

Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report

CITY OF ENCINTAS
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Case #03-119 CDP/MUP

SUBJECT: Beacon's Beach Access Project: The project consists of Coastal Development Permit and Major Use Permit applications to improve the existing beach access and stabilize the bluff at Beacon's Beach. Major elements of the project would include reconfiguration of the existing parking lot, construction of bluff retention structures, improvements to the existing trail, landscaping, drainage system improvements, and a public shower.

Summary:

In accordance with Section 15088.5 of the CEQA Guidelines, Sections 2.4 and 2.5 of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Beacon's Beach Access Project are being recirculated for public review. A lead agency is required to recirculate an EIR when significant new information is added to the EIR after it is circulated for public review but before its certification. "Significant new information" requiring recirculation includes a disclosure that a new significant environmental impact would result from the project. Sections 2.4 and 2.5 of the subject EIR contain new conclusions regarding the significance of the project's impacts on recreation and public safety. As described in these attached sections, the Draft EIR now concludes in Section 2.4 that the project would have significant and unavoidable impacts on recreation due to the loss of access to existing recreational facilities. In addition, Section 2.5 now concludes that the project would have significant and unavoidable impacts associated with inadequate parking capacity. There are no mitigation measures that would reduce these impacts to below a level of significance.

Recirculated portions of the Draft EIR, the previously-circulated Draft EIR, supporting documents, and project application may be reviewed or purchased for the cost of reproduction at the Encinitas Planning and Building Department.

Scott Vurbeff, Environmental Coordinator
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Date of Draft Report

2.4 RECREATION

2.4.1 Environmental Setting

Beacon's Beach is one of six City-operated beaches and receives approximately 170,000 visitors annually. There are also two State beaches in the City: San Elijo State Beach and Cardiff State Beach. The locations of the City and State beaches are presented on Figure 2.4-1. Total annual beach attendance at City and State beaches along the Encinitas coast has been estimated at between 2.2 and 2.5 million visitors. A variety of recreation activities are available to users of Beacon's Beach, including:

- sunbathing,
- picnicking,
- beachcombing,
- sightseeing,
- surfing,
- surf fishing,
- swimming, and
- jogging.

Policy 5.5 of the Recreation Element of the Encinitas General Plan states that "...the City shall assure that existing public parking lots for public beach access points are maintained and that no reduction in the number of existing public parking spaces shall be permitted." The intent of this policy is to implement Goal 5 of the Recreation Element, which states that the City will continue to provide for coastal/shoreline recreation areas with effective access. As discussed below, the project will result in a reduction in the existing number of public parking spaces, which may be inconsistent with Policy 5.5. However, the objective of the project is to preserve and protect public access and improve public safety at Beacon's Beach. The project design and associated loss of parking spaces is required in order to meet these objectives and maintain consistency with Goal 5 in the Recreation Element. Without project implementation, the ongoing bluff erosion would eventually eliminate all public access and off-street parking at Beacon's Beach. This scenario would be inconsistent with General Plan policies contained the City's Recreation Element.

2.4.2 Environmental Impacts

2.4.2.1 Significance Criteria

Impacts of the project on recreation would be considered significant if the proposed project would:

- affect an existing recreational facility such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated; and/or
- result in the ~~permanent~~ loss of access to existing recreational facilities.

2.4.2.2 *Impact Assessment*

The proposed Project would not affect an existing recreational facility such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated. Although construction and operation of the project would displace Beacon's Beach users to either Stonesteps Beach or Grandview Beach, these facilities would be able to accommodate the increase in visitors and would not suffer substantial physical deterioration as a result of this increase. During the construction of the project, ~~the public beach access at the top of the bluff at Beacon's Beach would be closed from September through May. The parking lot at the top of the bluff would also be closed for this period of time. Beach users would be directed south to Stone Steps Beach or north to Grandview Beach. Depending on the construction activities occurring, the beach could be closed to public access for safety purposes. This may occur during the delivery of equipment and materials required for construction of the shoreline protection structure and contouring the bluff face. Although the closing of the beach access would occur during the off-peak season,~~ approximately 63,000 visitors would be ~~affected by the closure~~displaced (based on 170,000 visitors using the beach per year and 37 percent of annual usage occurring during the off-peak months). However, because this displaced usage level is not anticipated to be concentrated at one beach or park, and would temporarily be diffused during the nine-month off-peak season, there would not be substantial physical deterioration of existing recreational facilities.

