CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION
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ENERGY, OCEAN RESOURCES, AND FEDERAL CONSISTENCY DIVISION REPORT

FOR THE

DECEMBER 9, 2011 MEETING OF THE CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

TO: **Commissioners and Interested Parties**

FROM: **Alison Dettmer, Deputy Director**
Mark Delaplaine, Manager
Energy, Ocean Resources & Federal Consistency Division

NEGATIVE DETERMINATIONS		
APPLICANT	**PROJECT**	**LOCATION**
ND-040-11 Department of the Air Force	Low Impact Development Retrofit Action: **Concur,** 10/14/2011	Pillar Point Air Force Tracking Station, San Mateo County
ND-049-11 Department of the Navy	Testing and Operation of Passive Acoustic Systems Action: **Concur**, 10/26/2011	Offshore of San Clemente Island

NO EFFECTS DETERMINATION		
APPLICANT	**PROJECT**	**LOCATION**
NE-052-11 North County Transit District	Replace storm-damaged drainage channel Action: **No Effect,** 11/28/2011	Sorrento Valley San Diego County

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October 14, 2011

Dina Ryan
Environmental Planner
Asset Management Flight
30 CES/CEAOP
1028 Iceland Avenue
Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437-6010

Subject: Negative Determination ND-040-11 (Low Impact Development Retrofit, Pillar Point Air Force Station (AFS), San Mateo County)

Dear Ms. Ryan:

The Coastal Commission staff has reviewed the above-referenced negative determination. The Air Force proposes to implement a Low Impact Development (LID) retrofit project at Pillar Point AFS (operated by Vandenberg Air Force Base (AFB)) to re-route storm water runoff from impervious areas at the station to a series of vegetated bioretention cells. The Air Force states that LID is a method for eliminating pollutants in storm water through natural processes and by attempting to maintain pre-development hydrologic characteristics, such as flow patterns, surface retention, and recharge rates.

The majority of the storm water runoff at Pillar Point AFS currently flows as small rivulets or sheet flow over the adjacent cliffs into the ocean. However, the approximately 8.3 acres of developed land inside the West Point Avenue loop roadway drains to a single concrete outfall at the northern end of the station. The Coastal Commission concurred with an Air Force consistency determination (CD-062-94) in August 1994 for installation of storm water drainage improvements, erosion gully repair, gully recontouring, and revegetation of all regraded slopes. As a result of these improvements, storm water from the developed portion of the AFS currently flows down the bluff face through a 60-foot-long metal pipe, a mid-slope concrete energy dissipator, a 150-foot-long open concrete channel, and a second energy dissipator at the beach near the mouth of the recontoured gully.

Storm water quality monitoring performed at this location since 2006 indicates that runoff at the outfall has similar characteristics to typical urban pollutant profiles. The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) notified Vandenberg AFB in 2004 of an alleged violation of the California Ocean Plan (COP), arising from discharge of storm water from the Pillar Point AFS into an Area of Special Biological Significance (ASBS) – the James V. Fitzgerald Marine

Reserve adjacent to the station. The SWRCB requested that the Air Force either cease the discharge at the outfall or request an exception to the COP prohibition. The Air Force submitted an application for the exception and developed the proposed project to reduce storm water runoff and improve water quality in residual storm water runoff. The Commission's water quality staff participated in the successful multi-agency effort to develop the proposed project, which included reviews of project site characteristics, historic storm water flow volumes and rates, water quality treatment options, and project alternatives.

