

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

NORTH CENTRAL COAST DISTRICT
455 MARKET STREET, SUITE 228
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105
PHONE: (415) 904-5200
FAX: (415) 904-5400
WEB: WWW.COASTAL.CA.GOV



W15a

2-22-0726 (Surfers Beach Sand Restoration Project)

September 6, 2023

Correspondence



September 1, 2023

To: Donne Brownsey, Chair, California Coastal Commission

Cc: Kate Huckelbridge, Executive Director, California Coastal Commission
Erik Martinez, District Supervisor, North Central Coast District

Re: Item 15.a, Surfer's Beach Sand Restoration Project, Pillar Point Harbor (No. 2-22-0726)

Dear Chair Brownsey and Commissioners,

The San Mateo County Chapter of Surfrider Foundation is dedicated to the protection, access and stewardship of our County's beautiful shoreline for everyone to enjoy. We support the San Mateo County Harbor District's current proposal to provide one-time sand replenishment for Surfer's Beach and to establish eelgrass beds in the harbor's west basin. This project is a reasonable short-term option for addressing erosion at Surfers Beach, sand shoaling in the harbor and the burying of essential eelgrass habitat.

We would however, like to stress that this is an *experimental* solution for building back the beach at Surfer's Beach. Erosion of this beach will continue to be exacerbated as long as the Harbor jetties continue to block sediment transport and as long as Highway 1 and its associated armoring remain in place; setting an unnatural back to the beach and preventing the shore from migrating inward as sea levels rise. In the absence of long-term planning to remove the armoring, nourishment will become increasingly expensive and, at some point, ineffective for maintaining the beach.

We therefore encourage robust monitoring of this project so that the Harbor District can document the costs, impacts and relative benefits of beach fill as it evaluates ongoing solutions for managing erosion in this area. Additionally we suggest three minor amendments to special conditions related to lighting during construction and invasive species.

Robust Monitoring of this Pilot Project is Needed

Surfer's Beach is a popular and well-loved recreation area and surfing spot for both locals and visitors to the coast. It is easy to access, surf, and enter the ocean. However, the beach is already impacted by significant erosion due to Highway 1 and associated armoring, and due to impacts from the harbor breakwaters that contribute to erosion and prevent sand from migrating to the beach. As a result of these factors, Surfer's Beach is likely to disappear in the near future

with the current sea level rise we're already experiencing and realistic future sea level rise circumstances.

We support beach preservation of this area, and sand replenishment may be helpful in the short term. However, sand replenishment is not without impacts. Potential impacts can include the financial costs of sand dredging and fill, impacts to the surf over time, scarping of the beach caused by the buildup of sand in one spot, increased greenhouse gas emissions related to relocation of sand, and impacts to marine species living or foraging in the sand and intertidal zone.

The beach fill project being proposed is a pilot project, and any negative impacts have the potential to be repeated over and over again in future projects. Therefore it is important to also determine how long beach fill lasts at Surfer's Beach. During last season's storms, an amazing amount of sand was naturally deposited on this beach — so much so that stairs were no longer needed to access the beach at the south end of the riprap because the beach had been so built up. However the sand just as quickly began to recede and there is now a significant gap between the staircase and the beach.

This project presents an opportunity to study and measure the costs, impacts and effectiveness of sand replenishment in this area, which the Harbor District has suggested could be part of a longer-term solution to the loss of the beach and natural shoreline. To determine the effectiveness and feasibility of any future sand replenishment for Surfer's Beach, robust monitoring and data collection from this project is critical.

Currently the monitoring plan requires photo documentation of shoreline change as well as a "clear assessment of any impacts from sand placement, whether good or bad, on surfing resources." Photo documentation is required at least monthly. Surfrider proposes more robust monitoring that helps the applicant and the public better understand how long sand lasts on this beach, whether it distributes evenly, and how it affects the surf.

As any surfer knows, assessments of surfability can be vague, biased and very subjective. At a minimum, we suggest using the surf monitoring strategies that are employed for beach nourishment projects in San Clemente and San Diego County and based off Chuck Mesa's Surfability Assessment, which involves a consistent site surveyor evaluating surf conditions sometimes on a daily basis. In the winter, when shoreline and surf conditions can change very quickly, an objective monitoring report from a consistent surveyor at Surfer's Beach would be useful on at least a weekly basis. Beach width and slope conditions should also be documented bi-weekly for one year from when sand is placed.

Additional Amendments to Special Conditions

We strongly agree with Coastal Commission staff's recommendations for Special Conditions B and C, which prohibit lighting of the work area and prohibit construction during non day-time hours, unless due to extenuating circumstances. Since Pillar Point Harbor has a history of lighting issues impacting wildlife, it would be helpful to reference impacts of bright lighting on

wildlife in the findings, and a definition of what constitutes extenuating circumstances for which these special conditions prohibiting night work or lighting could be overridden should be clearly explained.

Locally, we see the impacts of excessive bright lighting from harbor activities at night on roosting pelicans and other seabirds and marine life (pelicans are especially vulnerable to broken legs/wings when they are flushed at night by bright lights). Several organizations have formally requested the Harbor District address lighting issues, but the response has been minimal. Excessive lighting from dock facilities and boats entering the harbor at night with 'squid lights' or other extremely bright lights, can be seen prominently from Hwy 1 and the El Granada and Princeton neighborhoods.