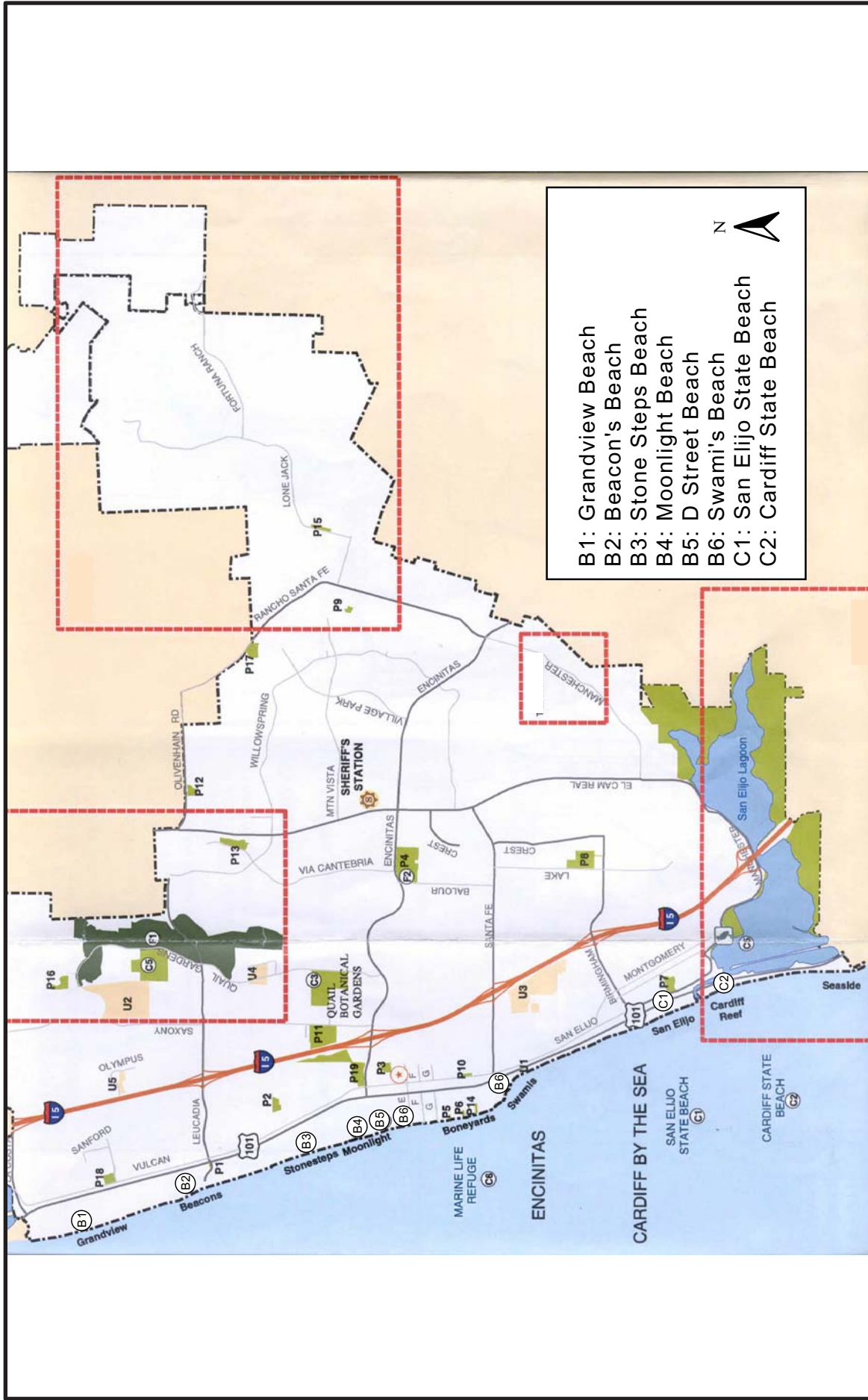


FIGURE 2.4-1: BEACHES AND PARKS IN ENCINITAS

The proposed Project would result in a temporary loss of access to Beacon's Beach during construction. During the construction of the project, the public beach access at the top of the bluff at Beacon's Beach would be closed from September through May. The parking lot at the top of the bluff would also be closed for this period of time. Depending on the construction activities occurring, the beach could be closed to public access for safety purposes. This may occur during the delivery of equipment and materials required for construction of the shoreline protection structure and contouring the bluff face.

