

**DATE ISSUED:** March 9, 2005      **REPORT NO.** HO-05-050

**ATTENTION:** Hearing Officer, Agenda of March 16, 2005

**SUBJECT:** SAN DIEGUITO RIVER VALLEY RESTORATION AND COAST TO CREST TRAIL - PROJECT NO. 55370. PROCESS THREE.

**OWNER/** SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON, SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME, 22<sup>ND</sup>. DISTRICT AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION, CITY OF SAN DIEGO and CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

**APPLICANT:** SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON and SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY

**SUMMARY**

Issue(s): Should the Hearing Officer approve Site Development Permit No. 161395 and Coastal Development Permit No. 191995 to allow the restoration of the San Dieguito River Valley and creation of a western segment of the Coast to Crest Trail in the Torrey Pines and Subarea II Plan areas?

Staff Recommendation:

1. **REVIEW AND CONSIDER** the Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement certified by the Joint Powers Authority; and
2. **APPROVE** Site Development Permit No. 161395 and Coastal Development Permit No. 191995.

Community Planning Group Recommendation: The project is located with two community planning areas. As such the Carmel Valley Community Planning Board voted unanimously, on February 8, 2005, to recommend approval. The Torrey Pines Community Planning Association voted 10:2:0, on February 10, 2005, to recommend approval. Neither group had any conditions associated with their recommendations.

Environmental Review: The City of San Diego as Responsible Agency under CEQA has reviewed and considered an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement certified by the Joint Powers Authority, LDR No 55370, dated March 2, 2005, covering this activity.

Fiscal Impact Statement: Funding for the processing of these applications has come from a special account in the General Fund funded by the applicant in accordance with a legally binding agreement. There is no cost to the City for the processing of this application.

Code Enforcement Impact: None with this action.

Housing Impact Statement: None with this action.

## **BACKGROUND**

The San Dieguito River Valley Restoration and Coast to Crest Trail project is to be located at a 370 acre site south of Via de la Via, west of El Camino Real, east and west of Interstate 5 in the San Dieguito River Valley of the Torrey Pines Community and the North City Future Urbanizing Area (Subarea II) of the Progress Guide and General Plan.

Southern California Edison Company (SCE) is the majority owner and operator of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS). The California Coastal Commission (CCC) issued a Coastal Development Permit for the construction of SONGS Units 2 & 3 with a condition that SCE fund an independent evaluation of impacts resulting from the SONGS' project on the marine environment. The Coastal Development Permit (CDP) further requires SCE to mitigate any significant adverse impacts from the SONGS project. The CCC determined SONGS adversely impacted bightwide fish stocks and required SCE to mitigate those losses. As partial satisfaction of those mitigation requirements, SCE is required to create or substantially restore at least 150 acres of wetlands in Southern California.

After considering the results of a site-selection study evaluating eight potential sites throughout Southern California, the CCC concluded the San Dieguito Lagoon offered the best opportunity for achieving the full objectives set forth in the CDP. A public working group consisting of resource agency representatives, non-governmental organizations, and interested members of the public worked together to develop a reasonable range of practicable alternatives for restoration of the San Dieguito Lagoon.

The wetland restoration project began an environmental review process pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority (JPA) took the role of state lead agency under CEQA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) took the role of federal lead agency under NEPA. The JPA incorporated the SCE wetland

restoration project into their overall Open Space Park Project (Park Project) for the San Dieguito River Valley area. A joint environmental impact report/environmental impact statement (EIR/EIS) was prepared for the entire San Dieguito Wetlands Restoration component of the Park Project.

The necessary permits, agreements, and approvals required to begin construction are summarized below:

Federal:

Section 7 Consultation (USFWS) (Completed)  
404 Permit (USACOE) (Submitted in August, Pending Approval)

State:

401 Certification (RWQCB) (Pending)  
1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement (CDFG) (Pending)  
Coastal Development Permit (CCC) (Pending)  
Encroachment Permit (Caltrans) (Pending)  
Access Agreement (22nd Ag. Dist) (Pending)  
State Lands Lease (State Lands Commission) (Completed)  
Waste Discharge Permit (RWQCB) (Pending)  
Power Line Relocation Authorization (PUC) (SDG&E responsibility)

Local:

Conditional Use Permit (Del Mar) (Pending)  
Encroachment Permit (Del Mar) (Application Pending)  
Floodplain Development Permit (Del Mar) (Pending)  
Encroachment Permit (NCTD) (Pending)  
Land Conservation Permit (Del Mar) (Pending)  
Coastal Development Permit (Del Mar) (Pending)  
Grading Permit (San Diego) (Pending)  
Site Development Permit (San Diego) (Pending)

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Project Description**

The proposal includes two components within one project. The project would be located in the San Dieguito River Valley within the Cities of Del Mar and San Diego. The primary component involves the restoration of the San Dieguito Lagoon (Restoration). The Restoration is the responsibility of SCE. The second component involves the construction of the Coastal Segment of the Coast to Crest Trail (Coastal Trail) along the San Dieguito River. The Coastal Trail is the responsibility of the San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Association (JPA) and would pass through the restoration area.

