CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION
SOUTH CENTRAL COAST AREA
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Hearing: 8/6--8/03

STAFF REPORT
PUBLIC WORKS PLAN AMENDMENT

TO: Commissioners and Interested Parties

FROM: Charles Damm, Senior Deputy Director
Melanie Hale, Supervisor

RE: SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE PUBLIC WORKS PLAN: Amendment 2003-01, and Notice of Impending Development 2003-01. Public Hearing and Final Action at the California Coastal Commission Hearing, August 6--8, 2003, Huntington Beach.

Summary

The Public Works Plan Amendment proposed by Santa Barbara City College (hereafter also called "PWP" and "SBCC") provides for maintenance of an on-campus flood control drainage channel. The drainage is not an Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area. Nevertheless, SBCC proposes to mitigate the removal of vegetation and sediment necessary to perform the channel maintenance activities by amending the PWP to define a new category of Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area ("Riparian and Wetland Habitat" and a creek maintenance plan. The corresponding NOID provides for the construction and maintenance of the new habitat type, including extensive removal of invasive, non-native plants and replanting/enhancement with native riparian, woodland, and wetland plants and trees (See Exhibit 3). The proposal provides for the permanent maintenance of the drainage channel and the preservation of the new habitat area. With Commission approval, SBCC proposes to perform the channel dredging prior to the onset of the next rainy season and to implement the channel enhancement plan immediately thereafter.

The staff **recommends certification** of the proposed amendment, and subsequent determination by the Commission that the proposed project **is consistent** with the certified PWP as amended herein.

For more information on this item, contact Melanie Hale at the Ventura Coastal Commission office at the letterhead address and telephone number.

I. Staff Recommendation

A. Approval of PWP Amendment as Submitted

MOTION #1: ***I move that the Commission certify Santa Barbara City College Public Works Plan Amendment 1-03 as submitted.***

Staff Recommendation for Approval of Public Works Plan Amendment:

Staff recommends a **YES** vote. Passage of this motion will result in approval of the Public Works Plan Amendment and the adoption of the following resolution and findings. The motion to certify passes only by an affirmative vote of a majority of the appointed Commissioners.

RESOLUTION #1:

The Commission hereby certifies Santa Barbara City College Public Works Plan Amendment 1-03 and adopts the findings stated below on the grounds that the Amendment conforms with the applicable policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act. Certification of the Amendment complies with the California Environmental Quality Act because there are no feasible alternatives or mitigation measures that would substantially lessen the significant adverse effects that the approval of the Amendment would have on the environment.

B. Approval of the Notice of Impending Development with Conditions

MOTION #2: ***I move that the Commission determine that the development described in the Notice of Impending Development 1-03, as submitted, is consistent with the Public Works Plan as amended by PWP Amendment 1-03.***

Staff recommends a **YES** vote. Passage of this motion will result in a determination that the development described in the Notice of Impending Development 1-03, as submitted, is consistent with the certified Santa Barbara City College Public Works Plan as amended by PWP Amendment 1-03 and adoption of the following resolution and findings. The motion passes only by affirmative vote of a majority of the Commissioners present.

RESOLUTION #2:

The Commission hereby determines that the development described in the Notice of Impending Development 1-03 is consistent with the certified Santa Barbara City College Public Works Plan for the reasons discussed in the findings herein.

II. Findings

A. Background

The Commission certified the Public Works Plan for Santa Barbara City College on November 20, 1985 and has amended the plan several times over the past 18 years. The campus is situated within the City of Santa Barbara. The City of Santa Barbara's Local Coastal Program was fully certified on November 12, 1986.

Santa Barbara City College is a fully accredited two-year community college located within the City of Santa Barbara. The 74-acre main campus is sited south of U.S. 101 on a marine terrace overlooking Shoreline Drive, Leadbetter Beach, the Santa Barbara Harbor and the ocean. The main campus entrance is on Cliff Drive (State Route 225) on the College's north boundary. The college is divided into an east and west campus by Loma Alta Drive, a City street running from Shoreline Drive to Cliff Drive. The City's Pershing Park forms the east boundary of the Campus. A former coastal bluff, now inland of Shoreline Drive, forms the south boundary of the campus. Residential areas are located to the west and north of the campus. Campus enrollment is currently approximately 13,000.

