CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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Filed: 9/26/11 49th Day: 11/14/11 180th Day: 3/24/12 Staff: AI Padilla-LB Staff Report: 11/21/11 Hearing Date: 1/11-13/12

Commission Action:

W8c

STAFF REPORT: CONSENT CALENDAR

APPLICATION NUMBER: 5-11-237

APPLICANT: Southern California Gas Co.

AGENT: Elisha Back, TRC Companies, Inc.

PROJECT LOCATION: North of Cabora Drive, Playa del Rey Storage Facility, Playa

del Rey

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Installation of an above grade 24 foot high pipe truss support

system throughout existing natural gas processing facility, and removal of invasive plants from a .46 acre area and landscape

with native plants.

SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends **APPROVAL** of the proposed development with two special conditions including: 1) require the applicant to incorporate Best Management Practices and; 2) monitor the landscaping for a period of three years. As conditioned, the proposed development conforms with all applicable policies of the Coastal Act.

I. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Commission adopt the following resolution to **APPROVE** the coastal development permit application:

MOTION: I move that the Commission approve coastal development permit

applications included on the consent calendar in accordance with the

staff recommendations.

Staff recommends a **YES** vote. Passage of this motion will result in approval of all permits included on the consent calendar. An affirmative vote of a majority of the Commissioners present is needed to pass the motion.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE PERMIT:

The Commission hereby approves a permit, subject to the conditions below, for the proposed development and adopts the findings set forth below on grounds that the development as conditioned will be in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 of the California 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 alternative that would substantially lessen any significant adverse impacts of the development on the environment.

II. STANDARD CONDITIONS:

- 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. <u>Expiration.</u> 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. <u>Interpretation.</u> Any questions of intent or interpretation of any condition will be resolved by the Executive Director or the Commission.

- 4. <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.
- 5. <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. <u>Debris Mitigation and Removal of Construction Debris</u>

- A) PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF THE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT, the applicant shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Director, a Construction Best Management Practices Plan for the construction project site, prepared by a licensed professional, which shall incorporate erosion, sediment, and chemical control Best Management Practices (BMPs) designed to minimize to the maximum extent practicable the adverse impacts associated with construction to receiving waters (i.e. Sempra Utilities Water Quality Construction BMP Manual). In addition to the specifications above, the plan shall be in substantial conformance with the following requirements:
 - (a) All construction activity that may result in unpermitted deposition, spill or discharge of any liquid or solid material into any coastal water or channel, shall be tarped during periods of precipitation to prevent any material from entering the near by wetlands.
 - (b) Any and all debris resulting from construction activities shall be removed from the project site within 24 hours of completion of construction;
 - (c) Best Management Practices (BMPs) designed to prevent spillage and/or runoff of construction related materials, sediment or contaminants associated with construction activity, shall be implemented prior to the onset of such activity. Selected BMPs shall be maintained in a functional condition throughout the duration of the project.
- **B)** The permittee shall undertake development in accordance with the plans approved by the Executive Director pursuant to this condition. Any proposed changes to the approved plans shall be reported to the Executive Director in order to determine if the proposed change shall require a permit amendment pursuant to the requirements of the Coastal Act and the California Code of Regulations.

2. Plan to Monitor the Disturbed Area and Remove Invasive Non-native Plants

A. PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF THE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT, the applicant shall submit, for the review and written approval of the Executive Director, a plan to monitor the disturbed area and to remove invasive non-native plants within the impacted area. The plan shall be prepared by a licensed biologist or licensed landscape architect.

The plan shall include procedures for identification and removal of non-native invasive plants that may be found in the impacted area. The plan shall include the following:

- 1. No new plantings of non-native or invasive species will be employed on the site. Invasive plants are those identified in the California Native Plant Society, Los Angeles -- Santa Monica Mountains Chapter handbook entitled <u>Recommended List of Native Plants for Landscaping in the Santa Monica Mountains</u>, January 20, 1992, those species listed by the California Invasive Plant Council on any of their watch lists as published in 2007, and those otherwise identified by the Department of Fish and Game or the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.
- 2. All non-native invasive plants shall be removed with hand tools.
- 3. No herbicides or rodenticides shall be employed.
- 4. Removal of all tempary irrigation after successful completion of planting.
- **B.** The permittee shall undertake development in accordance with the approved final plans. 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 required.
- **C.** Three years from the date of issuance of Coastal Development Permit No. 5-11-237, the applicant shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Director, a monitoring report, prepared by a licensed biologist, landscape architect or qualified resource specialist that certifies the on-site landscaping is in conformance with the submitted landscaping plan and approved pursuant to this special condition, and provides no less than 80% coverage of planted area and resists invasion by exotic plant species as demonstrated by less than 25% coverage of weed species. The monitoring report shall include photographic documentation of plant species, plant coverage and an evaluation of the conformance of the resultant landscaping with the requirements of this special condition.
- **D.** The permittee shall undertake development in accordance with the approved final plan and schedule and other requirements. 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 required.

