

## CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

SAN DIEGO AREA  
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SAN DIEGO, CA 92108-4402  
767-2370

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Filed: 9/10/02  
49th Day: 10/29/02  
180th Day: 3/9/03  
Staff: LRO-SD  
Staff Report: 2/13/03  
Hearing Date: 3/4-7/03

REGULAR CALENDAR  
STAFF REPORT AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATION

Application No.: 6-02-134

Applicant: City of San Diego

Agent: Dirk Smith

Description: Demolition of existing 2,128 sq.ft. "Headworks" building and construction of a two-story, 49-ft. high, 4,800 sq.ft. "Headworks" building in the same location including construction of an interim grit processing facility, relocation of two blowers, construction of two south grit tanks and other miscellaneous improvements at existing wastewater treatment plant.

Site: Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant, Peninsula, San Diego, San Diego County. APN 532-520-06

STAFF NOTES:

March 9, 2003 represents the 180<sup>th</sup> day since the subject application was filed. Therefore, pursuant to the Permit Streamlining Act, the Commission must act on the subject proposal at the March, 2003 meeting.

Summary of Staff's Preliminary Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the proposed project subject to several special conditions. The proposal raises potential concerns regarding visual impacts. The proposed development includes the construction of a new Headworks Building and Interim (temporary) Grit Processing Facility. The exterior treatment for new structures at the treatment plant is also important to retain the visual quality of the area. The new building will be 49 ft. high and represents one of the tallest structures on the treatment plant site. Staff explored with the applicant the possibility of providing landscape screening for the structure. However, for a number of reasons, the applicant has indicated that landscape screening for this building is not feasible. Therefore, staff recommends the building be colored such that it better blends in with the natural hillside behind it. The applicant is required to submit final plans for construction materials including a color board indicating the proposed color for the new building is consistent with the approved color scheme for the treatment plant and is a color that blends in with the surrounding

hillsides and compatible with the surrounding natural setting to help reduce the visibility of the proposed new structure. With the attached special conditions, the proposed development is consistent with all applicable Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act.

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Substantive File Documents: Certified Peninsula Land Use Plan and City of San Diego LCP Implementation Ordinances; General Report of Geotechnical Evaluation Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plan Trailer Complex by Ninyo & Moore Geotechnical and Environmental Sciences Consultants dated 2/18/94; Update to same dated 8/31/01; CDP #s, 6-92-84, 6-94-159 & 6-94-159-A, 6-95-159 & 6-95-159-A1, 6-95-109-A, 6-95-159 & 6-95-159-A, 6-96-137 & 6-96-137-A1, 6-97-124, 6-00-110, and 6-01-101; "Landscape, Architectural and Aesthetic Improvements to the Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant" dated 5/6/96.

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I. PRELIMINARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The staff recommends the Commission adopt the following resolution:

**MOTION:**     *I move that the Commission approve Coastal Development Permit No. 6-02-134 pursuant to the staff recommendation.*

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION OF APPROVAL:**

Staff recommends a **YES** vote. Passage of this motion will result in approval of the permit 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 THE PERMIT:**

The Commission hereby approves a coastal development permit for the proposed development and adopts the findings set forth below on grounds that the development as conditioned will be in conformity with the policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act and 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. Approval of the permit 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 development on the environment, or 2) there are no further feasible mitigation measures or alternatives that would substantially lessen any significant adverse impacts of the development on the environment.

II. Standard Conditions.

See attached page.

### III. Special Conditions.

The permit is subject to the following conditions:

1. Final Plans/Construction Materials. PRIOR TO THE ISSUANCE OF THE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT, the applicant shall submit final plans and a color board for the Headworks building which documents the proposed structure is in substantial conformance with the previously-approved color scheme for the treatment plant pursuant to the report entitled, "Landscape, Architectural and Aesthetic Improvements to the Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant" dated 5/6/96. Specifically, the proposed color of the new structure shall blend in with the surrounding hillsides and be compatible with the natural setting of the area. Said plan shall be submitted for review and written approval by the Executive Director.