B. Proposed Amendment and NOID

The College proposes to amend the PWP and to implement the proposed project through the accompanying NOID. The proposal defines a new habitat area type, "Riparian and Wetland Habitat," provides for the construction of such habitat adjacent to the drainage channel, and establishes a drainage channel maintenance program. The result of this change will be to allow SBCC to undertake flood control management through the removal of less than 40 cubic yards of sediment presently clogging the channel, and to perform routine maintenance as needed in the future to keep the channel open. (See Exhibits 1--3).

C. Project Setting & Description

The subject channel is an unnamed drainage channel that flows along the northeast side of SBCC. This drainage forms an open channel from Montecito Street to the tennis courts at Pershing Park that is approximately 700 feet long. Upstream, the drainage is essentially a subterranean storm drain through an urban area. At the downstream end of the open channel, a metal grate covers the entrance into a culvert. In the limited open areas, patches of vegetation have grown into portions of the channel and trap increasing amounts of sediment and debris. Water flows during storm conditions are impeded and in some cases blocked by this accumulation, and flooding of the downtown Carriage House and Art Museum has resulted.

The channel width varies from three to seven feet, and water depth during low flow summer conditions typically ranges from one to ten inches. SBCC proposes to undertake the necessary dredging of the portion of the channel that traverses the campus during September 2003, while flows are at seasonal lows, and to implement sediment control measures to minimize turbidity in remaining downgradient flows. Dredged material will mostly be used to repair eroded bank areas, to fill in where non-native palms are removed, and to construct the new habitat area. If any residual material remains, SBCC will place it in an approved, covered site on campus for use in the campus landscaping program. SBCC representatives estimate that the dredging component of the project will require approximately one week for completion. Removal of non-native species and planting of native species within the new riparian/wetland area will be undertaken immediately thereafter. All project dredging activities will be completed prior to the onset of the 2003 – 2004 rainy season, in accordance with the applicant's proposal, and re-planting/restoration of the channel banks in accordance with the planting plan shown in Exhibit 3 will commence immediately thereafter.

SBCC proposes to undertake the proposed project, including vegetation removal and control of invasive non-native plants, by hand or mechanical measures and will only rely on herbicides safe for aquatic area application when either: a) mechanical measures fail to control non-native species are necessary or b) digging up many plants would cause damage to the channel banks (thereby undermining bank stability and increasing erosion). Application of herbicides and other activities within the channel will occur only during low flow seasonal conditions and will be monitored daily by a qualified biologist retained by SBCC, in accordance with the applicant's proposal. Non-native species will be removed and only native riparian and wetland species will be included in the new habitat area. Species proposed for planting include coast live oaks, purple needlegrass, mugwort, western sycamore, and others. The newly established habitat will be maintained and protected, and no future development will be allowed within it except for the limited maintenance of the center of the channel to preserve throughflow and prevent flooding.

The location of the new Riparian and Wetland Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area is shown on Exhibit 2, which will be incorporated into the certified PWP.

Subsequent to project completion, the center of the drainage channel will be permanently maintained in an open condition to prevent urban flooding. No herbicides will be used for long-term channel maintenance. Low-growing wetland plants that do not block the channel and trap sediment and debris will be allowed to colonize the margins of the channel.

SBCC representatives have conducted surveys of the drainage channel for sensitive species and habitats over a period of several years, and have submitted evidence that no state or federally listed sensitive species, or locally rare or sensitive species

have been observed in the project area, nor is there suitable habitat for sensitive species present in the project area.

D. Stream Alteration; Water Quality

Stream Alteration

Coastal Act Section 30236 provides that:

> *Channelizations, dams, or other substantial alterations of rivers and streams shall incorporate the best mitigation measures feasible, and be limited to (l) necessary water supply projects, (2) flood control projects where no other method for protecting existing structures in the floodplain is feasible and where such protection is necessary for public safety or to protect existing development, or (3) developments where the primary function is the improvement of fish and wildlife habitat*

Section 30236 of the Coastal Act allows for the alteration of streams for flood control projects where such projects incorporate the best mitigation measures feasible and where such protection is necessary for public safety or to protect existing development. The proposed project is necessary to control flooding in public areas of urban Santa Barbara, and is therefore for the purpose of protecting public safety and existing development, as stated previously. In addition, SBCC proposes to fully mitigate all potential project impacts.

