W14c

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION NORTH COAST DISTRICT OFFICE 1385 8th STREET • SUITE 130 ARCATA, CA 95521 (707) 826-8950 FAX (707) 826-8960

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MEMORANDUM

Date: October 3, 2016

To: Commissioners and Interested Parties

From: Robert S. Merrill, District Manager – North Coast District

Subject: Addendum to Commission Meeting for Wednesday, October 5, 2016 North Coast District

| <u>AGENDA #</u> | APPLICANT | DESCRIPTION | PAGE |
|-----------------|---|---------------------------------------|-------|
| W14c | 1-16-0491 City of Crescent City | Correspondence from Eileen Cooper, | 14c-1 |
| | | Friends of Del Norte | |

Friends of Del Norte, Committed to our environment since 1973

A nonprofit, membership based conservation group, advocating sound environmental policies for our region. PO Box 229, Gasquet, CA 95543 Sept. 16, 2016

ATT: California Coastal Commission

Crescent City Council, Crescent City Planning, 377 J Street, Crescent City

btrudeau@crescentcity.org, etaylor@crescentcity.org

Regarding: Coastal access, Front Street Park improvements

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. The improved parking and picnic areas, as shown, would be welcomed enhancements to the park and along the existing coastal trail. New coastal access down to the tidal flats at the locations indicated will encourage human activity, with potential overuse at environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHA), especially Elk Creek. Increases in human disturbance activity can significantly degrade the biological productivity of the surrounding tidal flat ESHA below the revetment, which is extremely valuable resting and feeding habitat for shore birds along the Pacific Flyway. Therefore we are very concerned that educational signs and enforcement of the rules are provided. We have attached sample signage to use for education. And we have provided other photos that can be used for signs, with credit given to Alan Barron. Signs are needed at both access ways.

<u>Allowing for boating is an inappropriate new use, and would be very disruptive of ESHA.</u> Encouraging boating would frighten away resting shorebirds, and would significantly disturb important recreational activity, namely bird watching from the top of the revetment, or picnic area. Please reference our previous testimony regarding these issues, 2014.

We are thankful that the Elk Creek access has been moved farther west away from the most dense shorebird resting habitat surrounding Elk Creek, and that only stairs will be provided here. However we must have informative signage and enforcement of regulations about dogs on lease and harassment of migrating birds.

This area is a renowned hot birding spot, with dense assemblages of resting shore birds that migrate along the Pacific Flyway, including sensitive species such as brown pelicans. Brown Pelicans have recently been delisted. However, their future is in no way secured as in recent years (2012) there was a population crash with young birds perishing in great numbers from starvation. Brown Pelicans rest here in great numbers. Also, this area provides an important feeding area, where frequent anchovy and small fish runs during migration periods, saturate the shallow areas at this location, and provide easy catching for pelicans and others.

Bird watching is an extremely popular and satisfying recreational activity at Elk Creek and along all of Howe Drive. The Audubon Society, including chapters from Ashland, Kalmiopsis/Gold Beach, and Humboldt Redwood Region chapter, all conduct regular field trips to Del Norte County that include this area. This area is highlighted on ebird, an internet web site for birdwatchers that locates rewarding places to visit. Howe Drive near Elk Creek can be found mapped and listed as a special ebird hotspot, one of only a few regularly attended

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CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION NORTH COAST DISTRICT and reliably wonderful spots. Birdwatchers stand along the trail at the top, where the picnic area is proposed. They set up scopes and view with binoculars. They do not go down the rocky revetment and enter the tidal flats and resting habitat of the birds, lest they scare them away and ruin the bird watching experience for themselves and everyone else.

When rare birds show up (such as the skimmer in photos), birdwatchers travel from around the country, from Washington, Oregon, Southern California or farther, just to get a glimpse of a very rare bird. Some even fly across the country from the East Coast. Ebird alerts go out, and bring in lots of tourist dollars.

Currently 17 percent of the 800 or so North American bird species are in decline, and all 20 species on the Audubon Society's list of "common birds in decline" have lost at least half their population since 1970. Those kinds of stark numbers, repeated around the world, have made it disturbingly evident that cities need to provide habitat for breeding, shelter, and food. Where possible, the habitat needs to be arranged in corridors where wildlife can safely travel.

Thank you for your careful consideration and adjustments to this plan,

Eileen Cooper, FODN vice president on behalf of the board.

0765 - 6 Oct. 2007, Elk Creek mouth and tidal flat- about two hundred pelicans



3171(A) - 22 Nov. 2012, Pelicans at Elk Creek tidal flats



8602 - 6 Nov. 2009, Elk Creek mouth and tidal flats looking south, well over 100 pelicans



7493 - 10 May 2009, Tidal Flats west of proposed access, near west Howe Park, an incredible number of Bonaparte's gulls



7496 - 10 May 2009, slightly west of proposed access, an incredible number of beautiful Bonaparte's gulls



4029 - 3 Nov. 2005, nandsome Heermann's guils at Elk Creek soal hats



0168(2) - 13 July 2007 - First and only Del Norte Co. record of Black Skimmer, with a Caspian Tern, at Howe Park west

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W14c

| Filed: | 9/6/16 |
|------------------------|-------------|
| 180^{th} day: | 3/7/17 |
| Staff: | C. Kenyon-A |
| Staff Report: | 9/16/16 |
| Hearing Date: | 10/5/16 |

STAFF REPORT: REGULAR CALENDAR

| Application No.: | 1-16-0491 |
|-----------------------|---|
| Applicant: | City of Crescent City |
| Location: | Along the shoreline of Beachfront Park, off of Howe Drive, Crescent City, Del Norte County (APN 118-020-31). |
| Project Description: | Construct a beach access staircase and ADA-compliant ramp, pave an existing gravel parking lot, and install a sidewalk, picnic area, and educational signage. |
| Staff Recommendation: | Approval with conditions. |

SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Commission staff recommends approval of Coastal Development Permit (CDP) Permit Application 1-16-0491 with conditions.