IV. FINDINGS AND DECLARATIONS:

The Commission hereby finds and declares:

A. <u>Project Description and Location</u>

The applicant proposes to construct an above grade 24 foot high pipe truss support system throughout an existing natural gas processing facility, and remove invasive plants from a .46 acre area and landscape with native plants.

The pipe truss support system will be used to support pipelines and electrical equipment. The proposed truss includes 18 column supports at a minimum elevation of 16 feet above-grade to provide the required minimum clearance for drilling rigs and other large vehicles. Maximum height of the truss system will be 24 feet above existing grade. The pipe truss system has been designed to include sufficient space and strength to accommodate projected future pipeline and equipment support needs, as well as the planned relocation of existing below grade infrastructure. The pipe truss system will provide easier operation, maintenance, leak detection, and corrosion prevention.

The pipe truss support system will require the removal of approximately 500 cubic yards of soil. All soil will be tested for contamination and properly disposed of at a licensed disposal site outside of the coastal zone.

The proposed project is located within the fenced area of the Playa del Rey Storage Facility in the community of Playa del Rey, in the City of Los Angeles (see Exhibit No. 1 and 2). The facility is located south of Culver Boulevard and just north of the City's public works service road, Cabora Road, which is located near the base of the Westchester bluffs, in the area that is known as Area B of the Ballona Wetlands (see Exhibit No. 3). The site is approximately 8 acres in area and is relatively flat with nearly the entire site paved and asphalted.

The natural gas storage field facility has been operating since 1942. The facility is comprised of two general areas naturally divided by the Westchester bluffs that bisect the facility in an east-west direction. The natural gas processing plant is located at the bottom (north side) of the bluffs and contains a number of above-ground storage tanks, vessels, production and observation wells, fire protections systems, and process equipment including electrical and piping infrastructure. The office portion of the facility is located at the top of the bluffs (south side) and contains all of the facility office space as well as other ancillary buildings.

B. <u>Water Quality</u>

Section 30230 states:

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.

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, and minimizing alteration of natural streams.

The proposed project involves excavating and pouring concrete footings and pile driving for support columns. All construction activity, including staging and storage of equipment and material, will occur within the fenced and paved surface area of the facility. Existing underground lines that will be replaced by the proposed truss system will either be removed and all trenches backfilled or abandoned in place using appropriate abandonment procedures.

Storage or placement of construction materials, debris, or waste in a location subject to erosion and dispersion or which may be discharged into coastal water via rain or wind would result in adverse impacts upon the marine environment that would reduce the biological productivity of coastal waters. For instance, construction debris entering coastal waters may cover and displace soft bottom habitat. Sediment discharged to coastal waters may cause turbidity, which can shade and reduce the productivity of foraging avian and marine species' ability to see food in the water column. During construction activity the applicant will implement storm water/water quality Best Management Practices (BMPs) in accordance with their Sempra Utilities Water Quality Construction BMP Manual., which has been implemented for other previous projects that have been approved by the Commission (Coastal Development Permit Nos: 5-06-364, 5-07-323, 5-10-208, 5-11-004). To ensure that construction-related adverse impacts upon wetland and marine resources are avoided, Special Condition No. 1 outlines construction-related requirements to provide for the safe storage of construction materials and the safe disposal of construction debris. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed development, as conditioned, conforms with Sections 30230 and 30231 of the Coastal Act regarding the protection of water quality to promote the biological productivity of coastal waters and to protect human health.

C. <u>Environmentally Sensitive Resources</u>

Section 30231 of the Coastal Act 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, and minimizing alteration of natural streams.

Section 30240(a) of the Coastal Act states:

(a) Environmentally sensitive habitat areas shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values, and only uses dependent on those resources shall be allowed within those areas.

