not valid and development shall not commence until a copy of the permit, signed by the permitee or authorized agent, acknowledging receipt of the permit and acceptance of the terms and conditions, is returned to the Commission office.
- 2. <u>Interpretation.</u> Any questions of intent or interpretation of any condition will be resolved by the Executive Director or the Commission.
- 3. <u>Assignment.</u> 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.
- 4. <u>Terms and Conditions Run with the Land.</u> 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.



III. SPECIAL CONDITIONS

- 1. Landscape and Irrigation Plan. PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF THE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT, the applicant shall submit, for the review and approval of the Executive Director, a plan for landscaping to screen the expanded parking area and provide sufficient trees so that within 10 years, 60 percent of the surface area of the lot is shaded by deciduous or evergreen trees. The plan shall be prepared by a licensed landscape architect.
 - 1. The plan shall demonstrate that:
 - a) All vegetation planted on the site will consist of drought-tolerant species;
 - b) All required plantings will be maintained in good growing conditions throughout the life of the project, and whenever necessary, shall be replaced with new plant materials to ensure continued compliance with the landscape plan.
 - 2. The plan shall include, at a minimum, the following components:
 - a) A map showing the type, location, and size of all plant materials that will be on the developed site at the time of installation, and the approximate size of the plant materials ten years from the date of installation, the irrigation system, topography of the developed site, and all other landscape features;
 - b) A schedule for the installation of plants.

The approved landscape plan shall be completely implemented within 180 days of Executive Director approval and plant materials shall be maintained in good condition thereafter. The permittee shall undertake development in accordance with the approved final plan. Any proposed changes to the approved final plans shall be reported to the Executive Director. No changes to the approved final plans shall occur without a Commission amendment to this coastal development permit unless the Executive Director determines that no amendment is required.

- 2. Revised Plans Parking Lot Construction. PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF THE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT, the applicant shall submit revised plans for the expanded parking area, indicating the location, type, and size of wheel stop material, consistent with CZLUO Section 23.04.168c.
- 3. Water Quality. The permittee shall do the following to ensure that the existing drainage system will effectively handle runoff from the site:
 - 1. Clear the gravel parking area of all trash and large debris on a regular basis, and ensure the area is cleared of all debris immediately prior to the onset of the rainy season (October 15th);
 - Maintain existing grass-lined swales by re-planting with native plant species when necessary to ensure adequate year-round vegetation coverage and enhance the filtering potential of the swales.



4. Condition Compliance. Within 90 days of Commission action on this coastal development permit amendment, or within such additional time as the Executive Director may grant for good cause, the applicant shall satisfy all requirements specified in the conditions hereto that the application is required to satisfy prior to issuance of the permit. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the institution of enforcement action under the provisions of Chapter 9 of the Coastal Act.

IV. FINDINGS AND DECLARATIONS

A. Standard of Review

The Commission is acting on this permit amendment because the Commission retains jurisdiction over amendments to Commission-approved permits after certification of a local coastal program (LCP). Pursuant to California Code of Regulation Section 13166(c), the standard of review for such post-certification Commission actions is conformity with the certified LCP.

B. Status of Development

Although the proposed development, described as an expansion (by approximately 80,000 square feet) in parking area to create an overflow parking lot, has occurred prior to submission of the coastal development permit amendment application to the Commission, consideration of this application is based solely upon San Luis Obispo County's local coastal program provisions, which have been certified as being consistent with the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act. Review of this permit request does not constitute a waiver of any legal action with regard to any violation of the Coastal Act that may have occurred. The Commission acts on this application without prejudice and acts on it as if the existing development had not previously occurred.

C. Project Location and Description

The Hearst Castle Visitor Center is located at the Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument, on the northeast side of Highway 1, in the community of San Simeon. Coastal Development Permit 4-84-71 was issued in 1984 for the redevelopment of the main visitor center and concession building, maintenance building, corporation yard and parking lot, and the construction of an area office with related landscaping. The Department of Parks and Recreation is requesting an amendment to Coastal Development Permit 4-84-71 to allow the expansion of the existing parking area, with related visual screening.