The City of Crescent City proposes to make improvements to Beachfront Park that include the installation of a beach access staircase, a beach access ADA-compliant ramp, a 7,100-square-foot paved parking lot, a 9,000-square-foot picnic area, 171 lineal feet of sidewalk, and educational signage. Beachfront Park is a 35-acre, City-owned park on the northwest shore of the Crescent City Harbor.

1-16-0491 (City of Crescent City)

The proposed project will provide public access amenities that will enhance the public's use and enjoyment of the shoreline of Beachfront Park and help maximize public access consistent with the public access policies of the Coastal Act.

Staff recommends several special conditions to avoid or minimize potential impacts of the proposed development on coastal resources. The proposed project involves ground disturbance, paving, and the use of heavy equipment near the Crescent City Harbor and the mouth of Elk Creek that could result in sediments, debris, or hazardous materials entering coastal waters and impacting sensitive fish species and their habitat. To minimize temporary construction impacts to the biological productivity and quality of nearby coastal waters, staff recommends **Special Condition 2** requiring that a suite of BMPs be employed and **Special Condition 3** requiring a final plan for erosion and sediment control and pollution prevention during project construction.

The proposed beach access ramp and staircase will improve the accessibility of the beach which may result in a greater disruption of shorebird resting and foraging that occurs on the beach and adjacent creek mouth. Off-leash dogs in particular pose a harassment threat to the congregation of birds. To address this potential impact, the City proposes to install at least one educational sign informing the public about wildlife in the Harbor area and ways to prevent harassment. Staff recommends **Special Condition 4** to ensure educational signage is installed as proposed.

Construction of the project will result in the temporary closure of portions of Beachfront Park, including a portion of the beach and California Coastal Trail (CCT). Staff recommends **Special Condition 6** requiring submittal of a public access protection plan that demonstrates that the area and duration of public access closures are minimized and that the CCT is temporarily rerouted with adequate signage informing the public of the detour.

Staff believes that the proposed development, as conditioned, is consistent with all applicable Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act. The motion to adopt the staff recommendation of **approval** of Coastal Development Permit (CDP) 1-16-0491 with special conditions is found on page 4.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Substantive File Documents

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1 Regional Location Map
- Exhibit 2 Vicinity Maps
- Exhibit 3 Project Plans
- $\frac{\text{Exhibit } 6}{\text{Exhibit } 4} \text{Site Drainage and Temporary California Coastal Trail Detour}$ $\frac{\text{Exhibit } 5}{\text{Exhibit } 5} \text{Beachfront Park Master Plan}$

I. MOTION AND RESOLUTION

The staff recommends that the Commission adopt the following resolution:

Motion:

I move that the Commission approve coastal development permit 1-16-0491 pursuant to the staff recommendation.

Staff recommends a **YES** vote on the foregoing motion. 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:

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. 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

This permit is granted subject to the following 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 of 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.

III. SPECIAL CONDITIONS

This permit is granted subject to the following special conditions:

1. Final Plans

- A. PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT NO. 1-16-0491, the applicant shall submit for review and written approval by the Executive Director, final plans in substantial conformance with the preliminary plans attached as Exhibit 3.
- B. The permittee shall undertake development in accordance with the approved plans. Any proposed changes to the approved plans shall be reported to the Executive Director. No changes to the plans shall occur without a Coastal Commission approved amendment to this coastal development permit unless the Executive Director determines that no amendment is legally required.
- 2. **Construction Responsibilities.** The permittee shall comply with the following construction-related requirements:
 - A. <u>Timing of construction:</u>
 - i. Access ramp construction shall be limited to the period of the year after the flowering of the Wolf's evening primrose (after mid-September);
 - ii. All ground-disturbing activities and asphaltic-concrete paving operations shall occur during dry weather only; and
 - iii. If rainfall is forecasted during the time construction activities are being performed (i.e., the National Weather Service's Northwestern California forecast for the Crescent City sub-area of the Redwood Coast predicts a greater than 50 percent chance of precipitation for the timeframe in which the work is to be conducted), all onsite stockpiles shall be covered and secured, and any exposed soil areas shall be promptly mulched with weed-free straw or covered with sheeting and secured with sand bagging or other appropriate materials before the onset of precipitation.
 - B. <u>Erosion and sediment control</u>:
 - i. Upon completion of construction activities and prior to the onset of rainfall, all bare soil areas shall be seeded. No plant species listed as problematic and/or invasive by the California Native Plant Society, the California Invasive Plant Council, or by the State of California shall be planted or allowed to naturalize or persist. No plant species listed as a "noxious weed" by the State of California or the U.S. Federal Government shall be planted;
 - ii. Sediment control BMPs including fiber rolls and silt fencing shall be installed as proposed prior to and maintained throughout the construction period to trap and remove eroded sediment from runoff, to prevent sedimentation of coastal waters;