The proposed project is located in a portion of the Ballona wetlands known as Area B. Because of past development within Area B, including oil drilling, pipelines, road construction, and farming, only portions of the area contain wetlands (see Exhibit No. 10, Map of wetland areas, based on California Department of Fish and Game wetland determination, December 1, 1982. In 2010 a preliminary wetland determination was conducted by WRA Environmental Consultants for the Ballona Restoration Project. The wetland delineation, for the area adjacent to the project site, remains consistent with the 1982 determination). All wetland areas within the Ballona wetland area are considered environmentally sensitive habitat areas and provide habitat for many species of marine fish, migratory shore birds, and endangered species, including the California least tern and Belding's savannah sparrow. The closest wetland area to the project site is a drainage channel located in the northeast portion of the property. Because of the existence of the wetland and an environmentally sensitive habitat area, the development must be found consistent with Sections 30231 and 30240 of the Coastal Act.

The construction of the truss support system will take place within the paved area of the facility and will vary from 60 to over 200 feet from the drainage channel (See Exhibit No. 4 and 5). The majority of the system will be located along the backside or southern portion of the facility, and over 200 feet from the drainage channel. Since construction will take place on the existing paved area and BMPs will be incorporated to contain runoff and sedimentation within the paved construction area, construction activity will not adversely impact any wetland area.

The proposed project will also include landscaping of a .46 acre area north and adjacent to the existing facility's paved and asphalted area, adjacent to the narrow drainage channel that runs east to west (see Exhibit No. 8). The channel is considered wetlands within and up to the high water mark within the steep banks of the channel.

The applicant has prepared a landscaping plan and conducted a biological survey of the area to be landscaped. According to the survey there are no known sensitive plants or animals found within the project area. The existing dominant plant species in the proposed landscaped area is ice plant (Carpobrotus chilensis), which is an invasive non-native plant found throughout the wetlands. Other non-native plants found in the area include Brazilian pepper-tree (Schinus terebinthifolius), pampas grass (Cortaderia selloana), castor bean (Ricinus communis) and myoporum (Myoporum laetum). No sensitive or rare spices were found in the area.

All non-native plants will be removed by hand. All landscape debris will be removed and disposed of off-site within a certified disposal facility outside of the Coastal Zone. The applicant will install a sediment fence outside of the channel providing a buffer between the channel and proposed revegetation area to ensure that the channel is not impacted during landscaping activity. The applicant will also provide a biologist on-site to monitor and over-see the landscaping.

The revegation plan, which has been prepared by Edith Read, Ph.D. and Tom Rau, ASLA, will include the use of California native plants that are compatible with the environment and with the future restoration of the adjacent Ballona Ecological Reserve. Ground cover will include California brome, golden yarrow, California poppy, and creeping wild rye. Larger and taller plants, such as Laurel sumac, Lemonade berry, and California coffeeberry, will be placed along the edge of the existing asphalt and 50 to 75 feet from the channel. Container plants will be used to provide immediate cover, while seeds will be used to accelerate infill (see Exhibit No. 9 for plan and complete list of plants). Temporary above ground irrigation will be installed until the plants have established. An existing non-native palm (Washingtonia robusta) will be left in place due to its size and contribution to screening the facility from nearby Culver and Jefferson Boulevard.

The success of the revegetation once existing plants have been removed is important to ensure that the exposure of bare soil is minimized to reduce the possibility of erosion and sedimentation into the nearby wetlands. Therefore, Special Condition No. 2 requires the applicant to monitor the landscaped area for three years and provide a progress report on the revegetation of the area. The landscaping shall provide no less than 80% coverage of planted area and resist invasion by exotic plant species as demonstrated by less than 25% coverage of weed species. At the end of the three year period, if the revegetated site has not established pursuant to the landscape plan the applicant shall submit an amendment to modify the landscape plan in order to provide adequate plant coverage. As conditioned, the project will not have an adverse impact on the wetlands, and is consistent with Section 30231 and 30240 of the Coastal Act.

D. Visual Resources

Section 30251 of the Coastal Act requires that the scenic and visual qualities of this coastal area shall be protected. Section 30251 of the Coastal Act states, 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...

The proposed project is located within the fenced area of the Playa del Rey Storage Facility in the community of Playa del Rey, in the City of Los Angeles. The facility is

located over .75 miles from the ocean, and 800 to over 1,000 feet south of Culver Boulevard at the toe of the 150 foot high Westchester bluffs. The top of the bluffs are developed with the facility's upper plant and single-family residences, which are built partially down the bluff, and are visible from Culver and Jefferson Boulevard. Near the bottom of the bluffs the City's public works service road, Cabora Road is cut into the bluff.