Project implementation would also result in some permanent loss of access to Beacon's Beach due to the reduction of existing public parking spaces at the site. There would be seven fewer public parking spaces (24 existing, 17 following construction) than what currently exists at the bluff-top parking area, or a 29 percent decrease. The loss of parking spaces would reduce readily available access opportunities at the beach, and the impact on recreation would be significant.

~~Policy 5.5 of the Recreation Element of the Encinitas General Plan states that "...the City shall assure that existing public parking lots for public beach access points are maintained and that no reduction in the number of existing public parking spaces shall be permitted." The intent of this policy is to implement Goal 5 of the Recreation Element, which states that the City will continue to provide for coastal/shoreline recreation areas with effective access. Although the loss of parking spaces would reduce readily available access opportunities at the beach, the impact on recreation would not be significant because the objective of the project is to preserve and protect public access and improve public safety at Beacon's Beach. The project design and associated loss of parking spaces is required in order to meet these objectives and maintain consistency with Goal 5 in the Recreation Element. Without project implementation, the ongoing bluff erosion is expected to eliminate all public access and off-street parking at Beacon's Beach. This scenario would be inconsistent with General Plan policies contained the City's Recreation Element.~~

As discussed in Section 2.1.2.2, the project may result in the long-term loss of beach width (due to fixing the back of the beach), or passive erosion. Since the beach at the project site is a recreational resource, the geotechnical impact related to the loss of the beach width would also result in a ~~potential~~ significant impact upon recreation.

2.4.2.3 Summary of Significant Effects

Project implementation ~~may~~ would result in significant impacts on recreation due to the loss of access to existing recreational facilities and potential long-term loss of beach width associated with passive erosion.

2.4.3 Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Program

Implementation of mitigation measure Geo-2 (see Section 2.1.3.) would reduce the project's direct impact on long-term loss of beach width associated with passive erosion ~~recreation~~ to below a level of significance. However, as discussed in Section 4.2, the project's cumulative impact on long-term loss of beach width associated with passive erosion ~~recreation~~ would remain significant and unable to be mitigated. There is no mitigation available to reduce the impact on recreation due to loss of access to below the level of significance.

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2.5 PUBLIC SAFETY

2.5.1 Environmental Setting

The following discussion of public safety focuses on two areas of concern: traffic safety during and following construction of the project, and general safety of residents and beach visitors during project construction.

Access to the Beacon's Beach overlook and parking area is via Leucadia Boulevard to Neptune Avenue. Neptune Avenue is a one-way street with travel flowing in a northerly direction parallel to the parking area of Beacon's Beach. Neptune Avenue primarily services local neighborhood traffic but also serves a significant amount of coastal-oriented traffic from users of Beacon's Beach and other up-coast and down-coast public access beaches. From the intersection of Neptune Avenue with Leucadia Boulevard, ingress to the parking area of Beacon's Beach follows Neptune Avenue in a northerly direction and at the northern extent of the parking area drivers make a left turn into the parking lot. Additionally, parking is provided adjacent to and parallel with the parking area on Neptune Avenue. Traffic exits the southerly end of the parking lot then proceeds easterly on Leucadia Boulevard, or via a left turn back onto Neptune Avenue in a northerly direction.

2.5.2 Environmental Impacts

2.5.2.1 Significance Criteria

Impacts of the project on recreation would be considered significant if the project would:

- cause an increase in traffic that is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections);
- exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways;
- result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location, that results in substantial safety risks;
- substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment);
- result in inadequate emergency access;
- result in inadequate parking capacity;
- conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks); and/or

- expose the public to safety risks above and beyond those typically encountered during construction of major public works projects and recreational facilities.

2.5.2.2 *Impact Assessment*

During project construction, access to the parking area and beach would be closed to the public from September through May. Neptune Avenue would remain open to normal traffic and access to the surrounding neighborhood would remain unimpeded by construction traffic. Deliveries of materials and equipment could provide brief periods of traffic congestion during the daylight hours. This could occur from trucks transporting construction-related materials and equipment along Leucadia Boulevard to Neptune Avenue and the project site. Standard traffic safety measures implemented during construction projects, such as caution signs, traffic cones, and flagmen, would ensure that construction impacts to traffic would not be significant.