The proposed project includes: (1) replacing a portion of an existing concrete v-ditch (located immediately south of the primary industrial buildings at the station along the loop roadway) with a series of vegetated bioretention cells; and (2) installing two bioretention cells between Buildings 1 and 10. The surface area of all the bioretention cells would total approximately 0.26 acres. The project would promote infiltration of storm water runoff from impervious areas within the developed central area of the AFS, reduce runoff flow rates, and improve the quality of residual storm water runoff. Storm water runoff from impervious areas would be directed to the bioretention cells, which would retain the runoff until maximum storage capacity is achieved; at that point, any overflow from the cells would be conveyed to the existing storm water outfall and to the Pacific Ocean. Engineered fill in all the bioretention cells would consist of 60 to 80 percent sandy soils, 10 to 20 percent silty soils, and 7 to 15 percent clayey soils to maximize storage capacity of the cells, whose depth would range between 30 and 36 inches. All of the bioretention cells would be planted with native wetland vegetation. As the easternmost section of the roadside bioretention cells is sited within the limits of an ancient landslide, an impermeable liner will be installed underneath the cells within the limits of the ancient landslide as well as within 50 feet of the southern and northern limits of the slide to prevent retained storm water in the cells from infiltrating downward into the ancient landslide and potentially affecting slope stability.

The Air Force states that the installation of the bioretention cells would result in an 80 percent reduction in the storm water volume discharged to the ASBS, based upon historic precipitation records, rainwater infiltration capabilities evaluated, and the recorded runoff volumes of the last ten years. In addition, although the majority of the associated pollutant load removal would be attributed to the volume reduction, removal of total suspended solids (a proxy for other pollutants) is estimated at 85 percent due to the additional solids that would settle out in the bioretention cells. As a result, the Air Force reports that expected residual pollutant concentrations discharged to the ASBS would be reduced to below California Ocean Plan thresholds established by the SWRCB for the protection of marine life. Coupled with an exception to the discharge prohibition, the proposed project would be in compliance with the California Ocean Plan. The Air Force is currently awaiting final action by the SWRCB on the completed application for an exception to the COP discharge prohibition.

The proposed project includes construction and operational best management practices to minimize adverse effects on coastal resources. The Air Force will develop and implement an erosion and sediment control plan to minimize construction impacts, and all measures will remain in place until disturbed areas are permanently stabilized. All new storm water infrastructure elements will be inspected prior to the start of and monthly during the rainy season

and will be maintained to ensure their continued effectiveness, including maintenance of native plant cover and mulch in the bioretention cells and maintenance of inlets, underdrains, and outfalls. Re-evaluation of the design of the LID system will be conducted if necessary to address any unexpected long-term erosion problems that develop at the site. If construction of bioretention cells is scheduled to occur during the April 1 through August 30 bird nesting season, a pre-construction survey for nesting birds will be completed in coastal terrace prairie habitat. If nesting birds are found in areas of proposed ground disturbance, the Air Force will consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine the measures needed to avoid impacts to birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Approximately 0.18 acres of coastal terrace prairie habitat would be permanently replaced by the proposed bioretention cells along the central loop road, and approximately 0.43 acres of this habitat would be temporarily affected by construction activities. This habitat type consists of native grass, non-native grasses, and other herbaceous species, some of which may be on the California Native Plant Society's List 1B of rare or endangered plants. If List 1B plants are found in the construction area during the required spring pre-construction surveys, the Air Force will require that a biological monitor be present on-site during all ground disturbing construction work to minimize impacts to those species. In addition, if any listed plant species would be directly affected by construction, voucher specimens of those species would be collected and transferred to the nearest herbarium.

The Air Force has incorporated into the project the planting of native wetland vegetation within the 0.26 acres of proposed bioretention cells (to maximize the absorption potential of the cells) and the restoration of an existing 0.61-acre disturbed site to coastal terrace prairie habitat. This restoration site is located approximately 250 feet south of the base entrance gate along the eastern side of the central loop road. The Air Force states that non-native grassland currently exists on the disturbed site but that coastal terrace prairie habitat historically occurred at this location. The Air Force will also restore to coastal terrace prairie habitat the 0.43 acres of this habitat type that would be temporarily affected by construction activities. The Environmental Assessment for the proposed project outlines the monitoring and maintenance procedures that the Air Force will implement at the bioretention cells and at the restoration sites over a three-year period to ensure successful establishment of native vegetation at the cell and restoration sites. However, the Air Force has committed to submitting the formal coastal terrace prairie habitat restoration plan to the Commission staff for its review and approval prior to the start of construction of the LID retrofit project and associated habitat restoration. The Air Force expects project construction to commence in late spring or early summer of 2012 and take approximately two months to complete.