The existing facility consists of storage tanks, above ground piping and other infrastructure that vary in height from a few feet to 24 feet. The proposed truss system will be 24 feet in height and will be located among the existing infrastructure. The truss system will be painted the same green color as other structures within the facility.

Because of the distance from Culver Boulevard and the ocean, and the developed nature of the facility, the proposed truss system will not have a significant impact on the bluffs or any coastal views. An existing eucalyptus grove located outside and adjacent to the property to the northwest helps screen the facility from the roads to the north, and the proposed landscaping will help provide additional screening of the existing facility. As proposed, the project will not have a significant visual impact on coastal resources and is consistent with Section 30251 of the Coastal Act.

E. Local Coastal Program

Section 30604 (a) of the Coastal Act states that:

Prior to certification of the Local Coastal Program, a Coastal Development Permit shall be issued if the issuing agency, or the Commission on appeal, finds that the proposed development is in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 30200) of this division and that the permitted development will not prejudice the ability of the local government to prepare a Local Coastal Program that is in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3.

In November 1986, the Commission certified, with suggested modifications, the land use plan portion of the Playa Vista segment of the City of Los Angeles' Local Coastal Program after the City annexed the area. The proposed project is located within the City of Los Angeles' planning area of Playa Vista. While there is a certified land use plan for the area, the City of Los Angeles does not have a certified Local Coastal Program for the Playa Vista area. The City of Los Angeles submitted its Local Coastal Program in March 1981. The Commission denied the submitted LCP on December 18, 1981. The City has not submitted a revised LCP.

The Ballona wetlands area, including Area B, has recently been acquired by the Department of Fish and Game. Presently, the California Coastal Conservancy, the State Lands Commission and the Department of Fish and Game are developing a restoration plan to create a variety of native habitats on the Ballona wetlands and associated upland areas. The project as conditioned will not have any impacts on the marsh and is consistent with the habitat policies of the Coastal Act. The Commission, therefore, finds that the proposed project is consistent with the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act and

will not prejudice the ability of the City to prepare a Local Coastal Program consistent with the policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act as required by Section 30604(a).

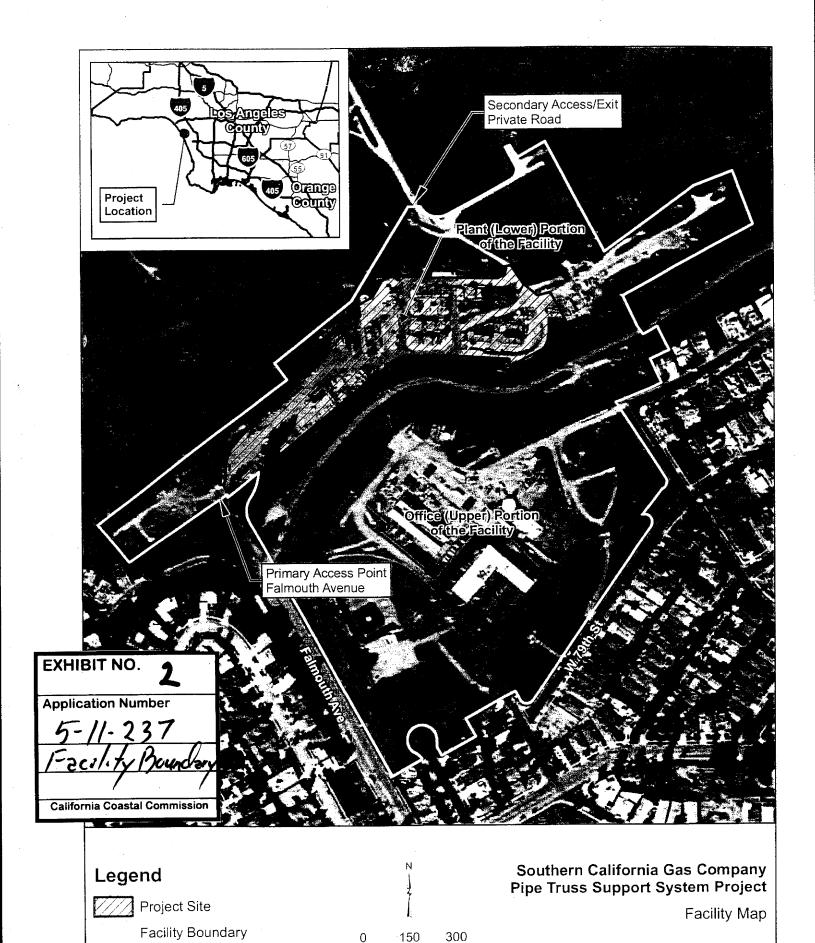
F. California Environmental Quality Act

Section 13096 of the Commission's administrative regulations requires Commission approval of Coastal Development Permit applications to be supported by a finding showing the application, as conditioned by any conditions of approval, 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.