Residents along Neptune Avenue in the vicinity of the project site would be impacted by the general construction activity during the various phases of construction (see Chapter 1—Project Description for a complete discussion of construction activities). This would include limited deliveries of materials and equipment to the project site, construction-worker traffic, and noise associated with demolition of the existing facilities and the construction of the new facilities. ~~These Noise impacts would not be significant because of their temporary nature of the project~~ are addressed in Chapter 7 of the EIR. As noted in Section 1.4.1, heavy equipment would access the beach to construct the shoreline protection structure. Neptune Avenue would be used for hauling of fill material (approximately 4,478 cubic yards) over the course of 8 to 12 weeks, resulting in an average of 22 truck trips per day for an eight week period. The hauling of fill material would result in the highest number of average daily trips during construction activity; however, these trips do not represent a substantial traffic volume and would not significantly impact the capacity of the circulation system or exceed a level of service standard. Furthermore, the project would be conditioned to limit hauling of material between peak traffic hours (9am to 4pm).

When construction activity is completed, traffic would resume to the pattern that existed prior to construction of the project because no change in road geometry or capacity is part of the project. The project will not generate traffic because it is an existing recreational facility and no change in use is proposed. Therefore the project will not cause an increase in traffic that is substantial in relation to the existing traffic volume. Likewise, the project will not cause degradation in a level of service standard for adjacent streets. ~~Traffic would continue to ensure safe travel between the work site and ingress to the beach at Moonlight Beach to access and exit the parking area in the same manner as before construction.~~

Because the project does not involve any change in air traffic patterns, it is not necessary to evaluate potential impacts under the related threshold identified above.

During construction, the perimeter of the site would be surrounded with safety fencing and posted with signs indicating an active construction zone and that public access is prohibited. This would include a portion of the beach fronting the location of the bluff protection wall. A safety

zone sufficient to preclude public access to this area would be cordoned off with safety fencing and construction personnel would instruct visitors that this area is off limits to the general public.

As stated in Section 1.4.1, heavy equipment would need to access the bluff via Moonlight Beach, a distance of approximately 1.25 miles. A Beach Encroachment Permit would be required for movement of construction vehicles and equipment along the beach. Standard conditions in the permit would include, but not be limited to, the following: advance notifications to the City Lifeguard; a beach barrier plan to protect the public from equipment movement, construction activity, and the construction site; a detailed construction traffic plan and haul route that is reviewed and approved by the City; flagmen within Moonlight Beach State Park when children are present, and other restrictions to ensure significant public safety impacts are avoided.

During construction activity, Encinitas lifeguards would continue routinely patrol and monitor Beacon's Beach to ensure marine safety is maintained. Outside of the peak summer months, lifeguards patrol the beach from 8 am to sunset two to three times per day, up to a dozen times per day when conditions warrant (e.g., during periods of high surf). Emergency access from the north or south along the beach would continue to be provided to the lifeguards during construction activity. It is anticipated that when public access across the bluff is temporarily closed, the potential for lifeguard emergencies may decrease at the project site because of the reduction in beach users accessing the site. Overall, emergency access is expected to be adequately maintained during construction activity for the project.

Project implementation would result in reduction in inadequate parking capacity at Beacon's Beach due to the reduction of existing public parking spaces at the site. There would be seven fewer public parking spaces (24 existing, 17 following construction) than what currently exists at the bluff-top parking area, or a 29 percent decrease. As parking at the site is constrained under existing conditions, a decrease in parking available at Beacon's Beach will result in an increased demand for parking along Neptune Avenue. This is considered a significant and unavoidable impact.

Because no change in traffic flow or design is proposed as part of the project, the project will not conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation, including Goal 3 of the Circulation Element of the General Plan to "promote the use of other modes of transport to reduce the dependence on the personal automobile."

2.5.2.3 *Summary of Significant Effects*

No significant public safety impacts would occur during project construction with the implementation of standard construction safety precautions described in Section 2.5.2.2. However, project implementation would result in inadequate parking capacity.

2.5.3 **Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Program**

~~Because no significant public safety impacts would result from the project, no mitigation measures are necessary.~~ There are no mitigation measures available to reduce the project's impact associated with inadequate parking capacity.