The permittee shall undertake development in accordance with the approved final plan. Any proposed changes to the approved final plan shall be reported to the Executive Director. No changes to the approved final plan shall occur without a Commission amendment to this coastal development permit unless the Executive Director determines that no amendment is legally required.

### IV. Findings and Declarations.

The Commission finds and declares as follows:

1. Detailed Project Description. Proposed is the demolition of an existing 2,128 sq.ft. "Headworks" building and construction of a new two-story, 49-ft. high, 4,800 sq.ft. "Headworks" building in the same location at the Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant in the City of San Diego. The new building will have two floors. The existing Headworks structure houses the grit classification/washing equipment and the air blowers for the North and Central Grit Tanks. This equipment is proposed to be relocated before demolition of the existing building, in order to start with the construction of the new building. An interim grit processing facility will be constructed north of Grit Tank N2 and the blowers will be relocated to their permanent new location, east of the Motor Control Center No. 10 (ref. Exhibit No. 3). The interim structure will be approximately 9,000 sq.ft. in size. Also proposed is the reconstruction of the two south grit tanks in order to meet the Clean Water Program design guidelines for aerated grit removal tanks. Both tanks will be below the existing grade and directly south of the new Headworks building and, as such, will not be visible. The proposed project will result in improvements to the grit collection and removal processes of the Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plan to enhance removal of suspended solids from sewage. Enhanced removal of suspended solids would continue compliance with the conditions of the national pollution Discharge Elimination system (NPDES) permit for the Point Loma Ocean Outfall.

The proposed project also includes miscellaneous improvements to the existing north and central aerated grit tanks which includes the placement of weirs at the outlets of Tanks

C1 and N1. In addition, weirs and other improvements will be installed to provide a more even flow distribution between the grit tanks. Other minor improvements are proposed to the raw wastewater Intake and Screening channels. However, all of these latter improvements are below existing grade and will be installed within existing structures without any net increase in size to any of the structures/facilities. These improvements are intended to enhance the performance of existing mechanical components at the treatment plant. Because these latter improvements will all be housed within an existing structure they are exempt from permit requirements as they involve replacement or maintenance of existing facilities which do not alter the service capacity, do not involve construction of new roads, grading of undisturbed area of greater than 500 sq.ft., or removal of major vegetation. They are described herein for information purposes only.

The Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant is located on the west side of the Point Loma peninsula on a blufftop site adjacent to natural steep hillsides. As such, it is highly visible from offshore by boats. Access to the Point Loma Treatment Plant is gained from an existing roadway (Gatchell Road) which also provides access to a public tidepool area associated with the Cabrillo National Monument, naval facilities and a Coast Guard station and lighthouse. Gatchell Road is commonly referred to as the "South Access Road" by the City treatment plant staff. From Gatchell Road just off of Cabrillo Memorial Drive, looking west, there are panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean and the entire treatment plant, including the subject site where the new building is proposed. The road extends in a southerly direction off of Cabrillo Memorial Drive and descends the steep, western face of the peninsula toward the Coast Guard Point Loma Lighthouse entrance, at which point it makes a hairpin turn and then continues in a northern direction to the treatment plant. Just past the security gate entrance to the plant site, there are three primary roads on which the majority of the treatment plant improvements are situated. First Street is the road furthest to the west and closest to the coastal bluffs. Second Street is more inland to the east, and Third Street is the easternmost street. The proposed improvements will be situated east of First Street, well inland of the coastal bluffs.

The Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant is located in the Peninsula community in an area that was not included in the City of San Diego's certified Local Coastal Program. As such, the Commission retains permit jurisdiction over the site at this time and the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act are the standard of review.

2. Water Quality. Sections 30230 and 30231 of the Coastal Act are applicable to the proposed development and state the following:

Section 30230

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.