- iii. To minimize wildlife entanglement and plastic debris pollution, temporary rolled erosion and sediment control products (such as fiber rolls and silt fencing) that incorporate plastic netting (such as polypropylene, nylon, polyethylene, polyester, or other synthetic fibers) shall not be used. Acceptable alternatives include erosion and sediment control products without netting, products made with loose-weave natural fiber netting, and unreinforced silt fences;
- iv. Staging and storage of construction equipment and materials (including debris) shall not take place on the beach. Staging and storage of construction equipment and materials shall occur on paved surfaces at least 50 feet from coastal waters, drainage courses, and storm drain inlets;
- v. All on-site stockpiles of soil and construction debris shall be contained at all times and shall be covered during storm events to minimize discharge of sediment and other pollutants;
- vi. Any excess excavated material and other construction debris resulting from construction activities shall be removed immediately upon completion of component construction, and shall be disposed of at a disposal site outside the coastal zone or within the coastal zone pursuant to a valid coastal development permit; and
- vii. BMPs for concrete paving and grinding operations and storm drain inlet protection shall be employed to prevent concrete grindings, concrete slurry, and paving rinseate from entering drop inlets or sheet-flowing into coastal waters. No concrete shall be poured below mean high water (MHW).
- C. <u>Use of heavy equipment</u>:
 - i. Heavy equipment shall only be operated from upland areas to minimize the generation of suspended sediment and potential water quality impacts;
 - Fuels, lubricants, and solvents shall not be allowed to enter coastal waters or wetlands. All equipment used during construction shall be free of oil and fuel leaks at all times. Any fueling, equipment maintenance, concrete washout, and washing of construction equipment shall occur at least 100 feet away from coastal waters; and
 - iii. Hazardous materials management equipment including oil containment booms and absorbent pads shall be available immediately on-hand at the project site. Any accidental spill shall be rapidly contained and cleaned up.
- D. <u>Protection of beach access</u>:
 - i. All beaches, beach access points, and other recreational use areas impacted by construction activities shall be restored to their pre-construction condition or better within three days of completion of construction. Any beach sand impacted shall be filtered as necessary to remove all construction debris from the beach.

3. Final Erosion and Sediment Control and Pollution Prevention Plan

A. PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT NO. 1-16-0491, the applicant shall submit an erosion and sediment control and pollution prevention plan to the Executive Director for review and approval.

- i. The plan shall demonstrate that temporary construction impacts to the biological productivity and quality of nearby coastal waters shall be minimized during project construction consistent with the provisions of Special Condition 2.
- ii. The plan shall include a construction site map and a narrative description addressing, at a minimum, the following required components:
 - a. A map delineating the construction site, construction phasing boundaries, and the location of all temporary construction-phase BMPs (including silt fences, fiber rolls, and inlet protection).
 - b. A description of the BMPs that will be implemented to minimize erosion and sedimentation, control runoff and minimize the discharge of other pollutants resulting from construction activities.
 - c. A schedule for the management of all construction-phase BMPs (including installation and removal, ongoing operation, inspection, maintenance, and training).
- B. 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.

4. **Final Design Plans for Signage**

- A. RIOR TO ISSUANCE OF COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT NO. 1-16-0491, the applicant shall submit a plan for the installation and maintenance of proposed educational signage to the Executive Director for review and approval. The plan shall include at least one sign informing park users about local wildlife in the Harbor area including resting and feeding waterbirds and ways to prevent harassment including local leash laws.
 - i. The plan shall demonstrate that:
 - a. The signage shall be posted conspicuously;
 - b. The signage shall be low with a slanted top so as not to obstruct views from public vantage points;
 - c. The signage shall be weather resistant and permanent;
 - d. The signage shall be maintained and replaced as necessary over the life of the beach access staircase; and
 - e. The signage shall be installed within 180 days of issuance of the coastal development permit unless additional time is granted by the Executive Director for good cause.
 - i. The plan shall include, at a minimum, the following components:
 - a. A map or site plan showing the location of all signage;
 - b. A depiction of information to be displayed on signage;
 - c. A description of the dimensions, materials, and colors of all signs;
 - d. Signage maintenance procedures; and
 - e. A schedule for installation of the signage.

- B. The permittee shall undertake development in accordance with the approval 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.
- 5. Assumption of Risk, Waiver of Liability and Indemnity. By acceptance of this permit, the permittee acknowledges and agrees (i) that the site may be subject to hazards, including but not limited to waves, storms, earthquake shaking, liquefaction, tsunami inundation, flooding, and erosion, many of which will worsen with future sea level rise; (ii) to assume the risks to the permittee and the property that is the subject of this permit of injury and damage from such hazards in connection with this permitted development; (iii) to unconditionally waive any claim of damage or liability against the Commission, its officers, agents, and employees for injury or damage from such hazards; and (iv) to indemnify and hold harmless the Commission, its officers, agents, and employees with respect to the Commission's approval of the project against any and all liability, claims, demands, damages, costs (including costs and fees incurred in defense of such claims), expenses, and amounts paid in settlement arising from any injury or damage due to such hazards.

6. Public Access Protection Plan

- A. PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT NO. 1-16-0491, the applicant shall submit, for the review and written approval of the Executive Director, a Public Access Protection Plan to minimize impacts to public access within Beachfront Park including access to the beach and California Coastal Trail (CCT) during and following construction activities authorized under this coastal development permit.
 - i. The plan shall demonstrate:
 - a. The portions of the park, beach, and CCT to be temporarily closed to the public for construction-related public safety purposes shall be minimized;
 - b. The duration of closure for construction-related public safety purposes shall be minimized and shall not exceed 90 days total, unless the Executive Director grants in writing for good cause additional time as needed;
 - c. The CCT shall be temporarily rerouted around project construction on alternative paved paths in order to provide a continuous multi-use bicycle/pedestrian path through the park throughout construction; and
 - d. Adequate signage shall be posted informing the public about the closure of public access areas and the temporary rerouting of the CCT.
 - ii. The plan shall include, at a minimum, the following components:
 - a. A narrative description of the proposed temporary access control measures to be used;
 - b. Depictions of the dimensions and content of signage informing the public of the changes to public access during project construction activities;
 - c. A site plan showing the route of the CCT detour around the construction areas, where any proposed temporary access barriers would be installed,

where signage would be placed, and which portions of the site would be closed to public access use; and

- d. A schedule of the estimated dates when the proposed temporary access control measures would be installed/implemented and removed/terminated.
- B. 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 hereby finds and declares as follows:

A. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The City of Crescent City proposes to construct coastal access improvements including a staircase and ADA-compliant ramp to the beach, a paved parking area, a sidewalk, and a picnic area in Beachfront Park in Crescent City, Del Norte County (Exhibits 1-2). Beachfront Park is bordered by the Crescent City Harbor and a narrow beach to the south, Front Street and Crescent City's central business district grid to the north, B Street and the City's Wastewater Treatment Plan to the west, and the mouth of Elk Creek to the east. Howe Drive and the California Coastal Trail (CCT) run along the southern edge of the park and are separated from the narrow beach below by a rock revetment on the east side of the park and a line of riprap on the west side of the park. There is currently no formalized path over this shoreline armoring material to the beach.