SCE is responsible for implementing the overall lagoon enhancement and restoration required to fulfill the conditions in the SONGS Coastal Development Permit. The Restoration's main features include excavating and maintaining the San Dieguito River inlet channel to maintain tidal exchange, restoring tidal wetland areas, constructing berms and associated drainage and slope protection measures, vegetating dredge disposal areas, constructing nesting sites, and improving beach access along the river from Camino del Mar. Some of this work is outside the jurisdiction of the City of San Diego.

SCE is responsible for the maintenance of the Restoration for the operating life of SONGS. SONGS is presently estimated to be operable for forty more years. Longer-term maintenance of the restored wetlands and uplands, as well as improvements to the Coastal Trail, would be performed by the JPA. SCE is also responsible for keeping the river inlet open in perpetuity. Neither SCE nor the JPA would be responsible for maintaining the nesting sites. It is presumed that, ultimately, the 22<sup>nd</sup> District Agricultural Association (District) would assume maintenance responsibility for the nesting sites; but this matter is still in the process of being resolved between the California Coastal Commission and the District.

The JPA would be responsible for implementing and maintaining the Coastal Trail, as well as replanting upland areas included in the San Dieguito Restoration Project Final Restoration Plan, with the exception of the dredge disposal sites which will be planted by SCE.

### Restoration

Restoration of the San Dieguito Lagoon would involve re-establishing a significant portion of the site west and east of Interstate 5 (I-5) to tidal wetlands consisting of subtidal, intertidal mudflat, coastal salt marsh, and transitional wetland habitats created through excavation and grading of existing high elevation areas. On both sides of I-5, additional areas of transitional wetland habitat would be created to offset minor impacts on existing wetlands incurred in the course of wetland restoration. Approximately 90 acres of upland would be used for disposal of soil excavated to create the tidal wetlands. The upland disposal sites would be converted to upland habitat. Excavated soil suitable for beach disposal would be placed on the local beaches. Some of the excavated soil would be used to create nesting sites for the California Least Tern and Western Snowy Plover. An existing nesting site would be rehabilitated through removal of weeds and soil raking.

The major components of the Restoration include:

- Initial and long-term periodic excavation of the tidal inlet to maintain marine water exchange between the ocean and the restored wetlands;
- Excavation and grading to create 115 acres of wetland habitat, including subtidal, intertidal, transitional, and seasonal salt marsh habitats east and west of I-5;
- Construction of three berms adjacent to the San Dieguito River to confine existing

- flood flows, protect restored habitat areas from extreme flood damage, and maintain the transport of river sediment to the ocean;
- Bank protection on the south side of the river upstream of Jimmy Durante Bridge and on the southern slope on portions of the river berm located east of I-5 and north of the river;
  - Culverts may be used through the two main river berms to help balance water levels in the tidal lagoons and river channel during flood flows;
  - A weir along the eastern edge of a river berm to eliminate any backwater effect on the upstream river channel;
  - A pedestrian trail along the south side of the inlet channel or alternative accessway providing access around the mouth of the lagoon at the beach during tidal exchange; and
  - Creation of four nesting sites and rehabilitation of an existing nesting site to provide habitat for the California Least Tern and Western Snowy Plover.

Restoration construction would occur in three areas. In Area I, which would focus on the area west of I-5, construction would consist of mobilizing equipment and designating the construction access routes and staging areas. Salvaging wetland vegetation for storage and propagation offsite would follow these activities. Subsequent to the salvage of wetland vegetation and the clearing of non-native vegetation, excavation would commence in various areas including the tidal inlet. It would be anticipated that bulldozers, scrapers and backhoes would excavate material to be hauled by trucks to designated disposal sites and a proposed berm. The previously cleared areas would then be revegetated in accordance with the Restoration Planting Program with salvaged stores of wetland plant material. Additionally, slope protection would be placed along the inlet channel at the confluence with the San Dieguito River.