### Section 30231

The biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored through, among other means, minimizing adverse effects of waste water discharges and entrainment, controlling runoff, preventing depletion of ground water supplies and substantial interference with surface water flow, encouraging waste water reclamation, maintaining natural vegetation buffer areas that protect riparian habitats, and minimizing alteration of natural streams.

The proposed project involves improvements on a blufftop site that is located adjacent to the ocean. In particular, the proposal includes the demolition of an existing Headworks building and the construction of a new Headworks building and related improvements. The proposed new structure is to be located on a previously disturbed area of the treatment plant (not containing any sensitive vegetation) and will be located far inland of the coastal bluff edge. The proposed development will not result in a net increase in impervious surface area as result of the proposed construction. Although the building footprint of the new structure will be larger than the existing structure to be demolished, the pre-construction surfaces are impervious also. This is true for the proposed temporary Headworks Building, as well. All run-off will be treated (filtered) at the storm drain inlet structure nearest to the proposed project. Eventually this runoff is then discharged to ocean waters. The Commission's water quality staff has reviewed the proposal and found the project to be acceptable, not resulting in impacts to water quality. Therefore, the Commission finds the proposed development will be designed to minimize adverse impacts to coastal resources, in a manner consistent with the water and marine policies of the Coastal Act.

3. Visual and Scenic Resources. Coastal Act Section 30251, provides, in part:

The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas....

As noted earlier, the larger and taller project entails demolition of an existing Headworks building and the construction of a new Headworks building in its place. While the existing Headworks building is being constructed, a temporary Headworks uilding is also proposed in close proximity to the new structure. When the new Headworks building is completed, the temporary structure will be demolished (reference Exhibit Nos. 2 & 3). Also proposed are miscellaneous improvements consisting, in part of: relocation of two blowers, construction of two south grit tanks and other related miscellaneous

improvements. The proposed improvements will be compatible with the character of the surrounding area.

The treatment plant site is visible from the west by off-shore ships and boats, and as such, the proposed improvements will be visible as viewed from the west. The area where the proposed new development will occur is largely built out and consists of a large impervious area including numerous other mechanical structures. There is little room to install new landscaping as the area where the new structure is proposed to be constructed is largely paved out. Although it may be possible to place two planter box trees west of the new structure, the placement of trees at this location would do very little to visually buffer the structure as they cannot be seen from offshore to the west and the applicant has indicated that trees in this area may adversely affect plant operations.

The applicant is proposing, instead, to paint the exterior the building in a color consistent with a previous color scheme approved for the treatment plant so that it will be less visible from offshore. In 1997, the Commission approved an amendment to several past coastal development permits approved at the treatment plant which contained conditions of approval addressing the exterior colors of various buildings. Specifically, the condition required that the facilities be of "an earthtone color to blend in with the natural setting of the existing coastal bluffs in the area". The approved amendment modified the permits such that the treatment plant incorporated a new color scheme for all the structures in accordance with a landscape and architectural theme report dated 5/6/96 to replace the past conditions of approval for the subject permits. The new approved color scheme included dark green, reddish-brown and gray, with reds and yellows as accent trims) to blend in with the surrounding hillsides to the north, south and east of the buildings. The new color scheme was proposed to unite the operational buildings, tanks, pumps, odor control towers and other man made structures while also considering the natural environment surrounded by cliffs, coastal scrub vegetation, sea and sky. The application of alternating hues of these industrial structures were proposed to soften their visual impact in the landscape by breaking up the monochromatic surfaces and creating a rhythm of colors already found in the surrounding environment. This color scheme was found to be compatible with the surrounding natural setting of the area and was found to result in a significant improvement to the visual quality of the treatment plant. Many of the existing structures at the treatment plant have incorporated these new colors into their design, including the digesters which are painted an aqua-blue color.