Howe Park East

The majority of the proposed improvements including the staircase, parking lot, sidewalk, and picnic area would occur in the southeastern portion of the park in a location called "Howe Park East" where Stamps Way and Howe Drive terminate at their intersection adjacent to the CCT and a large gravel parking lot on a terrace above the beach. In this location, The City proposes to install a concrete staircase to connect the CCT that runs along the southern edge of Howe Drive at its intersection with Stamps Way to the beach below (an elevation difference of approximately 7.5 feet). The City also proposes to pave a 7,100-square-foot portion of the existing gravel parking lot and stripe 11 parking spaces, including one new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant space. A second ADA space would be striped on Howe Drive to the west of its intersection with Stamps Way and the newly proposed beach staircase. The City proposes to convert the remainder of the existing gravel parking area into three individual 22-foot-diameter paved picnic areas surrounded by grassy field. Each of the three picnic areas would include a picnic bench, fire-pit, and barbeque. 171 lineal feet of six-foot-wide sidewalk would be installed around the northern and eastern edges of the paved parking lot that would connect existing sidewalk along Stamps Way to the CCT and newly proposed picnic area. The City also proposes to install educational signage at the top of the new staircase informing the public about local wildlife in the Harbor area including resting and feeding waterbirds that congregate nearby at the mouth of Elk Creek, and about ways to prevent harassment of wildlife including local leash laws. See Exhibit 3, pages 6-9 for plan sheets depicting proposed improvements to Howe Park East.

As previously described, the proposed staircase would be built on top of the existing unengineered revetment which is comprised of irregular rock boulders and concrete rubble. According to the City's engineer, one large piece of the existing revetment may need to be chipped or moved before additional rock slope protection (RSP) would be placed on top of the existing revetment and grouted to create a consistent slope for the staircase. A polyethylene bond breaker would then be placed on top of the grout backfill so that any shifting of the rock revetment would not compromise the structural integrity of the staircase. Finally, the concrete staircase would be poured in place. Approximately 15 tons of asphalt would need to be removed to construct a landing for the staircase. The City plans to crush the asphalt and reuse it as a subbase for the parking lot. Any debris that cannot be recycled would be loaded onto trucks and delivered to the Del Norte Transfer Station for disposal.

Staging for construction in Howe Park East would be located on the paved surface of Stamps Way (See Plan Sheet C-6, Exhibit 3, pg. 6). During construction, the right lane of Stamps Way would be closed to vehicular traffic and the left lane would be divided into two lanes to allow continued vehicular access to the harbor-side of the park. The CCT would also be temporarily rerouted around the project construction and staging areas, meeting back up with its existing route where it runs between the City's pool and Elk Creek. The City estimates that project construction would take no longer than 90 days.

Howe Park West

The proposed ADA-compliant coastal access ramp would be installed in the southwestern portion of the park in an area known as "Howe Park West." In Howe Park West, there is a staircase and ramp connecting Howe Drive and the CCT to a picnic area below developed with picnic benches, fire pits, and a paved pathway. A string of riprap separates this picnic area from the beach, with only a minor elevation difference (approximately 4.5 feet). The proposed ramp would extend approximately 100 feet from the existing paved pathway in the picnic area to the beach with an eight-foot-wide path of travel. Any existing riprap would be removed before pouring the concrete ramp in place. The ramp's waterside footing would be poured to a depth of three feet and lined with riprap to prevent undercutting by waves. Existing riprap from the surrounding beach would be used and would be supplemented by imported RSP. See Exhibit 3, pages 2-5 for plan sheets depicting proposed improvements to Howe Park West.

Staging for construction in Howe Park West would also be located on the paved surface of Stamps Way (See Plan Sheet C-6). The City estimates that construction of the ramp would only take one to two days.

No work or fill is proposed at an elevation below mean high water (MHW). Some existing riprap would be removed in the vicinity of the access ramp and new riprap would be installed to protect the staircase and access ramp, but all removal and placement of riprap would occur at a minimum of two feet about MHW. In total the project would require a maximum of 600 tons of new riprap.

B. SETTING & BACKGROUND

The proposed project is located in Beachfront Park, an approximately 35-acre, City-owned park on the northwest shore of the Crescent City Harbor (Exhibits 1-3). Historically, the project site was located approximately 800 feet out in the Crescent City Harbor. In 1964, the Great Alaska Earthquake set in motion a tsunami down the west coast of the U.S. that decimated the Crescent City Harbor and approximately 30 city blocks. After the tsunami, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dredged the harbor and placed the spoils along the coastline to create present day Beachfront Park. A rock revetment was installed between the park and harbor to protect the shoreline. There is currently no formalized path over this rock revetment from the park to the beach.

Beachfront Park is currently developed with several facilities and amenities including a cultural center, swimming pool, marine mammal center, horseshoe pits, large play structure, picnic areas, a disk golf course, and a number of open lawns. A multimodal section of the CCT also runs through the park, connecting the park with Battery Point Park and B Street pier to the west and the City-owned RV park and Crescent City Harbor to the east. The City's locally adopted Beachfront Park Master Plan recommends the development of a picnic area, paved parking lot, and trail down to the beach such as proposed under the current CDP application (Exhibit 5).