As proposed, there are no feasible alternatives or mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impact which the activity may have on the environment. Therefore, the proposed project is found consistent with CEQA and the policies of the Coastal Act.

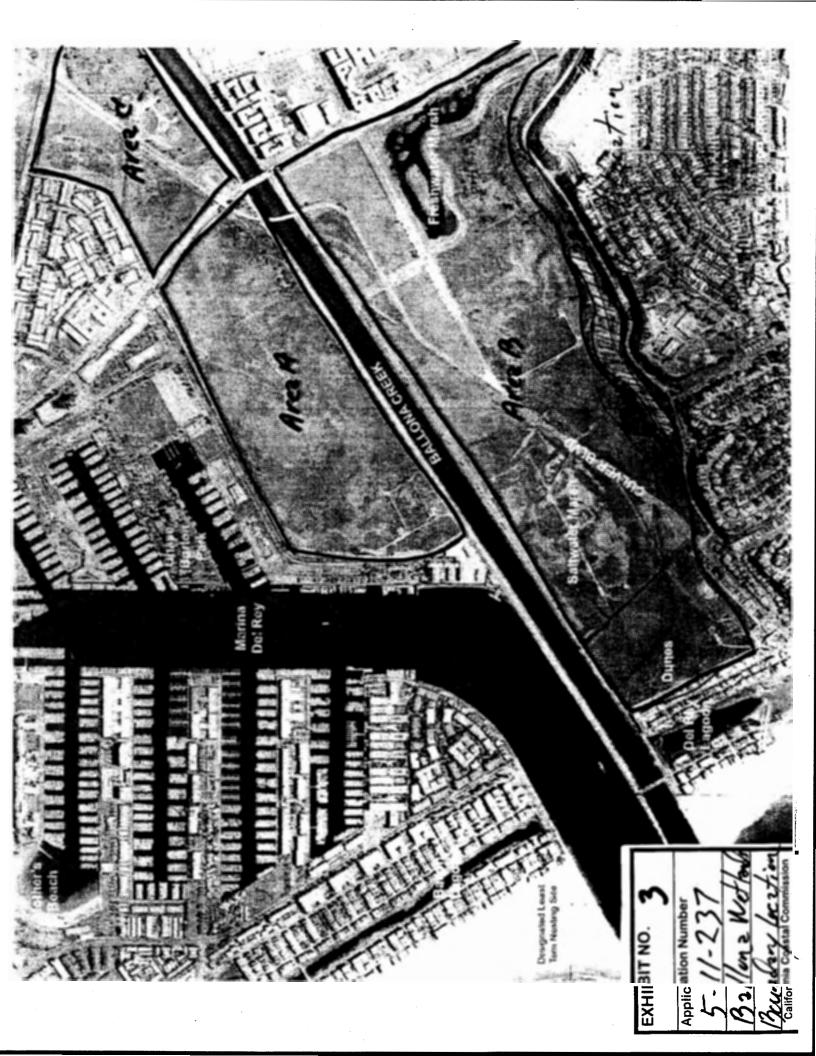


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Revegetation Site Location

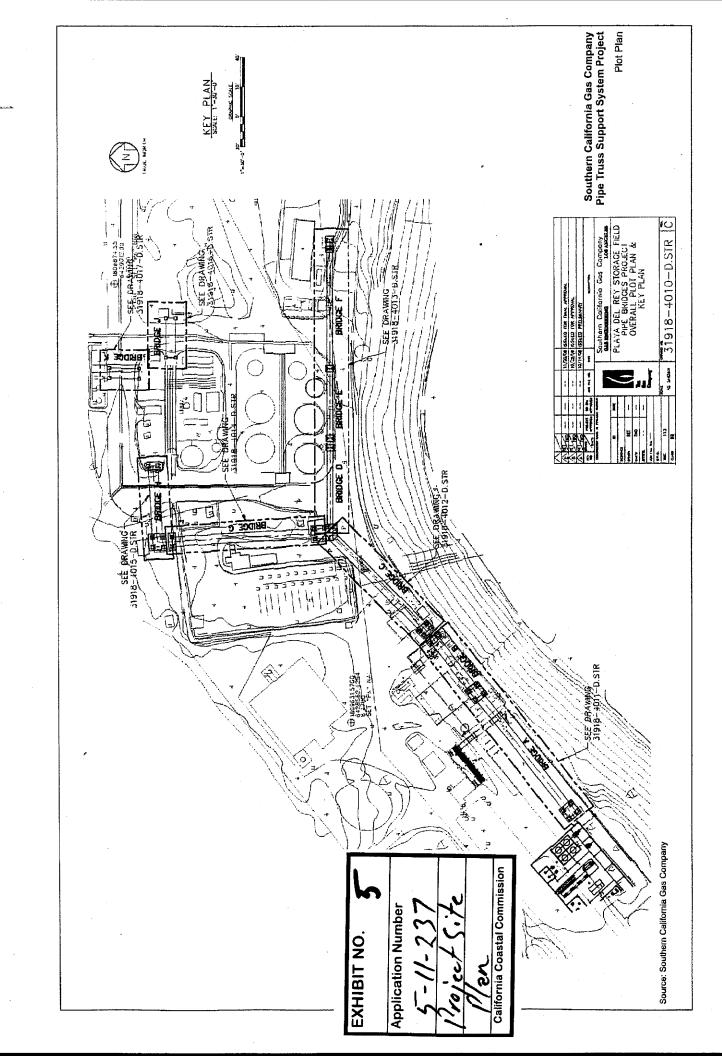
EXHIBIT NO. 4

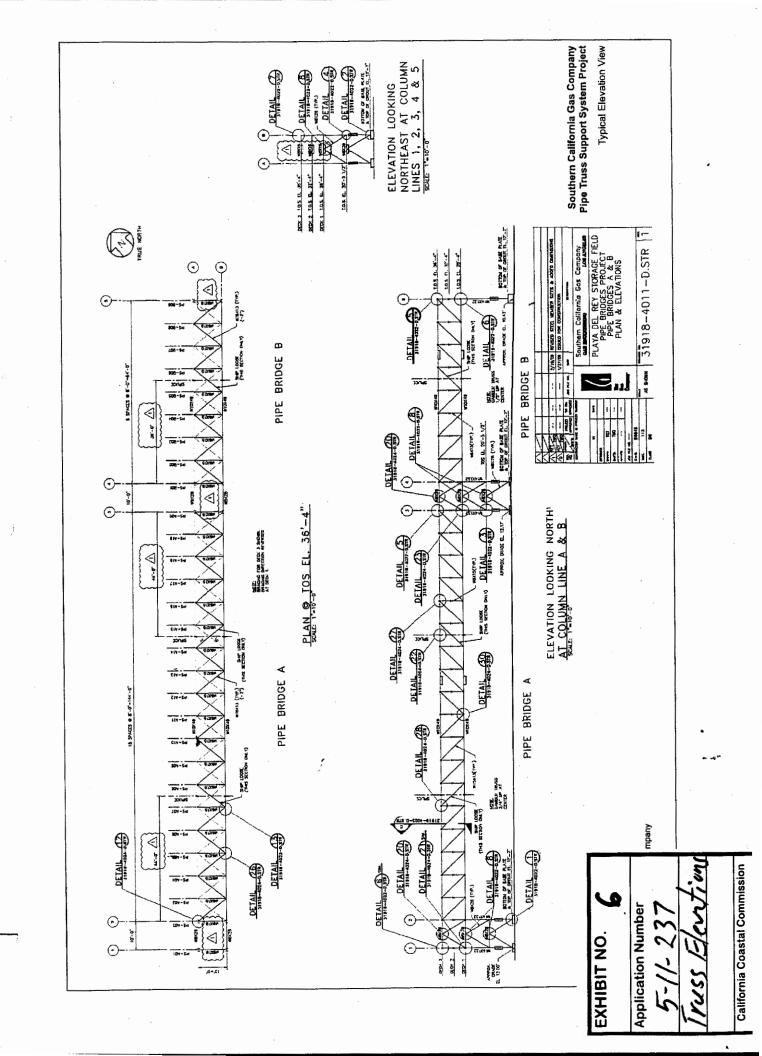
