

July 29, 2020

Hon. Steve Padilla, Chair  
California Coastal Commission  
455 Market Street  
Suite 300  
San Francisco CA 94105

## F12a

**SUBJECT:** *De Novo* Coastal Development Permit Application, Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI) Field Staging Building, APN 133-252-001, Appeal A-3- MCO -17-0068

Dear Mr. Chairman,

The Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute ("MBARI") wishes to advise the Coastal Commission that we endorse the recommendation for approval in the report dated July 24, 2020 and accept all proposed conditions of approval. We are unaware of any opposition. We respectfully request that this item be moved to the Consent Calendar.

We provide background below that is not recited in the staff report for informational purposes only. Finally, we recognize and appreciate the outstanding leadership of Executive Director Jack Ainsworth.

### *The Mission of MBARI*

Research programs at the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI) encompass the entire ocean, from the surface waters to the deep seafloor, and from the terrestrial coastal zone to the open sea. The institute's Strategic Plan and Technology Roadmap (<https://www.mbari.org/about/vision/>) highlight key focal points of its Research & Development enterprise.

Founded in 1987 by David Packard, MBARI continues to receive substantial support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. This ongoing private funding enables the nonprofit institute to take on high-risk projects (high risk for success but high return if successful), as well as long-term studies that traditional ocean science granting agencies may be reluctant to fund. MBARI's work contributes to the Packard Foundation's goal to restore the health and productivity of the world ocean.

MBARI researchers pursue a range of challenging problems, such as how the tiniest microbial organisms affect other sea life, the causes and consequences of geological disturbances on the sea floor, and how the changing chemistry of ocean surface waters brought on by the burning of fossil fuels affects not only iconic plants and animals that sustain human health but also the food available to animals living thousands of meters below on the deep seafloor.

MBARI addresses issues of global and societal relevance within the following research themes:

- Ocean visualization—creating representations of the ocean's interior, its inhabitants, and its bottom topography.
- Ecosystem dynamics—studying complex interactions between microorganisms and the transfer of nutrients between the ocean surface and the deep sea.

- Ocean biogeochemistry—reaching an understanding of global-scale processes by recording variations in ocean acidity, oxygen, temperature, density, nutrient transport, and trace metals.
- Exploration—investigating areas of the sea never seen before, which can lead to discoveries of new seafloor features and processes, novel animals, and previously unknown biological, chemical, and geological events and systems.

### *The Project*

The Expedition Staging Building (ESB), as MBARI calls this facility, is a highly specialized building with a heavy-duty internal crane for lifting large metal shipping containers. The containers hold highly sensitive and sophisticated oceanographic research equipment, Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs), and in some cases have been converted to house mobile labs.

The purpose of the ESB is to provide a secure interior location for servicing, repairing, assembling, and calibrating the equipment in the containers prior to dispatching that equipment to a research vessel, and for restoring and repairing equipment when it returns from a research expedition. Over 80% of the container movements are done by a specialized, street-legal forklift. The building is over 5,200 square feet and is 32.5 feet tall as measured from the finished floor.

Proximity to the research vessels that routinely deploy and recover the equipment staged at the ESB is critical to a successful expedition, and this is the reason that this ESB is located on Moss Landing Island just a short distance from MBARI's docks and ships. The LCP gives priority to coastal dependent uses in the Light Industrial designation (Policy 4.3.6.F.1, North County LCP/Land Use Plan).

Therefore, we respectfully disagree that MBARI and all of its facilities are not coastal-dependent, although this project does not need a shoreline protective device. We continue to believe, and since 1993 the County and Coastal Commission have held, that MBARI is both a coastal-dependent (and at times, a resource dependent) use under the California Coastal Act.

### *Conclusion*

MBARI respectfully requests that the California Coastal Commission approve of its proposal, which will lead to a greater understanding of the ocean and our planet.

Sincerely,



Chris Scholin, President/CEO  
Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute  
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Moss Landing, CA 95039

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phone: 831-775-1779

cc: Coastal Commission  
Jack Ainsworth, Executive Director  
Dan Carl, District Director  
Brian O'Neill, Coastal Program Analyst

# MONTEREY COUNTY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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August 6, 2020

Hon. Steve Padilla, Chair  
California Coastal Commission  
455 Market Street  
Suite 300  
San Francisco CA 94105

**F12a**

SUBJECT: *De Novo* Coastal Development Permit Application, Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI) Field Staging Building, APN 133-252-001, Appeal A-3- MCO -17-0068

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Commission:

The County of Monterey supports the approval of the above Coastal Development Permit and urges approval by the Commission.

The Light Industrial District allows marine research facilities as a permitted use (subject to a CDP). In fact, Policy 4.3.6.F.1 specifically states: "Lands designated for Heavy and Light industrial use in the North County Coastal Zone, shall be reserved for coastal dependent industry as defined in Sections 4.3.1. L and M., and in the glossary of this plan. New heavy or light Industrial manufacturing or energy related facilities shall be located only in areas designated for these uses in this plan". The County has honored this policy by prioritizing marine research facilities as coastal dependent uses in the Light Industrial zone.