In order to accommodate tour bus parking and overflow vehicle parking during high visitor use (e.g. summer months and holiday periods), the Department of Parks and Recreation proposes to expand the existing Visitor Center parking area by approximately 80,000 square feet. Approximately 13,117 square feet of the new parking area nearest to the Visitor Center will be paved with concrete and used for thirteen tour bus parking spaces. A base surface will be applied to approximately 20,573 square feet surrounding the concrete bus parking area, in order to create a 1.5% slope and facilitate sheet flow drainage towards the existing drop inlets. The remaining 46,000 square feet will be used



as overflow gravel parking for vehicles (see Exhibit 2 for project plans). Adjacent parking lot entrances will require minor realignments and paving to provide safe and efficient ingress.

D. Drainage/Water Quality

The following LCP ordinance is applicable to the proposed development:

CZLUO Section 23.05.050b – Drainage Standards: Natural channels and runoff. Proposed projects are to include design provisions to retain off-site natural drainage patterns, and when required, limit peak runoff to predevelopment levels.

The proposed concrete bus parking area and adjacent sidewalks and base material will be sloped to conduct runoff to existing drop inlets, which flow from grass-lined swales into adjacent fields to facilitate filtration and percolation (see Exhibit 2, 3, and 4 for project plans and photos). The system is designed to filter and treat any pollutants generated from the vehicle traffic in this area to protect adjacent creeks and coastal waters. The remainder of the proposed parking area will be composed of permeable gravel material and will only be used for parking during the high visitor use periods.

As a condition of the base permit (Coastal Development Permit 4-84-71), DPR is required to remove excess petroleum products from parking areas and roadways through a regular cleaning schedule, with more frequent cleaning occurring during peak visitor periods and prior to winter storms. Currently, the entire premises is walked and cleared of trash and a mechanized street sweeper is used to clean the paved parking areas on a daily basis. When any excessive pollutant spills are identified, an absorbent agent is applied and the entire spill area is swept clean.

The proposed parking lot expansion will include the addition of approximately 14,000 square feet of impervious surface to the existing parking area (± 2% expansion in pavement coverage) and approximately 20,000 square feet of a semi-permeable material (base surface). The addition of this paved and base surface area will be a negligible addition to the overall capacity of the existing drop inlets and grass-lined swales to handle polluted runoff. This system, if managed correctly, therefore should function to protect the water quality of adjacent waterways, and thus, additional drainage measures are not necessary.

Special Condition 3 requires DPR to clear the gravel parking area of all debris during peak visitor periods and immediately prior to the onset of the rainy season (i.e. October 15th), and maintain the grass-lined swales by re-planting native plant species, when necessary, to ensure adequate vegetation coverage and enhance the filtering potential of the swales. Thus, as conditioned, the drainage system will effectively retain off-site natural drainage and handle contaminated runoff from the parking area, consistent with CZLUO Section 23.05.050b.

E. Visual Resources

The following LCP policies and ordinances are applicable to the proposed development:



Policy 1 for Recreation and Visitor-Serving Facilities. Coastal recreation and visitor-serving facilities, especially lower-cost facilities, shall be protected, encouraged and where feasible provided by both public and private means.

Policy 2 for Recreation and Visitor-Serving Facilities. Recreational development and commercial visitor-serving facilities shall have priority over non-coastal dependent use, but not over agriculture or coastal dependent industry.... All uses shall be consistent with protection of significant coastal resources.

Policy 2 for Visual and Scenic Resources. Permitted development shall be sited so as to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas. Wherever possible, site selection for new development is to emphasize locations not visible from major public view corridors.

Policy 4 for Visual and Scenic Resources. New development shall be sited to minimize its visibility from public view corridors.... New development which cannot be sited outside of public view corridors is to be screened utilizing native vegetation...