Therefore, given that there is no room to install landscaping on site at this location, the City proposes at this time, to paint the exterior of the building in a color that is consistent with the past color scheme proposed for the treatment plant. In so doing, this will help to minimize the visual impacts of the new structure. In addition, it should be noted that although the proposed structure will be larger than the existing structure, it is designed such that it is narrower from the west to the east which will minimize the appearance of its bulk and mass as viewed from the west. Also, the new structure will not be visible from the Cabrillo National Monument to the south, which is a major visitor-destination spot and where potential view impacts could occur.

Special Condition No. 1 requires submittal of final plans and a color board indicating the Headworks building will be consistent with the color scheme previously approved for the treatment plant including exterior colors to blend in with the surrounding hillsides and which are compatible with the surrounding natural setting of the area. In summary, the proposed improvements, as conditioned, will not impact existing public views toward the ocean or scenic areas and is visually compatible with the character of the surrounding area. Therefore, the project is consistent with Section 30251 of the Act.

4. Shoreline Access. Coastal Act Section 30211 provides:

Development shall not interfere with the public's right of access to the sea where acquired through use or legislative authorization, including, but not limited to, the use of dry sand and rocky coastal beaches to the first line of terrestrial vegetation.

In addition, Section 30212 states, in part:

(a) Public access from the nearest public roadway to the shoreline and along the coast shall be provided in new development projects except where:

- (1) it is inconsistent with public safety, military security needs, or the protection of fragile coastal resources,
- (2) adequate access exists nearby, ...

Currently, there is no direct public access to the shoreline from the plant site. At the wastewater treatment plant, the shoreline presently consists of rocky headlands interspersed with the previously constructed revetments. Due to the revetments and the rocky headlands, lateral access opportunities have been relatively non-existent since the time of plant construction. Also, due to the nature of the sewage treatment facility, public use of the area is restricted. With the proposed improvements, physical shoreline access by the public will not be reduced beyond that which currently exists.

Additionally, to the north of the project site are Navy owned lands which prohibit public access along the shoreline. To the south is the Cabrillo National Monument which encourages public access to the tip and westerly side of Point Loma. Parking lots and shoreline viewing areas are available at the Monument and along the access road south of the treatment plant facility, but only limited access to the shoreline is allowed because of the sensitive marine resources found at the base of the bluffs. The Monument offers guided tours of the tide pools at the base of the bluffs which allows the public the opportunity to view inter- and sub-tidal marine life.

With regard to potential construction impacts, none are expected to occur. Access to the treatment plant and other facilities, etc. will be required to remain open. Staging of equipment will occur on the grounds of the treatment plant. Therefore, the Commission finds the proposed project is fully consistent with Sections 30210 and 30212 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. As conditioned, such a finding can be made for the subject development.

The Point Loma Wastewater/Sewage Treatment Plant is located within an unzoned geographic area included in the Peninsula Community Plan segment of the City of San Diego Local Coastal Program where it has existed since 1963. This area was not included in the City of San Diego's certified Local Coastal Program, and the Commission retains permit jurisdiction over the site at this time. In addition, the Peninsula LCP Land Use Plan acknowledges ongoing maintenance, and assumes some potential future improvements. However, the proposed development would be in keeping with the LUP policy of maintaining and enhancing public services. Therefore, the Commission finds that approval of the proposed project, as conditioned, will not result in adverse impacts to coastal resources nor prejudice the ability of the City of San Diego to continue implementation of its fully certified LCP.

6. 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, as conditioned, to be consistent with any applicable requirements of 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 available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse effect which the activity may have on the environment.

The proposed project has been conditioned in order to be found consistent with the public access policies of the Coastal Act. Mitigation measures, including conditions addressing visual resources, will minimize all adverse environmental impacts. As conditioned, there are no feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impact which the activity may have on the environment. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed project is the least environmentally-damaging feasible alternative and is consistent with the requirements of the Coastal Act to conform to CEQA.