The mitigation measures incorporated into the project description include scheduling the construction to take place during the lowest possible stream flow conditions at the end of summer/early fall 2003 (dredging will require approximately one week), only performing routine maintenance in accordance with a similar seasonal schedule thereafter and without the use of herbicides, and implementing sediment control measures to reduce downgradient turbidity that might otherwise result despite low flow conditions. The applicant will also implement temporary post-construction bank stabilization measures to ensure that new plantings and bank reconstruction are established and do not contribute sedimentation through future erosion. The applicant will also dispose of any residual dredged materials in a covered, approved site on campus for use in the campus landscape program, thereby preventing sedimentation that could occur from windblown sediment or uncontrolled runoff during the rainy season. Finally, the applicant proposes to enhance the channel banks through plantings with locally native riparian/wetland species as shown in Exhibit 3. The enhancement plan will mitigate the loss of vegetation necessary to clear the center of the drainage channel. Although SBCC has not quantified the area relationships, it is clear from Exhibit 3 that the enhancement area ratio to disturbed channel areas is at least 10:1.

For all of these reasons, the proposed project meets the requirements of Section 30236 of the Coastal Act: the project is a flood control project necessary to protect public safety and existing development, there is no alternative way to relieve the downgradient flooding that is caused by the excess sedimentation in the existing drainage channel, and the project incorporates best mitigation measures feasible. Therefore, the Commission finds the proposed PWP Amendment 1-03 consistent with Section 30236 of the Coastal Act as submitted, and further finds the proposed implementation of the project pursuant to NOID 1-03 fully consistent with the PWP as amended herein, as submitted.

Water Quality

Section 30231 of the Coastal Act addresses the potential of proposed development in a drainage channel to adversely impact coastal water quality through dredging, removal of vegetation, erosion, and sedimentation.

Section 30231 states:

> *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, minimizing alteration of natural streams.*

Sedimentation directly affects riparian corridor ecology by increasing water turbidity. Turbidity reduces the penetration of sunlight needed by aquatic vegetation, which translates to negative effects on plant establishment and overall productivity, which in turn impacts aquatic species that depend on such vegetation for food and cover. In addition, aquatic animals are affected by turbidity in the following ways: reduced visibility for visual predators, such as birds and mammals; and inhibited feeding effectiveness for benthic filter feeding organisms. The proposed project, which is described above, includes measures to control downgradient sedimentation and turbidity during siltation removal activities. In addition, in accordance with the applicant's proposal, the project will be implemented during the lightest streamflow conditions of late summer/early fall, prior to the onset of rainy season. Thus, potential sedimentation will be minimized in downgradient waters and ultimately in discharge to the Pacific Ocean. Thus, provided the proposed project is implemented in accordance with the applicant's proposal, PWP Amendment 1-03 as implemented by NOID 1-03 will avoid adverse impacts from the dredging and channel maintenance on coastal water quality. Therefore, the Commission finds the proposed PWP Amendment 1-03 consistent with Section 30231 of the Coastal Act

as submitted, and further finds the proposed implementation of the project pursuant to NOID 1-03 fully consistent with the PWP as amended herein, as submitted.

E. PWP/CEQA

The proposed amendment is to the Santa Barbara City College Public Works Plan, which the Commission certified the Public Works Plan in 1985.

The Coastal Commission Public Works Program process has been designated at the functional equivalent of the CEQA. CEQA requires the consideration of the least environmentally damaging feasible alternatives and the consideration of mitigation measures to lessen significant environmental impacts to the level of insignificance. As discussed in the findings above, Public Work Plan Amendment 1-03 as submitted, including the implementation of the amendment as proposed pursuant to Notice of Impending Development 1-03, is consistent with the applicable policies of the Coastal Act. There are no alternatives or feasible mitigation measures that would further reduce the impacts to the environment. Therefore, the amendment is consistent with the provisions of the Environmental Quality Act and the Coastal Act.