In Area II construction would focus on the areas east of I-5 and south of the San Dieguito River and occur concurrently with ongoing work in Area I. Wetland vegetation would again be salvaged in the restoration areas as in the Area I. Excavation and grading activities would also occur in designated restoration areas. Some of the excavated material would be used to construct the southern river berm and form the base of nesting sites. Using heavy equipment sand for nesting sites would be spread over these sites to form a cap of at least twelve inches in depth. Utility poles east of I-5 would be relocated by SDG&E in a new alignment along Via de la Valle. Revegetation of restoration areas in Area II would then take place as in Area I.

Area III would focus on construction east of I-5 and north of the San Dieguito River. Salvage operations, clearing and grubbing of designated restoration areas would occur as in the other areas. Excavated material would be used to construct the river berm proposed to the north of the river and to construct upland portions adjacent to Via de la Valle. The berm slope facing the river would be protected where necessary and covered with native vegetation. A weir would be constructed at the northeastern end of the berm. The wetland and upland areas of designated restoration areas would be revegetated with salvaged or purchased stores. SDG&E lines located in this area would be relocated in cooperation with SCE along Via de la Valle.

Staging areas would be located within the project boundary. Two primary staging areas are proposed within the site. One staging area would be west of I-5 and one east, with two secondary areas proposed to accommodate channel dredging operations.

Whenever feasible construction equipment would utilize existing dirt roads within the site and travel would be limited within the footprint of the proposed construction areas. Construction equipment is anticipated to access the project site from Via de la Valle and El Camino Real. It is anticipated that several temporary construction access roads would be constructed to provide access to excavation sites, as well as to accommodate hauling excavated materials to the disposal sites. A temporary river crossing may be constructed across the San Dieguito River to allow for material and equipment transport.

It is anticipated that Restoration construction would occur over a three-year period beginning the month of July 2005. Hours of construction operation would comply with City regulations and begin no sooner than 7 a.m. and end no later than 7 p.m. Monday through Friday. On Saturdays, construction operations would begin no sooner than 9 a.m. and end no later than 7 p.m.

The total estimated construction cost is approximately \$40.6 million. This estimate includes the implementation of the tidal wetland, nesting site, disposal site, transitional wetland, and seasonal salt marsh components. The cost estimate includes contingencies (20%), permitting/design (estimate), and construction management (6%). In addition, an allowance for potential river infrastructure components has been included in the estimate.

Of the approximate 386 acres of area where restoration efforts would occur, roughly 61 acres would exist within the City of Del Mar and 325 acres would exist within the City of San Diego. Approximately half of the berm in Area I would be located in the City of Del Mar while the other half would be located in the City of San Diego. Both of the remaining proposed berms would be located within the City of San Diego.

#### Beach Access Improvements

As a part of the restoration effort, SCE has proposed an improved connection between the down coast beach areas and the bridge at Camino Del Mar. Increases in water depth and velocity in the river inlet would potentially affect recreational use of the beach at and near the river inlet. Crossing of the river channel would often become more difficult compared to existing conditions. Beach access and use would still be available in areas north and south of the river inlet and crossing of the inlet would be possible, although less convenient, by using the bridge at Camino Del Mar.

The proposed improved beach access would specifically consist of improving an existing pedestrian pathway along the south side of the river. This pathway would access the beach over the existing riprap. Such a pathway would provide access from the south side

of the river to Camino Del Mar, where beach goers could then use the existing pathway on the Camino Del Mar Bridge to cross the river.

## COASTAL SEGMENT OF THE SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK & COAST TO CREST TRAIL

### Trail

The coastal part of the Coast to Crest Trail would be located between Jimmy Durante Boulevard and the horse park, west of El Camino Real, a distance of 2.7 miles. This Coastal Trail helps the overall Wetland Restoration component by managing and directing public access, which is currently unregulated, away from the created and restored wetlands, to the outer perimeter of the project area. Trail segments would generally consist of polymer binder-hardened or stabilized cement with native soil or decomposed granite shoulders. An exception to this basic description is Segment 1, which is proposed as a boardwalk. Each Coastal Trail segment is described below.

Segment 1 a brings the pedestrian down from Jimmy Durante Boulevard to the beginning of the trail (Segment 1 b). Segment 1 a is 80 feet long. (From Jimmy Durante Boulevard, hikers can go south on the existing Jimmy Durante Boulevard Bridge, and from there either go west on the existing Del Mar River Path or east on a planned future trail to the Grand Avenue Overlook. Ultimately the western route would provide access to the beach and to the proposed Coastal Rail Trail.