STANDARD CONDITIONS:

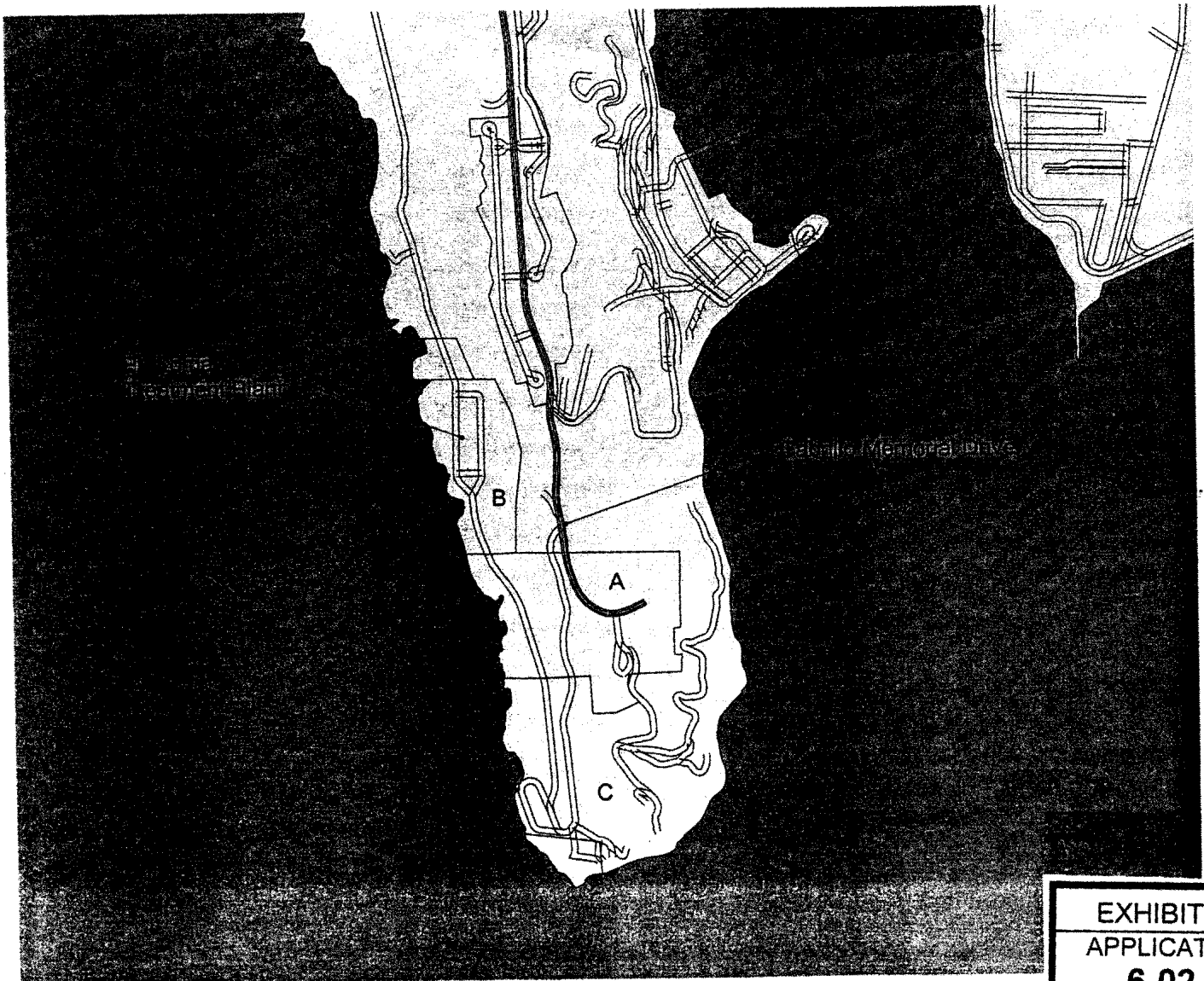
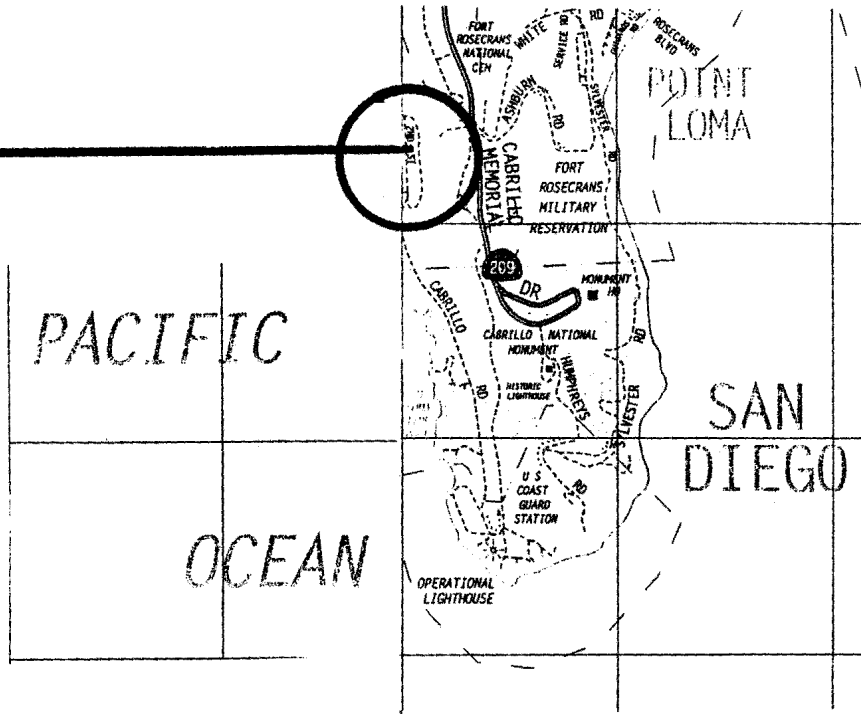
1. Notice of Receipt and Acknowledgment. The permit is not valid and development shall not commence until a copy of the permit, signed by the permittee or authorized agent, acknowledging receipt of the permit and acceptance of the terms and conditions, is returned to the Commission office.
2. Expiration. 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. Interpretation. Any questions of intent or interpretation of any condition will be resolved by the Executive Director or the Commission.
4. 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.
5. 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.