Source: USGS 7.5 Min. Santa Barbara, Calif. 1952, 1988

Figure 1. Project Location

EXHIBIT NO. 1
APPLICATION NO. SBCC PWPA 1-03 and NAD 1-03
project site

New ESHA

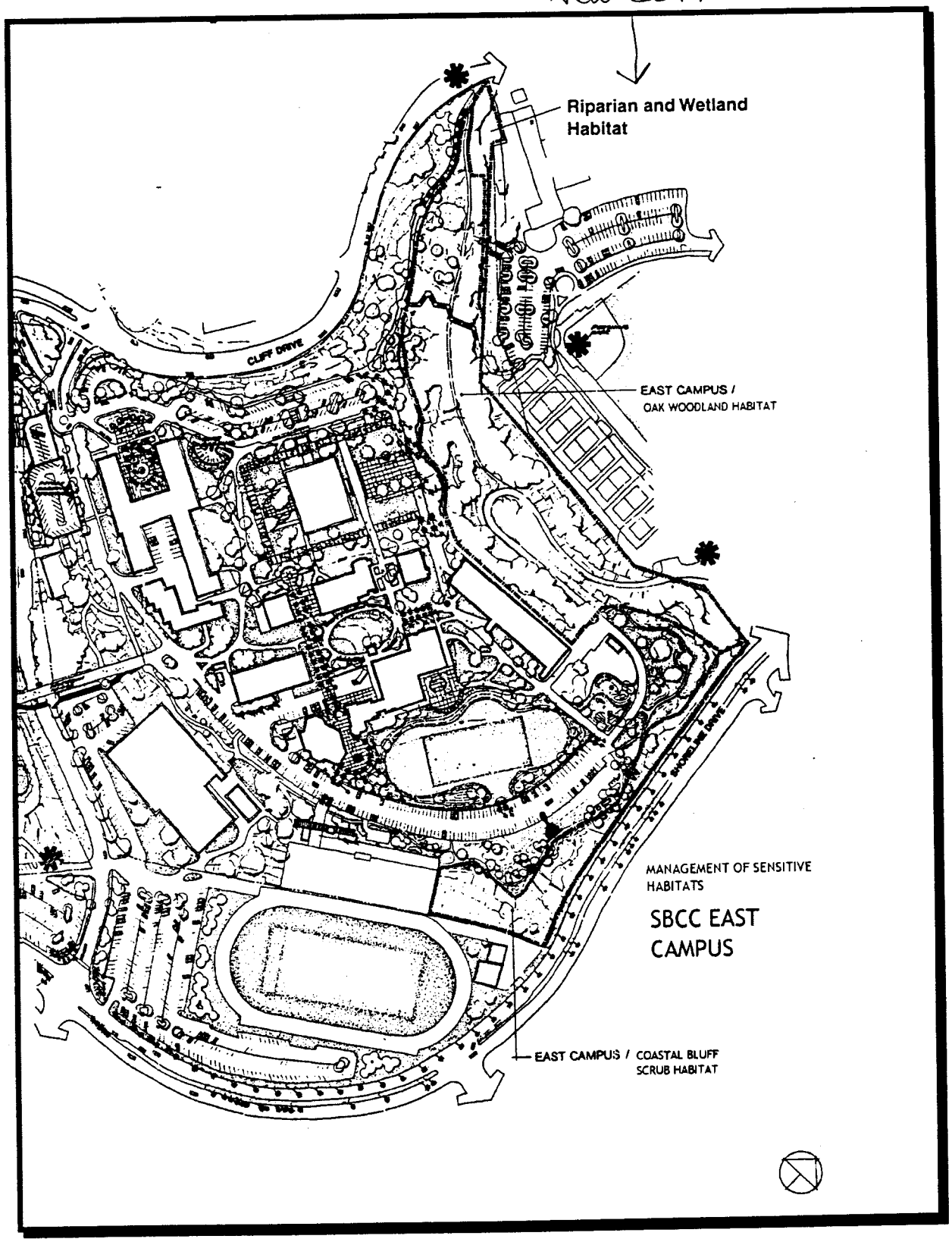