North Coast Planning Area Standards: Site Design and Building Construction

- 6. Site Selection. Primary site selection for new development shall be locations not visible from Highway 1 as follows:
 - a. Sites shall be selected where hills and slopes would shield development unless no alternative location exists or the new development provides visitor-serving facilities.
 - d. Development proposals for sites with varied terrain are to include design provisions for concentrating developments on moderate slopes, retaining steeper slopes visible from public roads undeveloped.

The Visitor Center is located in a fairly remote area, and thus, parking for the facility is limited to that which is provided by DPR. In addition to touring Hearst Castle, visitors are able to view movies related to the castle in the National Geographic I-Max Theater (constructed in 1993). Due to the addition of this facility at the Visitor Center and the greater number of visitors during the holiday weekends and summer months, the average length of stay for visitors has increased. Thus, the parking lot turnover rate has decreased, and additional parking spaces are needed to accommodate visitors during these peak-use periods.

The expansion of the existing parking area to accommodate tour bus and overflow parking allows the Department of Parks and Recreation to provide for additional parking at this visitor-serving facility, consistent with Policy 1 and 2 for Recreation and Visitor-Serving Facilities. Because the expanded parking area must serve the Visitor Center, alternative siting would not be feasible. However, the added development on this site has the potential to impact visual resources, as discussed below.



The North Coast of San Luis Obispo County is a highly scenic rural area, and any development is to be sited and designed to protect views and minimize its visibility from public view corridors. The stretch of coast to the north and south of the Visitor Center is characterized by open, rolling hillsides with very little unnatural vegetation. This area, most of which is designated as agricultural lands in the LCP, is extremely vulnerable to degradation by new development and has, for the most part, been preserved in its natural state.

The Hearst Castle Visitor Center is located on land designated for Recreational land uses, and as such, has been developed in a manner that sets it apart from surrounding areas of the North Coast. The Center serves a priority, visitor-serving purpose; in fact, the Hearst Castle State Park is one of the most popular in the state, serving as many as a million visitors per year in the recent past. In addition, it is located across the highway from San Simeon Point, which is forested with large groves of Monterey cypress trees.

Currently, the Visitor Center and related buildings are visible for quite some distance from northbound Highway 1. Although the Center itself is clearly an unnatural interruption to the rural grazing landscape, the Department of Parks and Recreation has, in the past, fairly effectively screened existing roadways and parking areas from public view of Highway 1 through the use of Monterey cypress trees. While Monterey cypress are not native to this area, they have been introduced in the past to provide shade and act as windbreaks. Because of the success of their growth, and rather than introduce a new species into the area, one eight-inch Monterey cypress will be relocated and six additional Monterey cypress will be planted, near the bus parking area to screen this area from view of Highway 1. In addition, eight Monterey cypress will be planted at the southern end of the proposed gravel parking area (see Exhibit 2 for project plans) to screen the gravel overflow parking area (the proposed Monterey cypress trees are also expected to provide additional screening of the Visitor Center and I-Max theater building located north of the expanded parking area).

As proposed, the combination of the new trees with the existing Monterey cypress and Monterey Pine trees at the south end of the parking lot will effectively screen the bus and overflow parking areas from travelers on Highway 1. This conclusion is supported in large part by the Park District's success with using Monterey cypress as a screening device for other parking areas (as seen in the photos in Exhibit 4). Thus, the proposed project is consistent with Policies 2 and 4 for Visual Resources and the North Coast Planning Area Standard regarding site selection, and may be approved.

F. Parking Lot Construction Standards

The following LCP ordinances are applicable to the proposed development:

CZLUO Section 23.04.168a - Parking Lot Construction Standards: Surfacing: All parking areas shall be surfaced...as specified in the following chart.



Location		Parking Lot Turnover		
	High	Medium	Low	
Outside Urban or Village Reserve Line	Asphalt or Concrete	Chip Seal	Crushed Rock	

CZLUO Section 23.04.168c – Parking Lot Construction Standards: Wheel stops: Wheel stops or continuous concrete or asphalt curbing are required in all parking lots to define the perimeter of the parking area and to protect landscaping from vehicle encroachment.