The adjacent Crescent City Harbor waters provide habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife species. Coho salmon (Oncorhynchus kisutch) pass seasonally through the harbor as they make their migration to and from spawning grounds within the Elk Creek drainage, and marine mammals, including the Steller sea lion (*Eumetopias jubatus*), utilize harbor sites as haul-outs and for feeding. Beachfront Park supports a scattered population of Wolf's evening primrose (*Oenothera wolfii*), a rare plant with a state ranking of S1¹ and a California Rare Plant Rank of 1B.1.²

C. STANDARD OF REVIEW

The proposed project is located within the Commission's retained jurisdiction. The City of Crescent City has a certified local coastal program (LCP), but the site is within an area shown on State Lands Commission maps over which the state retains a public trust interest. Therefore, the standard of review that the Commission must apply to the development is the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act.

D. OTHER AGENCY APPROVALS

No other agency approvals are required. The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, Army Corps of Engineers, and National Marine Fisheries Service have each reviewed the project plans and determined that the project is not subject to the agency's permitting or consultation under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or Section 7(a) of the Endangered Species Act, respectively. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) staff have also reviewed the project and have not raised any issues.

¹ Plants with an S1 rank are critically imperiled in California.

² Plants with a 1B rank are rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere, and the .1 threat rank indicates that the species is seriously threatened in California (over 80% of occurrences threatened/ high degree and immediacy of threat).

E. PROTECTION OF MARINE RESOURCES & WATER QUALITY

Section 30230 of the Coastal Act states, in applicable part:

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 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.

Construction-Related Impacts on Water Quality

The proposed project involves ground disturbance, paving, and the use of heavy equipment adjacent to the Crescent City Harbor that could result in sediment, debris, or hazardous materials entering coastal waters and impacting sensitive fish species and their habitat. To protect nearby marine resources, the City proposes a number of erosion and sediment control and pollution prevention measures during project construction including: (a) staging all equipment on the upper terrace of the park on paved surfaces; (b) installing silt fencing and fiber rolls as perimeter sediment control barriers; (c) covering exposed surfaces with straw mulch for soil stabilization; (d) seeding all bare soils with natural turf after the completion of construction; (e) managing concrete waste to minimize or eliminate the discharge of concrete waste materials to the storm drain system or other watercourses; and (f) following BMPs for construction vehicle and equipment cleaning, fueling, and maintenance.

To further minimize temporary construction impacts to the biological productivity and quality of nearby coastal waters, the Commission imposes **Special Condition 2**. Special Condition 2 requires that a suite of BMPs be employed during the construction of the project, including, but not limited to: (a) performance of all ground disturbing activities and asphaltic-concrete paving operations during dry-weather periods only; (b) seeding of bare soils upon completion of construction activities and prior to the onset of rainfall; (c) installation of fiber rolls and silt fencing as proposed prior to, and maintained throughout, the construction period; (d) staging and storage of construction equipment and materials on paved surfaces at least 50 feet from coastal waters, drainage courses, and storm drain inlets; (e) containment of all on-site stockpiles of soil and construction debris; (f) removal and disposal of any excess excavated material and construction debris resulting from construction activities at a disposal site outside the coastal zone

or within the coastal zone pursuant to a valid coastal development permit; (g) utilization of concrete paving and grinding operational constraints and inlet protection barriers around drop inlets; (h) operation of heavy equipment from upland areas only and (i) maintenance of adequate supplies of hazardous materials spill prevention and clean-up equipment on site.

As the water quality BMPs proposed by the applicant lack specificity as to the location of measures to be employed, the Commission also attaches **Special Condition 3** requiring that a final erosion and sediment control and pollution prevention plan be submitted to the Executive Director prior to permit issuance that includes a construction site map identifying the location of all temporary construction-phase BMPs proposed and required by Special Condition 2, as applicable, a narrative description of the BMPs to be implemented, and a schedule for the management of all BMPs.

Post-Construction Stormwater Management

The proposed paving of the parking lot will result in 7,100 square feet of additional impervious surface. Impervious surfaces block the natural infiltration of rainfall into the ground, which can increase the volume and rate of stormwater runoff, change the timing and duration of runoff flows, and impede the filtration of pollutants that naturally occurs in soil. Such blockage of rainfall infiltration could lead to problems in the watershed such as flooding, diminished groundwater replenishment, decreased stream base flows, higher stream temperatures, altered salinity in estuaries, and increased pollutant transport to waterways and the ocean.

However, the site of the proposed paved parking lot and picnic area is currently a gravel parking lot with a heavily compacted surface with limited ability to infiltrate runoff. Although a 7,100-square-foot portion of this existing gravel lot will be paved, an approximately 9,000-square-foot portion will be converted to grassland with an overall increase in permeability. In addition, the new paved lot will be sloped inland towards a grated drop inlet where it will flow through a pipe to an adjacent grassy field in Beachfront Park (See Exhibit 4 for a depiction of proposed stormwater management). An energy dissipater will be installed on the end of the pipe to prevent the pipe's outfall from scouring the adjacent field. The runoff will flow across the gently sloping field for over 300 feet before reaching a culvert near the swimming pool, allowing the field to filter and absorb the water prior to any discharge to coastal waters.