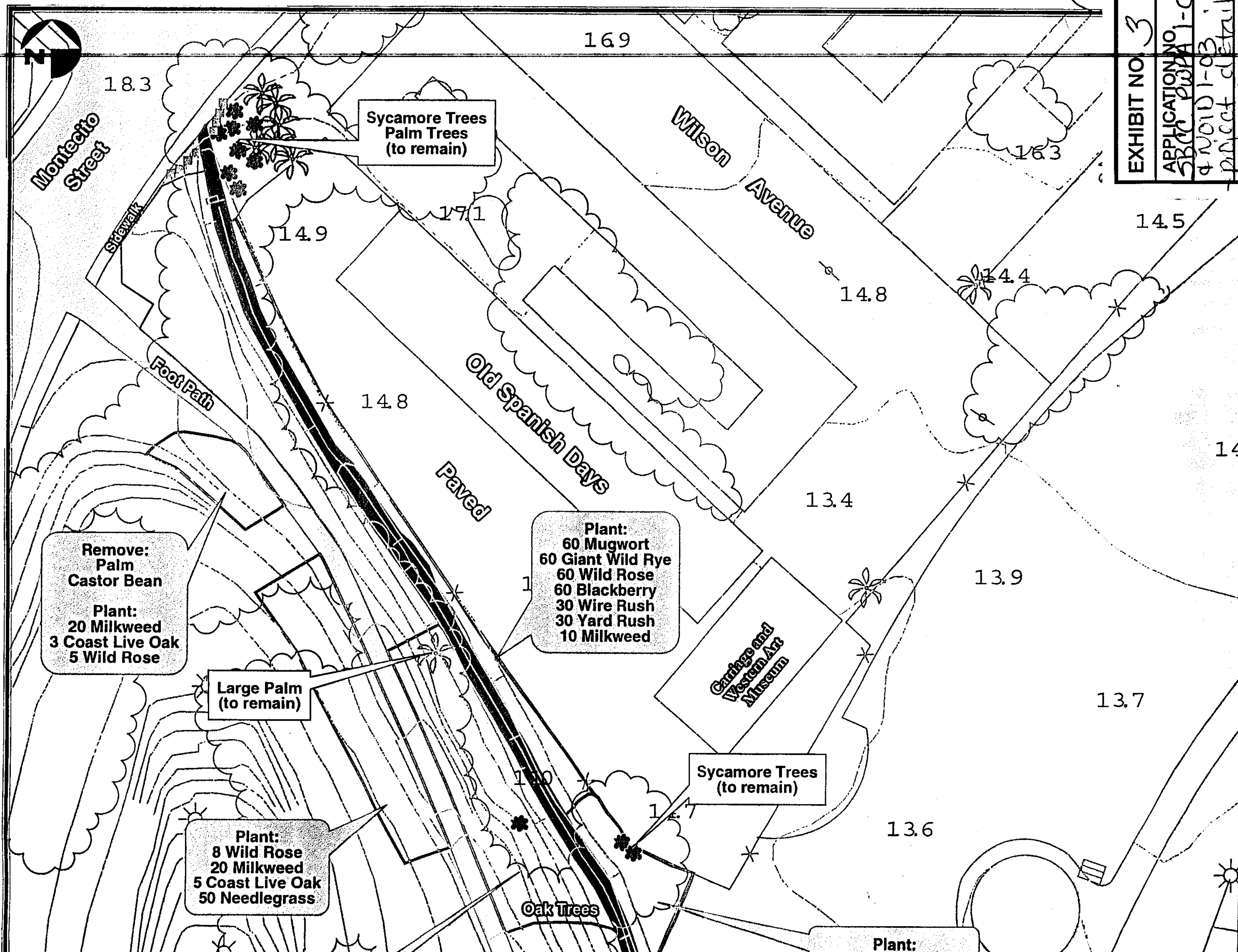
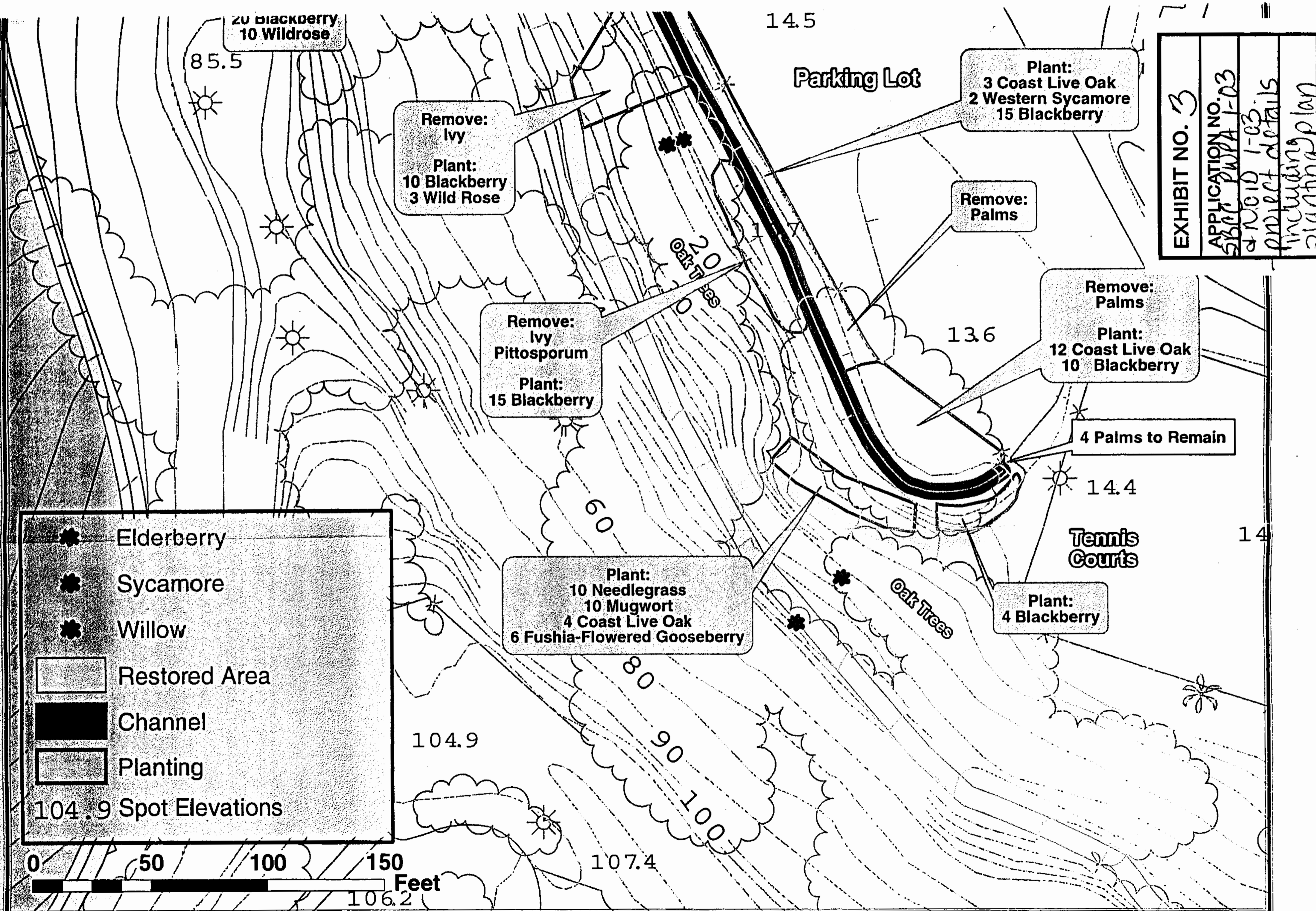