PROJECT LOCATION MAP

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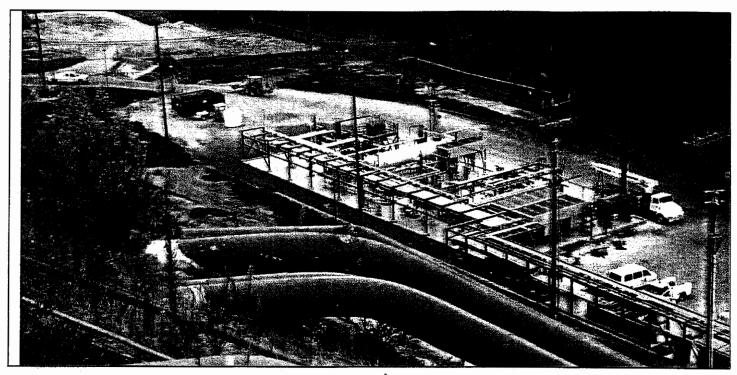


Photo 1: Photo taken from adjacent hillside facing west. Photo views western side of Project within fully developed facility.

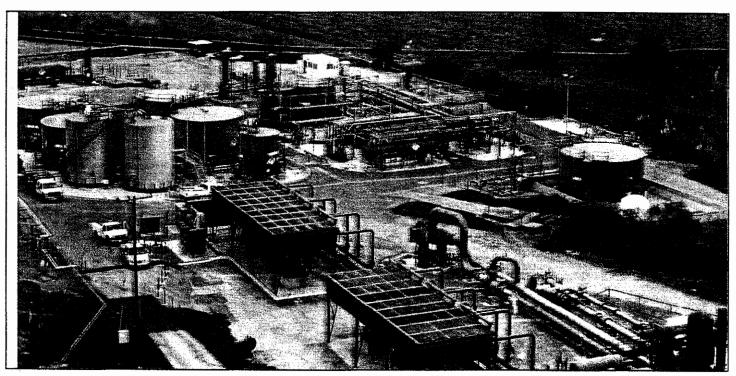


Photo 2: Photo taken from adjacent hillside facing west. Photo views eastern side of Project within fully developed facility.

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Photos of Existing