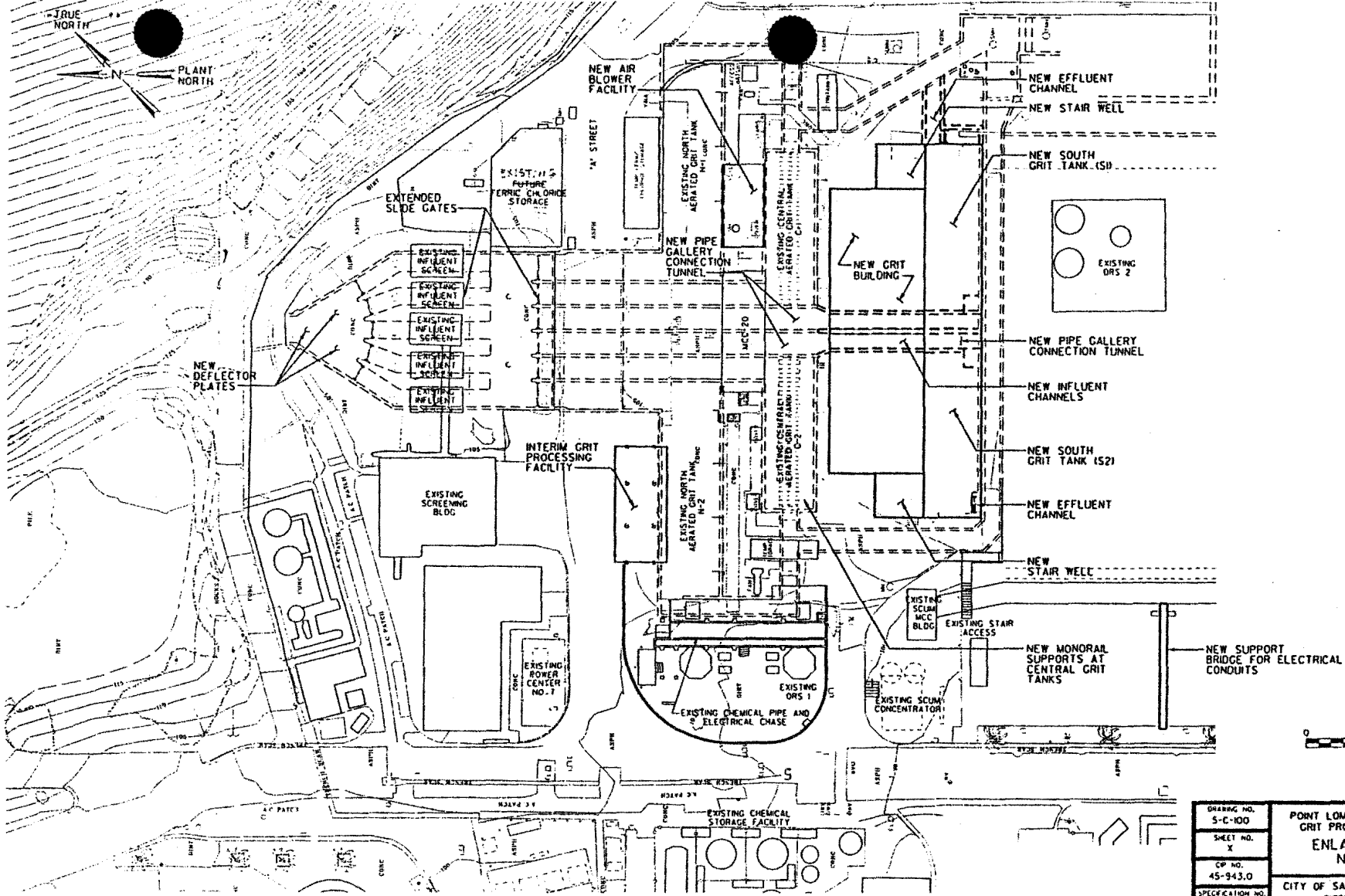
SITE



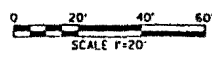
A=US Military-National Park-APN #532-520-05  
 B=City of SD PLWTP-APN #532-520-06  
 C=US Military-Cabrillo Memorial-APN # 532-520-10

EXHIBIT NO. 1
APPLICATION N
<b>6-02-134</b>
Location Map
California Coastal Commission





**EXHIBIT NO. 3**  
**APPLICATION**  
**6-02-134**  
**Enlarged Site Plan**



DRAWING NO. <b>S-C-100</b> SHEET NO. <b>X</b> CP NO. <b>45-943.0</b> SPECIFICATION NO.	<b>POINT LOMA WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT</b> <b>GRIT PROCESSING IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT</b> <b>ENLARGED SITE PLAN AND</b> <b>NEW FACILITY PLAN</b> CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA SHEET X OF X SHEETS	DATE 175000
DRAWING STATUS		DATE 175000
DESCRIPTION BY CHECKED DATE		DATE 175000
CONTROLLED BY DATE		DATE 175000

**WARNING**  
 IF THIS BAR DOES NOT MEASURE 1" THEN DRAWING IS NOT TO SCALE.

**LEE & RO, Inc.**  
 San Diego, California

SCALE: HORIZONTAL 1"=20', VERTICAL NONE

**METROPOLITAN WASTEWATER DEPARTMENT**  
 City of San Diego

NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION	BY	DATE

6-02-134