Figure 3.0 Sensitive Habitats Map - East Campus

EXHIBIT NO. 2
APPLICATION NO. SBCC PWP 1-03 and NOID 1-03
new habitat map

EXHIBIT NO. 3
APPLICATION NO. 4-SBV-01-03
project details including planting plan
(1 of 2)





Planting Plan

Figure 1

NEW AND REVISED 20032 LRDP POLICIES FOR SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE

2.1 NATURAL RESOURCES - BIOLOGY

2.1.1 Description of Habitats

As shown in Figures 2 and 3, the SBCC campus has the ~~three~~ four following types of native plant habitats of biological importance in the following areas:

- **Southern Oak Woodland Habitat** – located on the slope immediately above Pershing Park on the northeastern edge of East Campus; and
- **Southern Oak Woodland and Riparian Habitat** – located in Arroyo Honda in the northern and eastern end of West Campus; and
- **Coastal Sage Scrub Habitat** – on the bluff face of East and West Campus; and
- **Riparian and Wetland Habitat** – located in and along an open drainage channel on the northeast edge of East Campus from Montecito Street to the Pershing Park tennis courts.

[At end of Section 2.1.1 add:]

Both native and non-native vegetation is present in and along the open drainage channel from Montecito Street to the Pershing Park tennis courts. California bulrush (*Scirpus californicus*) and cattail (*Typha* sp.) grow in the channel and on the banks. When growth in the channel becomes dense, storm runoff cannot be conveyed rapidly and flooding of the adjacent property occurs. The west bank contains southern oak woodland (as described above) and riparian vegetation. The latter was planted as a demonstration project and is dominated by western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and California blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*). Non-native species present include elm, castor bean (*Ricinus communis*), and a decorative umbrella sedge (*Cyperus* sp.). The east bank is dominated by non-native species such as castor bean, cheeseweed (*Malva parviflora*), smilo grass (*Piptatherum miliaceum*), Bermuda buttercup (*Oxalis pes-capre*), wild radish (*Raphanus sativus*), celery (*Apium graveolum*), Calla lily (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*), and a decorative sedge. On the east bank, five large and one small non-native Washington palm trees (*Washingtonia robusta*) occur at the north end of the channel and numerous large Washington palm trees occur at the south end of the channel. One large Canary Island palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) is present on the west bank about 240 feet downstream from Montecito Street, and many smaller palm trees (both species) are becoming established at several locations along both banks.

2.1.2 Implementation Efforts

[At end of Section 2.1.2 add:]

In 2002, the College prepared a maintenance plan for the drainage channel. The maintenance plan includes an initial clearing of vegetation and sediment from the channel, removal of invasive non-native plant species from the east bank, and planting of native species for bank

EXHIBIT NO. 4
APPLICATION NO. SBCC PWPA 1-03 and ROID 1-03
PWP Amendment Text

stabilization and habitat enhancement on both sides of the drainage. The channel is to be kept clear of vegetation through annual inspections and hand clearing. The east and west bank restoration is to be monitored and maintained (e.g., weed control and watering) until the native plants are established.

2.1.3 Restoration Goals

The following are the restoration goals from the 1993 Oak Woodland and Coastal Bluff Restoration Plan (OW/CBRP). Restoration goals for the riparian area along the drainage channel are the same as for the OW/CBRP, except that regular clearing of plant growth from within the channel is needed to prevent flooding.

2.1.4 POLICIES

Bio 1. Environmentally sensitive campus habitats will be protected against significant disruption of habitat values through all of the following:

a. No development will occur within:

- the Arroyo Honda Southern Oak and riparian Woodland Habitat;
- the Pershing park Southern Oak Woodland Habitat and the Riparian and Wetland Habitat; or
- the remnant Coastal Sage Scrub Habitat on the West and East Campus bluff faces.

Development is defined as .... Exceptions to this policy are permitted for habitat restoration conducted by a qualified biologist, removal of emergent vegetation from the drainage channel from Montecito Street to the Pershing Park tennis courts, installation of a stairway to protect oak restoration on a steep slope above the Pershing Park tennis courts, and, for the West Campus bluff, a potential parking structure constructed over lot 3c.

[Policies **Bio 1** b, c, d, and e will remain unchanged.]

f. The College will implement the 2003 Creek Maintenance Plan which includes restoration of the east bank (Creek Maintenance Restoration Plan, 2003).