In conclusion, the Commission staff **agrees** that the proposed Low Impact Development project at Pillar Point AFS will not adversely affect coastal resources. The project will reduce the volume of storm water and residual pollutants discharged to the Pacific Ocean from the developed area of the AFS, and includes coastal terrace prairie habitat restoration, monitoring, and maintenance. We therefore **concur** with your negative determination made pursuant to 15 CFR 930.35 of the NOAA implementing regulations. Please contact Larry Simon at (415) 904-5288 should you have any questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Mark Delk

(for)

CHARLES LESTER
Executive Director

cc: CCC – North Central Coast District

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October 26, 2011

Jerry Olen
SPAWARSYSCEN Pacific
Department of the Navy
Space and Naval Warfare (SPPAWAR) Systems Center Pacific
53560 Hull St.
San Diego, CA 92152-5001

Attn: Kathryn Ostapuk

Re: **ND-049-11**, U.S. Navy, Negative Determination, Test and Operate Passive Acoustic Systems (Deployable Surveillance Group Project-Alpha (DGS-Alpha)), offshore of San Clemente Island

Dear Mr. Olen:

The Coastal Commission staff has reviewed the above-referenced negative determination submitted by SPAWAR for the testing and operation of a passive acoustic system called DGS-Alpha, to be located offshore of the east side of San Clemente Island, in water depths of 26 to 3280 ft. The systems would use passive hydrophones and autonomous underwater vehicles, with power supplied by small diameter fiber-optic cables. The testing would occur over the next 9 years. All equipment would be removed at the completion of the testing. The cables would be buried in nearshore and trawling areas. Fishing in the area is sparse, and public access and recreation would not be affected. Trained marine mammal monitors will be used during cable laying and other boat-related activities to assure marine mammals will be avoided, and marine mammals, sea turtles, and sensitive habitat (e.g., black abalone, hard bottom habitat) would not be affected.

The Coastal Commission staff **agrees** that the proposed project would not adversely affect coastal resources. We therefore **concur** with your negative determination made pursuant to 15 CFR 930.35 of the NOAA implementing regulations. Please contact Mark Delaplaine at (415) 904-5289 if you have any questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Mark Delaplaine

(for) CHARLES LESTER
Executive Director

STATE OF CALIFORNIA – NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY EDMUND G. BROWN, JR., GOVERNOR

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November 28, 2011

Justin Fornelli, P.E.
Chief Rail Engineer
North County Transit District
810 Mission Avenue
Oceanside, CA 92054

Subject: No Effects Determination NE-052-11 (Railroad drainage channel repair in Sorrento Valley, San Diego Co.)

Dear Mr. Fornelli:

The Coastal Commission staff has reviewed the above-referenced no-effects determination. NCTD proposes to repair and restore an existing, 2,250-foot-long track drainage channel within the existing railroad right-of-way in Sorrento Valley. A December 2010 storm and flood event undermined and destroyed the asphalt lining of the channel, which is located adjacent to the east side of the railroad track. NCTD now proposes to remove the remaining sections of asphalt and re-grade the channel. The repaired channel will have an earthen bottom to improve hydraulic and water quality functions. The existing, damaged drainage channel is unvegetated and NCTD will maintain the repaired channel to ensure that no vegetation becomes established in this area. The Commission staff agrees with NCTD's no-effects determination that the proposed project will not adversely affect coastal resources. Please contact Larry Simon at (415) 904-5288 should you have any questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

CHARLES LESTER
Executive Director

cc: CCC – San Diego Coast District
Erich Lathers, BRG Consulting, Inc.