CZLUO Section 23.04.168f – Parking Lot Construction Standards: Parking lot landscape: All parking lots of three or more spaces are to provide sufficient trees so that within 10 years, 60 percent of surface area of the lot is shaded by deciduous or evergreen trees...

The required parking lot construction standards regarding surface material indicate that a parking lot with a high turnover rate (exhibit facilities, including museums, are deemed to have a high turnover rate per CZLUO Section 23.04.166c) must have an asphalt or concrete surface. However, because the proposed overflow parking area will only be used for peak-use periods, and will not be used on a daily basis, a crushed rock surface acceptable for parking areas with a low parking lot turnover will be adequate. Additionally, a permeable surface will more effectively handle polluted runoff. Thus, as proposed, the project is consistent with CZLUO Section 23.04.168a.

CZLUO Section 23.04.168c and 23.04.168f require parking lots to include wheel stops and sufficient landscaping as part of the overall design. As proposed, the overflow parking area does not meet the requirements of these standards. Therefore, Special Condition 2 requires that DPR include wheel stops or a continuous concrete or asphalt curb to define the parking area and protect the existing and proposed vegetation from vehicle encroachment. In addition, Special Condition 1 requires DPR to submit plans that show sufficient additional vegetation within the parking area to comply with the requirements of CZLUO Section 23.04.168f ("within 10 years, 60 percent of surface area of the lot is shaded by deciduous or evergreen trees..."). Thus, only as conditioned, is the project consistent with applicable LCP standards regarding parking lot construction, and may be approved.

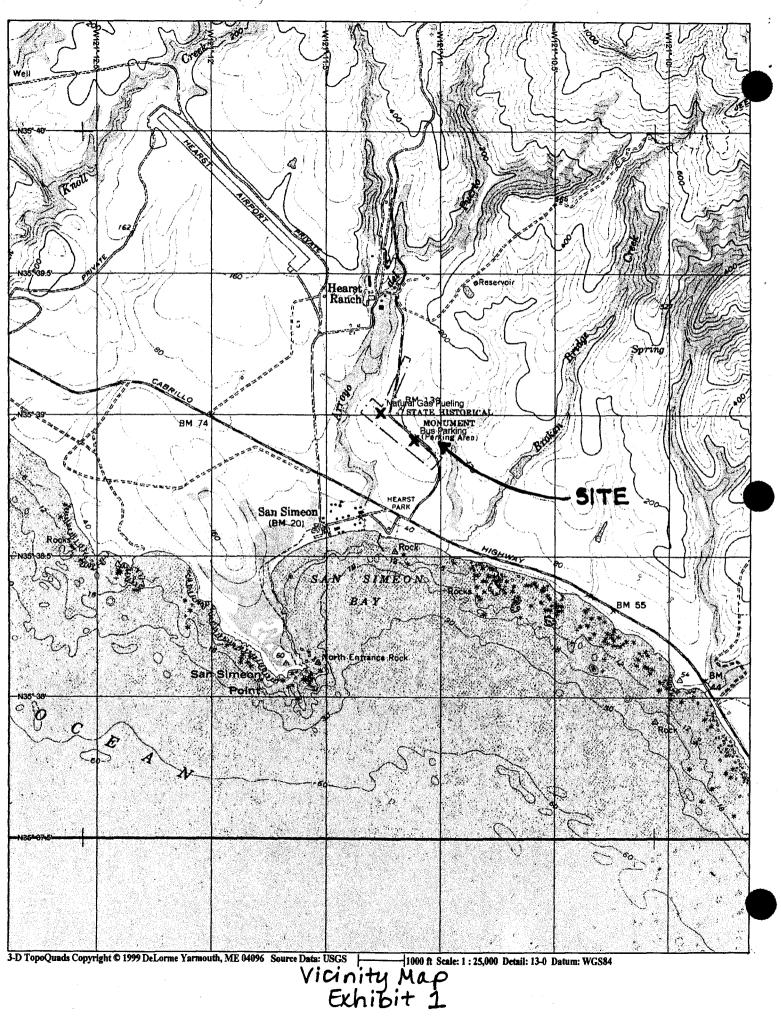
G. California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