The County respectfully disagrees that MBARI and all of its facilities are not coastal-dependent as the County – and the Coastal Commission – have consistently characterized the MBARI facilities as coastal-dependent priority uses since at least 1993. MBARI is spread over multiple parcels that function as a single campus. Certain parts like expedition staging is essential to be close to the vessel; and therefore, is coastal-dependent. Individual discrete parts like parking could be viewed as non-dependent if viewed on its own. However, County views that all of their facilities are inter-related and coastal-dependent because their research is a coastal-dependent use.

The County respectfully requests that the Commission approve the above referenced permit.

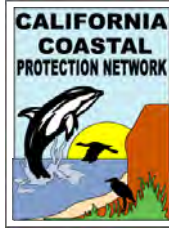
Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Carl P. Holm'.

Carl P. Holm, AICP  
Director  
Monterey County Resource Management Agency

cc: Coastal Commission  
Jack Ainsworth, Executive Director

Dan Carl, District Director  
Brian O'Neill, Coastal Program Analyst



August 7th, 2020

Honorable Steve Padilla, Chair  
Members of the California Coastal Commission  
California Coastal Commission  
455 Market Street Suite 300  
San Francisco CA 94105

RE: **Item Friday 7/12 a: SUPPORT for APPROVAL** of De Novo Coastal Development Permit Application, Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute ("MBARI") Field Staging Building, APN 133-252-001, Appeal A-3- MCO -17-0068

Dear Chair Padilla and Members of the Commission:

The California Coastal Protection Network (CCPN) is writing to indicate strong support for the approval of the above Coastal Development Permit for the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI) Field Staging Building.

CCPN has closely monitored this project for the last two years and, in July 2019, participated in an all-day site visit with Commission staff and the applicant that included walking the entire MBARI campus, an in-depth discussion of the research activities that occur on the various sites as well as a detailed presentation of the proposed project. Since that time, MBARI and Commission staff have worked studiously to resolve their differences and to design a project that can be found consistent with the relevant policies in the LCP and the Coastal Act.

MBARI's work encompasses research projects across the ocean, from the surface waters to the deep ocean, and their expeditions have resulted in significant contributions to our understanding of how the ocean functions and what can be done to preserve and enhance its viability. Initially founded in 1987 by David Packard, MBARI continues to receive support from the Lucille and David Packard Foundation whose dedication to protecting the ocean environment is well-recognized. Given the importance of MBARI's research, I was surprised during my site visit to see how tightly constrained the MBARI campus is and how its scientists have had to resort to working on highly sensitive equipment stored in containers in the main building parking lot in order to keep the instruments in close proximity to the research ships that MBARI deploys on a regular basis. It is this problem that is the impetus for the proposed project on the Garner site.

To be clear, I do not agree with staff that this is a 'storage' building and therefore not coastal dependent. The Monterey County Local Coastal Program defines all three of the parcels addressed in the staff report as designated for coastal dependent light industrial uses. Staff argues that the building is for "storage" and therefore MBARI could place the


building and the containers “anywhere”. In fact, this building will allow the repair, calibration, assembly and stocking of highly-sensitive equipment and mobile labs that are stored in weatherproof, ocean-going containers stored on the site. The building will also contain a large, ceiling mounted crane to lift containers and equipment, calibration equipment and tools and supplies. In my opinion, staff’s position does not align with the importance of keeping this equipment in close proximity to where the research is conducted and the docks from where the research vessels depart, and to provide a setting where MBARI can perform the calibration, assembly and repair in an enclosed setting. Just moving them within the MBARI parking lot as occurs now with the use of a special fork lift incurs an ongoing risk of damage. To site these trailers at a distance from the MBARI campus would likely substantially increase that risk.

Despite that disagreement, both staff and MBARI have worked diligently to agree on a project design that satisfies the policies in the LCP and the Coastal Act. As the staff report describes the project will result in:

- The restoration and permanent protection of dune ESHA on two adjacent MBARI parcels (the Davi parcels) totaling 3.56 acres and 1.34 acres on the Garner parcel in exchange for 1.7 acres to be developed;
- Removal of invasive species and planting of dune vegetation on a 10-foot area owned by the Moss Landing Harbor District, as well as ice plant removal between Sandholdt Road and the shoreline;
- Construction and maintenance of a variety of public access improvements including two public boardwalks, a new public parking area and signage to facilitate improved public access and resource protection;
- A prohibition on future coastal armoring and a hazard mitigation plan that would involve moving the development if threatened in the future – a form of ‘managed retreat’ that the Commission favors for addressing future sea level rise and related hazards.

CCPN recognizes the hard work by both staff and the applicant over the last two years to reach a mutually acceptable agreement that will enable the construction of this research facility and urges the Commission to approve this coastal development permit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Jordan", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Susan Jordan, Executive Director

cc: Coastal Commission

Jack Ainsworth, Executive Director

Dan Carl, Central Coast District Director

Brian O’Neill, Coastal Program Analyst