California Coastal Commission

Playa Del Rey Truss Support System Project

Site Photographs Figure: 3

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Existing Vegetation Exhibit B 50 100 A 1 Revegelation Area 50 ft Buffer from Revegetation Site 50 ft Buffer from Project Property Boundary Project Boundary

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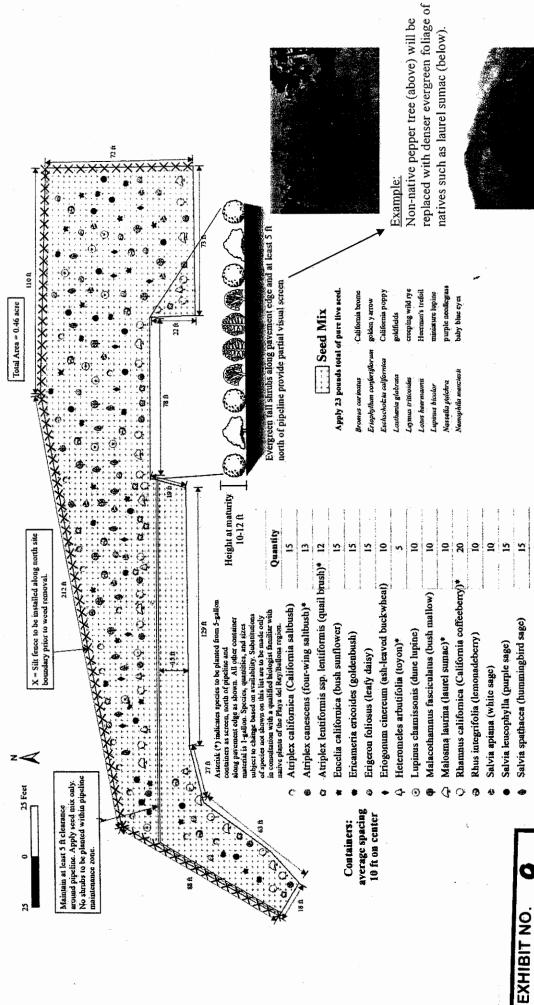


Exhibit D. Conceptual Planting Plan

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