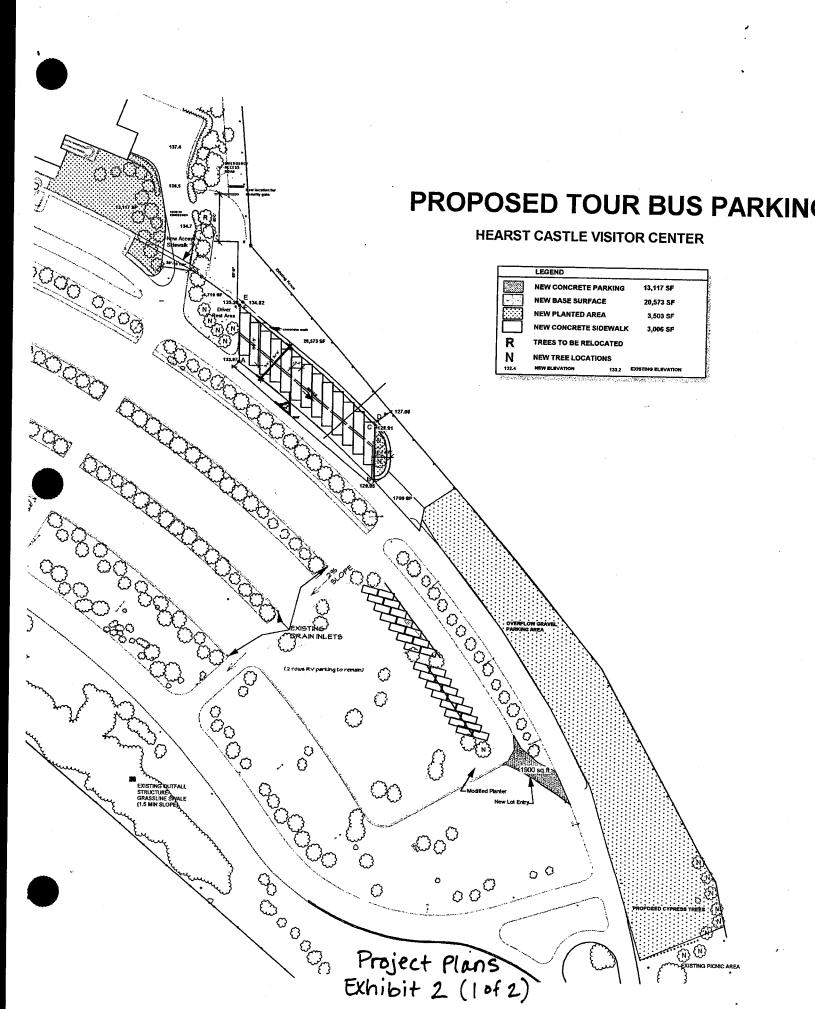
Section 13096 of the California Code of Regulations requires that a specific finding be made in conjunction with coastal development permit applications showing the application to be consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Section 21080.5(d)(2)(A) of CEQA prohibits a proposed development from being approved if there are feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures that would substantially lessen any significant adverse effect that the project may have on the environment.