Impacts to Elk Creek

Howe Park East, the proposed location of the access staircase, picnic area, sidewalk, and paved parking lot, is located in close proximity to the mouth of Elk Creek. Elk Creek is a Class 1, Third Order coastal stream that supports small runs of anadromous and resident salmonids, including coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), and cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki*). In addition, the mouth of Elk Creek and surrounding tidal flats attract a large congregation of resting and foraging birds. One birding guide of Del Norte County describes the mouth of Elk Creek as an excellent spot to view Western, Glaucous-winged, Mew, California, Heermann's and Herring Gull, Caspian Tern, Elegant Tern, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Western Grebe, Osprey, Great Egret, Red Phalarope, Whimbrel and Sanderling.³ Originally the City proposed to construct the beach access ramp and staircase as a combined facility near the mouth of the creek. However, because of concerns raised

³ <u>http://www.oregoncoastbirding.com/PDFs/5%20California%20Redwoods%20Listings.pdf</u>

by the public and USFWS, the project was moved further west to minimize disturbance to resting and feeding birds. The ramp is now proposed across the park in Howe Park West, and the beach access staircase is proposed at the terminus of Stamps Way, over 350 feet from the mouth of Elk Creek. In addition to being further away from Elk Creek, the proposed ramp location is much lower in elevation than the location originally proposed and requires only a 100-foot-long ramp rather than a 200-foot-long ramp.

The proposed beach access ramp and staircase will improve the accessibility of the beach. Although the beach is already heavily used, this improved access could encourage even greater use which could result in a greater disruption of shorebird resting and foraging that occurs on the beach and adjacent creek mouth. Off leash dogs in particular pose a harassment threat to the congregation of birds. To address this potential impact, the City proposes to install at least one educational sign informing the public about wildlife in the Harbor area and ways to prevent harassment, including information about birds that congregate at the mouth of Elk Creek and local leash laws. To ensure that the educational signage is installed as proposed, the Commission attaches **Special Condition 4** which requires that the applicant submit, prior to permit issuance, a plan for the installation and maintenance of the signage. The signage shall be sited in a conspicuous location at the top of the beach access staircase to help educate the public on practices to prevent impacts to marine resources including resting and feeding shorebirds, wading birds, seabirds, and other bird species.

Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed development, as conditioned, will maintain and enhance marine resources and the biological productivity and quality of coastal waters consistent with the requirements of Sections 30230 and 30231 of the Coastal Act.

F. ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE HABITAT AREAS (ESHA)

Coastal Act Section 30107.5 defines "environmentally sensitive area" as:

...any area in which plant or animal life or their habitats are either rare or especially valuable because of their special nature or role in an ecosystem and which could be easily disturbed or degraded by human activities and developments.

Coastal Act Section 30240 states that:

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

(b) Development in areas adjacent to environmentally sensitive habitat areas and parks and recreation areas shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts which would significantly degrade those areas, and shall be compatible with the continuance of those habitat and recreation areas.

Wolf's evening primrose (*Oenothera wolfii*), a rare plant with a state ranking of S1 and a California Rare Plant Rank of 1B.1, is found in various locations throughout Beachfront Park, including Howe Park West, the site of the proposed beach access ramp. Wolf's evening primrose

is found in coastal sand dunes, bluffs, and sandy roadsides along the Pacific coast north of Cape Mendocino in northern California and southern Oregon. The greatest threat to this rare, native species is hybridization with *Oenothera glazioviana*, an introduced ornamental. The hybrid appears to be more aggressive than either parent, displacing the native Wolf's evening primrose and threatening its genetic integrity. Because Wolf's evening primrose genetic integrity and persistence is threatened by hybridization, the establishment of genetically pure populations in areas isolated from *Oenothera glazioviana* and hybrid individuals is critical to saving this rare species (Center for Plant Conservation, 2010). The City is currently maintaining a Wolf's Evening Primrose mitigation area to the west of the project site by the Battery Point Lighthouse access ramp (as mitigation for prior construction projects in Beachfront Park). This approximately 1,100-square-foot mitigation area includes existing primrose plants augmented by seed from other local, uncompromised (i.e., genetically pure) populations that is being maintained free of competing vegetation and non-native *Oenothera glazioviana*.

On July 19, 2016, Dave Imper, a former USFWS ecologist and expert on the rare plant, visited the project site and determined that approximately 10 plants would be eliminated by the proposed beach access ramp. He noted that the flowering individuals showed a number of morphological characteristics typical of Wolf's evening primrose, but had questionable purity, in part due to the abnormally large size of flowers which are typical of the nonnative ornamental (Carlson & Meinke, 2008). Because of the serious threat of genetic dilution to the endemic Pacific coast's Wolf's evening primrose posed by hybrid plants, the habitats of these hybrid plants are not considered to be environmentally sensitive habitat area (ESHA).

Although the construction of the ramp will not displace any genetically pure native rare plants, there may be other genetically pure native rare plant individuals nearby in the project vicinity that could be impacted by project construction. Wolf's evening primrose is typically a biennial, germinating during the first year and producing rosettes that then bolt in the spring of the second growing season and produce flowers by May or June. Seed set occurs in August and September, followed by senescence (Imper, 1997). Disturbance of any Primrose habitat prior to the natural dispersal of seed from the plants would impair the regeneration of native Primrose at the site. If instead the Primrose individuals are allowed to naturally disperse seed prior to construction, Primrose plants would have the opportunity to regenerate in accordance with the plant's normal life cycle and the subsequent disturbance is less likely to cause any significant adverse harm to the species. Therefore, Special Condition 2(A)(i) requires that construction of the beach access ramp, which is estimated to take two days, to be limited to the period of the year after the flowering of the Wolf's evening primrose (after mid-September). As conditioned, the Commission finds that the development will not significantly degrade nearby ESHA and will be compatible with the continuance of all habitat areas. Therefore, the Commission finds that the project as conditioned is consistent with Section 30240(b) of the Coastal Act.

G. HAZARDS

Section 30253 of the Coastal Act states in applicable part:

New development shall do all of the following:

(1) Minimize risks to life and property in areas of high geologic, flood, and

fire hazard.