Mitigation measures are also mentioned for special status plants, however there is no mention of mitigation for invasive species that could be introduced or result from the construction disturbance caused by this project. We propose including mitigation of invasives in the event that these appear or spread from surrounding areas.

We Support a Long-Term Vision for Surfer's Beach

Surfer's Beach has unfortunately been the subject of piece-meal planning within a stretch of shoreline that involves multiple agencies and stakeholders. There is a need for all stakeholders to come together to create a comprehensive plan in collaboration, rather than the siloed approach that is often pursued. This project should be viewed within the larger context of the shoreline from Pillar Point Harbor and points south including Miramar, where hard armoring, more intense storms, and sea level rise threaten the future of our beaches.

As referenced by the staff report, the current Caltrans CDP that allowed the rock revetment fronting Highway 1 will expire soon. Caltrans has yet to submit a long-term adaptation plan as required by the CDP. Any long-term planning would benefit from being considered within the context of the entire area, not just the section at Surfer's Beach.

One Shoreline, the San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District, recently shared some possible solutions for consideration with the San Mateo County Harbor District. The proposal took a holistic approach that seeks to bring together and address issues for multiple jurisdictions, and emphasized the connected impacts for the whole shoreline and points south, including reconfiguring the harbor breakwaters to enhance protection in some areas and allow sand movement out of the harbor, as well as options for an enhanced reef, and realignment of Highway 1, among others.

Surfrider advocates for the kind of comprehensive vision presented by One Shoreline, that offers one possible integrated approach to achieve a healthier and more resilient future for Surfer's Beach and beaches southward. We support the One Shoreline proposal that was recently presented, which provides an adaptive pathway to implement more effective, longer-term, nature-based solutions.

We ask the Commission to approve this one-time project with all special conditions outlined in the Coastal Commission staff report, as well as the additional amendments regarding lighting and invasive species, and we ask the Commission to continue to encourage a long-term, integrated and collaborative approach to Surfer's Beach and adjacent areas.

Sincerely,



Kimberly Williams
Volunteer Policy Manager
San Mateo County Chapter
Surfrider Foundation



Mandy Sackett
California Policy Coordinator
Surfrider Foundation

Martinez, Erik@Coastal

From: Gregg Dieguez <mccgreggd@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 30, 2023 8:06 PM
To: Brownsey, Donne@Coastal; Martinez, Erik@Coastal; Huckelbridge, Kate@Coastal
Cc: James Pruet; wzemke@smharbor.com
Subject: Re: Item 15.a. Surfer's Beach Sand Restoration Project, Pillar Point Harbor (Application No. 2-22-0726)

September 1, 2023

To: Donne Brownsey, Chair, California Coastal Commission

Cc: Kate Huckelbridge, Executive Director, California Coastal Commission; Erik Martinez, District Supervisor, North Central Coast District; Jim Pruet, General Manager, San Mateo County Harbor District; Commissioner William Zemke, President, San Mateo County Harbor District

Re: Item 15.a. Surfer's Beach Sand Restoration Project, Pillar Point Harbor (Application No. 2-22-0726)

Dear Chair Brownsey and Commissioners,

As Chair of the MCC I write in support of the San Mateo County Harbor District's current proposal to provide sand replenishment for Surfer's Beach using sand dredged from Pillar Point Harbor, and the establishment of eelgrass beds in the harbor's west basin. The Midcoast Community Council (MCC) is an elected Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, representing Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton, and Miramar. Because notice of this agenda item came after our last meeting, with a response deadline before our next meeting, the Council as a whole has not fully considered this matter, thus I write as an individual.

Surfer's Beach is a valued recreational asset, but also a critical nexus in our main transportation, and only evacuation, route on the Midcoast.

The backstop of Highway 1 and the hard armoring in place to protect the highway, as well as impacts from the southern outer breakwater, have created an unsustainable condition for Surfer's Beach, which is now magnified by more frequent strong storms and sea level rise. I view the Harbor District's proposed project as an interim measure, while longer-term solutions are explored. During last season's storms, a large amount of sand was unexpectedly deposited on Surfer's Beach, however much of it has already receded. This project offers a more controlled opportunity to study and measure the impact and effectiveness of sand replenishment, which the Harbor District has suggested could be part of a longer-term solution to the loss of the beach and natural shoreline. As such, I would like to encourage robust monitoring and data collection from this project in order to better inform any future proposals and solutions.

I also encourage a more holistic view of this project within the larger context of the shoreline extending to Pillar Point Harbor and points south including Miramar, where the impacts of hard armoring, more intense storms, and sea level rise threaten the future of our beaches and our transit. The current Caltrans permit for rock revetment will be up for re-assessment soon, as Caltrans evaluates next steps for a long-term plan of Highway 1 (SR-1). Any long-term planning needs to be considered in the context of the entire coastal region, not just the section at Surfer's Beach. One Shoreline, the San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District, recently shared some possible solutions for consideration which I hope all stakeholders will come together collaboratively to consider as one possible integrated approach.

Therefore, I ask the Commission to approve this project in accordance with the Coastal Commission staff's assessment

and recommendations, and I encourage robust monitoring of the project for ecological impacts and to determine the effectiveness and feasibility of any future sand replenishment for Surfer's Beach.

Sincerely,

Gregg A. Dieguez
Midcoast Community Council - Chair
P.O. Box 370404
Montara, CA 94037
650-544-0714