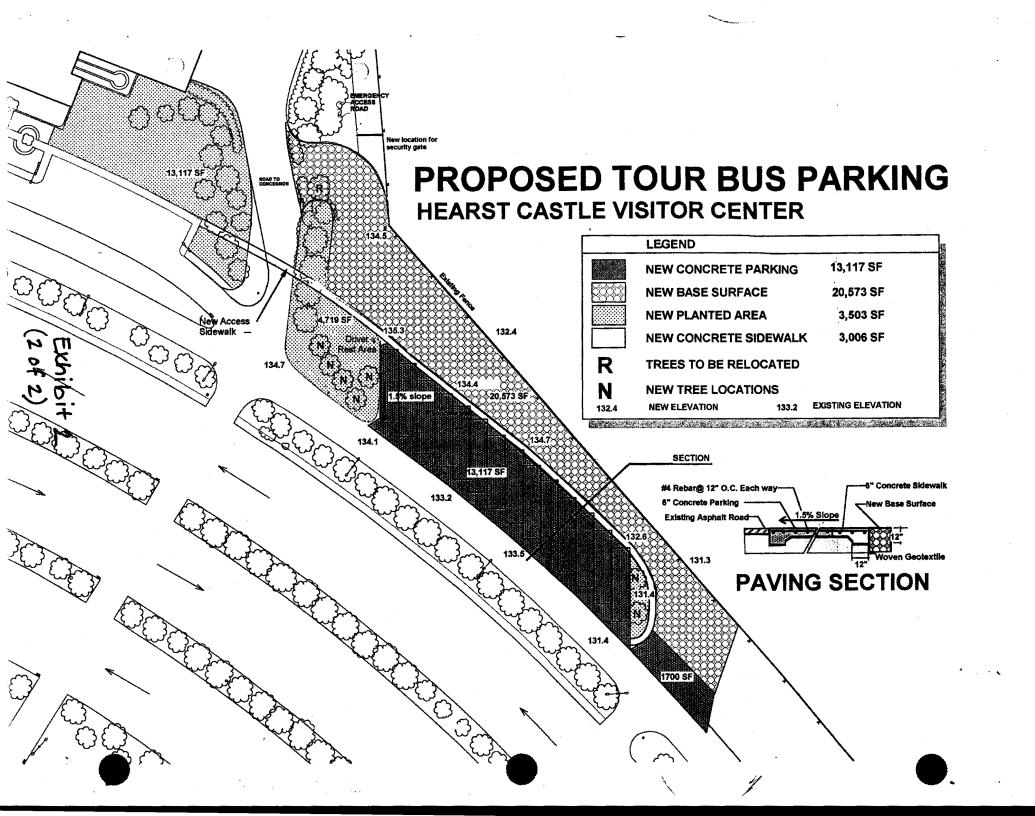
The Coastal Commission's review and analysis of land use proposals has been certified by the Secretary of Resources as being the functional equivalent of environmental review under CEQA.