(2) Assure stability and structural integrity, and neither create nor contribute significantly to erosion, geologic instability, or destruction of the site or surrounding area or in any way require the construction of protective devices that would substantially alter natural landforms along bluffs and cliffs...

Section 30253 requires in part that new development minimize risk to life and property in areas of high geologic and flood hazards, assure structural integrity and stability, and neither create nor contribute significantly to erosion. The project entails development in an area subject to significant exposure to geologic and flood hazards including strong earthquake shaking, liquefaction, erosion, tsunami inundation, and flooding from wave run-up and storm surge.

The proposed ramp and staircase will be located above mean higher high water to minimize shoreline dynamic impacts on the structures. However, the structures will still be affected by the highest high tides combined with storm surge. The ramp and staircase have been designed to ensure their geological stability and structural integrity by a registered civil engineer with experience in coastal structures and processes. The access ramp's waterside footing will be poured to a depth of three feet and lined with ½-ton RSP to prevent undercutting by waves. The proposed staircase will be structurally isolated from the underlying existing revetment to avoid any impacts from possible differential shifting of the unengineered revetment. In addition, both the ramp and staircase will be composed of concrete, a strong, non-corrosive material, to minimize maintenance needs and to withstand occasional inundation. Furthermore, the RSP proposed to reinforce the structures has been designed assuming five foot storm waves in the event that a coinciding high tide and storm result in wave action on the structures.

Section 30253(b) also requires that new development not create nor contribute significantly to erosion. Although the staircase and ramp are forms of hard armoring along the Crescent City Harbor's shoreline, the structures will not significantly increase the deflection of waves and tidal surge that could cause increased up-coast or down-coast erosion as the shoreline areas within which the new staircase and ramp will be located are already armored. The staircase will be located within an existing rock revetment armoring the beach in Howe Park East and the ramp will replace existing riprap lining the beach in Howe Park West. In addition, as previously discussed, both structures will be located above MHW so they will not impede any current flows.

Under sea level rise, the proposed ramp and staircase may be exposed to an increased level of periodic inundation as a result of high tide and storm events. The State of California supported the preparation of the 2012 National Research Council (NRC)'s report, Sea-Level Rise for the Coasts of California, Oregon and Washington: Past, Present, and Future, which is currently considered the best available science on sea level rise for Del Norte County. For areas north of Cape Mendocino, the NRC projects -2 to 9 inches of sea level rise by 2030, -1 to 19 inches by 2050, and 4-56 inches by 2100.⁴ The present MHW elevation in the project vicinity is 5.9 feet, while the

⁴ Year 2000 sea level is the baseline for these projections. The NRC Committee divided the Pacific coast for California, Oregon and Washington into two regions, north and south of Cape Mendocino, due to differences in tectonics that occur at this point. North of Cape Mendocino, land is rising by 1.5 to 3.0 mm/yr as ocean plates descend below the North American plate at the Cascadia Subduction Zone.

proposed access staircase has an upper landing elevation of 17 feet and a lower landing elevation of 9.5 feet.⁵ Therefore the proposed staircase can accommodate 3.6 feet (43 inches) of sea level rise without any part of the structure being inundated by MHW. The proposed access ramp ranges in elevation from 11.8 feet where it connects to the existing path to 7.3 feet at its terminus on the beach. Therefore the proposed ramp can accommodate 1.4 feet of sea level rise without any part of the structure being inundated by MHW. With the worst case scenario future MHW for 2050 (present day elevation of 7.5 feet), only the lowest portion of the ramp would be submerged at MHW. Both the ramp and staircase are armored with riprap and designed to withstand wave action and inundation. Furthermore, neither structure is a critical structure necessary for the protection of life or property.

In light of the aforementioned hazards, the Commission attaches **Special Condition 5**, which requires the City to assume the risks of flooding and geologic hazards to the property and waive any claim of liability on the part of the Commission. Given that the permittee has chosen to implement the project despite flooding and geologic risks, the permittee must assume the risks. Special Condition 5 notifies the permittee that the Commission is not liable for damage as a result of approving the permit for development. The condition also requires the permittee to indemnify the Commission in the event that third parties bring an action against the Commission as a result of the failure of the development to withstand the hazards.

As discussed above, the project as conditioned will not eliminate all risk to life and property from geologic and flood hazards. However, all feasible mitigation measures necessary to minimize the flood and geologic risks have been incorporated into the project as conditioned. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed project, as conditioned, will minimize risk to life and property from hazards, consistent with Section 30253 of the Coastal Act.

H. PUBLIC ACCESS & RECREATION

Section 30210 of the Coastal Act requires that maximum public access shall be provided consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect natural resource areas from overuse. Section 30212 of the Coastal Act requires that access from the nearest public roadway to the shoreline be provided in new development projects, except where it is inconsistent with public safety, military security, or protection of fragile coastal resources, or where adequate access exists nearby. Section 30211 of the Coastal Act requires that development not interfere with the public's right to access gained by use or legislative authorization. Section 30214 of the Coastal Act provides that the public access policies of the Coastal Act shall be implemented in a manner that takes into account the capacity of the site and the fragility of natural resources in the area. Section 30221 of the Coastal Act require that oceanfront land suitable for recreational use shall be protected for recreational use and development unless already adequately provided for in the area. In applying Sections 30210, 30211, 30212, 30214, and 30221, the Commission is also limited by the need to show that any denial of a permit application based on these sections or any decision to grant a permit subject to special conditions requiring public access is necessary to avoid or offset a project's adverse impact on existing or potential access.

⁵ Elevations quoted by the City are based on Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW).

1-16-0491 (City of Crescent City)

The proposed project is located in Beachfront Park, an approximately 35-acre park located on the northwest shore of the Crescent City Harbor that includes open sports fields, playgrounds, picnicking areas, and other public recreational and assembly facilities (Exhibits 1-2). The proposed project will add a number of public access and recreational facilities and amenities to the park including a beach access ramp and staircase, a picnic area, a sidewalk, a paved parking lot, and education signage. Although the beach below Beachfront Park is heavily frequented, there are currently no formal, safe, or ADA-accessible paths to the beach that cross over either the rock revetment along the beach in Howe Park East or a line of riprap along the beach in Howe Park West. The proposed ramp in Howe Park West will create ADA-compliant access to the Beachfront Park beach, opening the beach to a wider array of users. The proposed staircase in Howe Park East will provide an alternative means to reach the beach other than climbing down the rock revetment. The revetment was not constructed for public access and constant use for that purpose has caused deterioration to the revetment and surrounding area. The installation of a facility designed to handle pedestrian traffic will minimize the negative impacts to the coastline while creating a safe access point for the public.

The proposed project includes the conversion of an approximately 9,000-square-foot portion of a public gravel parking lot into a picnic area. However, ample parking exists nearby in the park, including on-street, pull-in parking located along Howe Drive between the road and the CCT. In addition, the proposed picnic area will provide significant new amenities for public access users as the picnic area will create a space along the CCT for people to stop and rest and enjoy views of the Crescent City harbor and the mouth of Elk Creek.

Construction of the project will result in the temporary closure of the left lane of Stamps Way between Howe Drive and Play Street for a staging area. To keep public vehicular access open during construction, the right lane will be temporarily converted to a two-lane road. In addition, alternative vehicular access from B Street and Howe Drive to the west will remain open.

Construction will also result in the temporary closure of the portion of the CCT that runs through Howe Park East (from just west of the terminus of Stamps Way to the City's public pool). The trail will be rerouted around the construction area during this time resulting in a longer, less direct route through the park that is further from coastal waters (See Exhibit 4 for a depiction of the temporary trail detour). In addition, people will not be able to access a portion of the picnic area and beach in Howe Park West while the beach access ramp is being constructed, or the gravel parking lot or a portion of the beach in Howe Park East while the beach access staircase, paved parking lot, and picnic area are being constructed. However, the impacts on the use of the facilities will be temporary; the City estimates that the entire project will take less than 90 days to construct. In addition, the majority of Beachfront Park as well as the inner harbor beach areas, the B Street Fishing Pier, and the Battery Point Lighthouse will remain open to public access and recreational use throughout construction.

To ensure that the project's impact on public access is temporary and minimized, the Commission attaches **Special Condition 6**. This condition requires submittal of a public access protection plan prior to permit issuance for the Executive Director's review and approval. The access plan must demonstrate that (a) the areas to be temporarily closed to the public for construction-related public safety purposes shall be minimized; (b) the duration of closure for construction-related public

safety purposes shall be minimized and shall not exceed 90 days total, unless the Executive Director grants in writing for good cause additional time as needed to ensure public safety; (c) the CCT shall be temporarily rerouted to provide a continuous multi-use bicycle/pedestrian path through the park throughout construction; and (d) adequate signage shall be maintained during project construction informing the public about the closure of public access areas and the CCT detour. **Special Condition 2** (Construction Responsibilities) also requires that all beaches, beach access points, and other recreational use areas impacted by construction activities be restored to their pre-construction condition or better within three days of completion of construction, and that beach sand be filtered as necessary to remove all construction debris from the beach.

Therefore the Commission finds that the proposed development will not have any significant adverse effects on public access and recreation, and is consistent with the requirements of Coastal Act Sections 30210, 30211, 30212, 30214, and 30221.

I. CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)

The City of Crescent City served as the lead agency for the project for CEQA purposes. The City adopted two Mitigated Negative Declarations for the project, one for the Howe Park East Improvements and one for the Howe Park West ADA Coastal Access Ramp. Section 13906 of the Commission's administrative regulation requires Coastal Commission approval of CDP applications to be supported by a finding showing the application, as modified by any conditions of approval, is 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 any feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available, which would substantially lessen any significant adverse effect the proposed development may have on the environment.

The Commission incorporates its findings on Coastal Act consistency at this point as if set forth in full. As discussed above, the proposed project has been conditioned to be consistent with the policies of the Coastal Act. The findings address and respond to all public comments regarding potential significant adverse environmental effects of the project on coastal resources that were received prior to preparation of the staff report. As conditioned, there are no other feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impacts which the activity may have on the environment. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed project, as conditioned to mitigate the identified impacts, can be found consistent with the requirements of the Coastal Act to conform to CEQA.

APPENDIX A SUBSTANTIVE FILE DOCUMENTS

Application File for Coastal Development Permit No. 1-16-0491.

- California Redwood Birding Trail: Del Norte County. Sponsored in part by the National Forest Foundation, USFWS, and Oregon Coast Visitors Association. Retrieved from <u>http://www.oregoncoastbirding.com/PDFs/5%20California%20Redwoods%20Listings.pdf</u>
- Carlson, M.L. & Meinke, R.J. (2008, June). Hybridization between a rare and introduced Oenothera along the North Pacific Coast. Western North American Naturalist 68(2), pp. 161-172.
- Center for Plant Conservation (2010). CPC National Collection Plant Profile: *Oenothera wolfii*. Retrieved from <u>https://web.archive.org/web/20150918173701/http://www.centerforplantconservation.org/</u> <u>Collection/CPC_ViewProfile.asp?CPCNum=3004</u>
- Imper, D.K. (1997). Ecology and conservation of Wolf's evening primrose in northwestern California. In Kaye, T.N., A. Liston, R.M. Love, D.L. Luoma, R.J. Meinke, and M.V. Wilson, eds. Conservation and management of native plants and fungi. Native Plant Society of Oregon, Corvallis, Oregon.







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