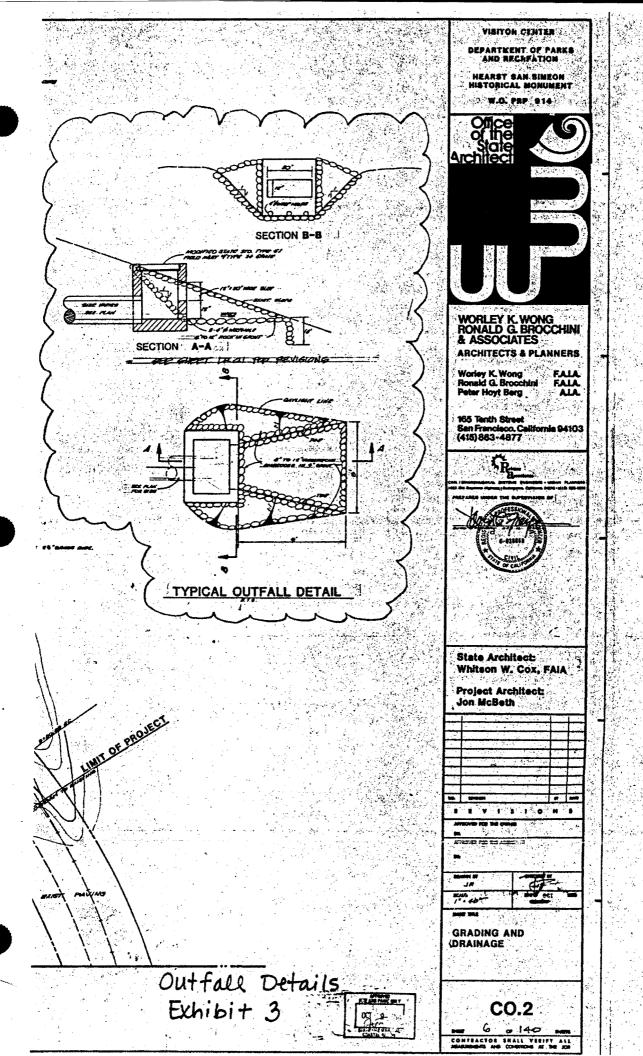


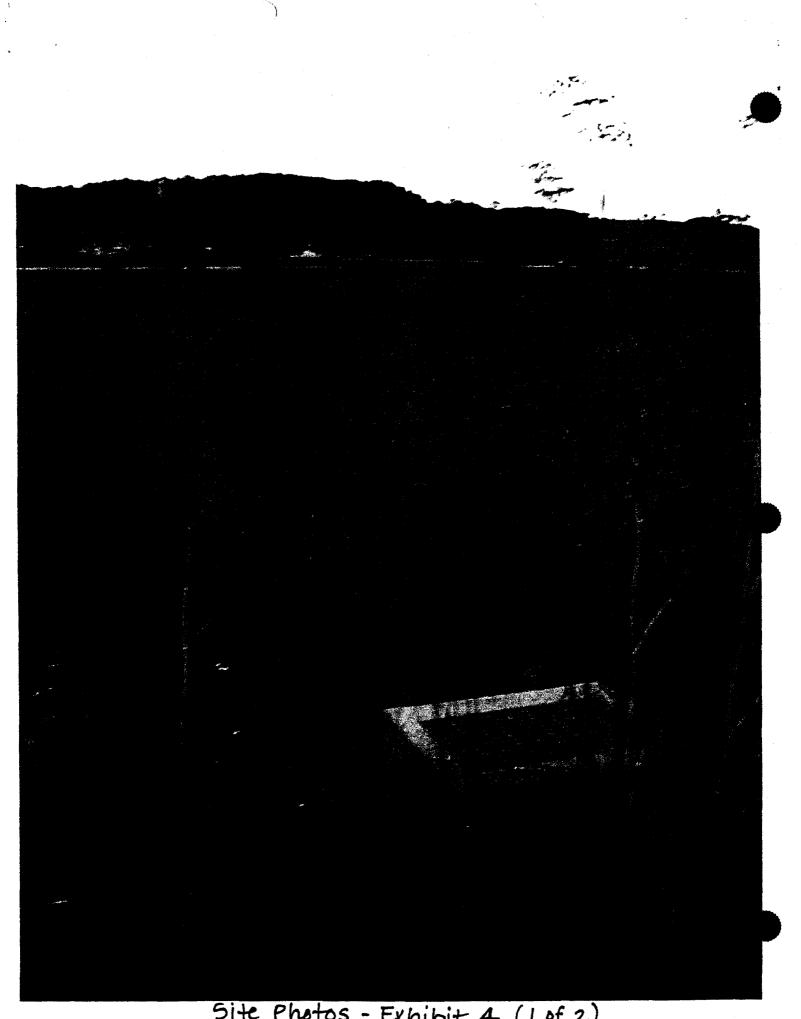
The impacts of the proposed development on coastal resources have been discussed in this staff report and the project is being approved subject to conditions which implement the mitigating actions required of the Applicant by the Commission (see Special Conditions of Approval). This impact analysis and findings, as well as conditions to mitigate the identified environmental impacts, are hereby incorporated. As such, the Commission finds that only as modified and conditioned by this permit will the proposed project not have any significant adverse effects on the environment within the meaning of CEQA.











Site Photos - Exhibit 4 (1 of 2)