Segment 1 b would be a 12" high, 6' wide boardwalk for pedestrian use only. This segment begins at Jimmy Durante Boulevard via Segment 1 a and skirts the southern edge of the Fairgrounds overflow parking lot for a distance of approximately 1,460 feet.

Segment 2, approximately 1,400 feet long, would be the beginning of the multi-use (bike/pedestrian) section of the trail. Wherever feasible, Segment 2 would utilize the existing earthen berm that lies at the outer edge of the Fairground parking lot. Bicyclists approaching from Jimmy Durante Boulevard would enter the trail at the juncture of Segments 1 and 2. Bicyclists heading west on the trail would be directed at that point to the existing bike lanes on Jimmy Durante Boulevard where they could then travel south to Powerhouse Park or north to Solana Beach.

As indicated on the diagram, there will be a viewing platform at the junction of Segments 1 and 2. This feature will help to identify this spot as the Coast to Crest Trail terminus.

Segment 3 would be 840 feet long and located at the southernmost boundary of the Surf & Turf Golf Driving Range. A 6-foot-high net fence is proposed to be located north of the trail outside of the floodway to protect trail users from golf balls that may still be rolling at this point. The net will be removed during Fairground operations that utilize the Surf & Turf lot for parking.

Segment 4 would cross under the I-5 freeway bridge as well as two drainage channels on both sides of the freeway. In order to pass under the I-5 Bridge, an under-crossing would be constructed within the northernmost bay of the I-5 Bridge. No water flows through this bay, which is currently lined with riprap, during normal river flows. The trail would, however, be subject to inundation during significant storm events. The under-crossing would require that the two drainage channels occurring on both sides of the freeway be crossed. These crossings would be accomplished using concrete open box culverts. Bridges are not desired because they could impede flows during flood events. The culverts would be a maximum of 12 feet in width. Under the freeway, the entire trail would be constructed of concrete and would be 12 feet wide, with 12 feet height clearance.

Segment 4a is 110 feet long. An open bottom concrete culvert is proposed to bridge the riprap lined drainage crossing. Of several crossing methods considered, this structure has been determined to have the least impact on wetland habitat without affecting the hydrologic conditions. Segment 4b is 220 feet long.

Segment 4c is 120 feet long. As also in Segment 4a, an open bottom concrete culvert is proposed to bridge the drainage crossing. Again, of several crossing methods considered, this structure has again been determined to have the least impact on wetland habitat without affecting the hydrologic conditions.

Segment 5, about 2,000-feet-long, would be parallel to I-5, utilizing an existing maintenance road. No widening is necessary. The maintenance road is used by SBC to maintain fiber optic cables that parallel I-5. I-5 would be the western extent of equestrian use of the trail, until such time as the trail is extended westward to the beach. Signs will indicate that equestrians must turn-around and return. The turn-around location would be at the west end of Segment 5.

Segment 6, about 1,100-feet-long, would continue on the maintenance road, behind the Albertson's shopping center. There is substantial urban run-off in this location. Consequently, it is proposed to create a series of storm water treatment ponds that would serve to treat and clean the urban run-off before the water reaches the finger channels of the restored wetlands as described later in this chapter. The trail would be built up to allow the water to flow between treatment ponds underneath the trail via pipes.

Segment 7, 653-feet-long, would utilize the right of way of the existing San Andres Road, and the existing sidewalk, in addition to new trail construction.

Segment 8, 2,829-feet-long, would be located on excavated soils that will be placed on this site as part of the Wetland Restoration Project, along the top of the proposed 4:1 slope that will separate the proposed fill area from the restored wetland by 100 feet or more. Near the western end of this property, the trail would pass the site of the future Nature/Interpretive Center. Viewing platforms would be located midway at an appropriate location adjacent to the trail and at the end of this trail segment.

All portions of the Coastal Trail would be situated within the City of San Diego, with the exception of Segment 1 and part of Segment 2. Approximately half (the first 540 feet) of Segment 2 would be situated in the City of Del Mar.

### Wetland Treatment Ponds

Currently, the area immediately south of the Albertson's shopping center is a collection point for a 313-acre watershed in the residential community north of Via de la Valle. This area does not contain desiltation ponds, oily wastewater separators or any other type of filtering device used to treat runoff. It is also filled with mature invasive plant species. Without treatment, the potential for freshwater runoff to encroach upon proposed brackish and saltwater marsh habitat would be a significant threat. The freshwater and poor quality of this water would decrease the viability of the saltwater restoration efforts.

Accordingly, wetland treatment ponds, occurring within Module TP41 (formerly M41), would be designed on this 5-acre segment of the project to trap and allow for easy removal of invasive species. These ponds would be implemented to process untreated urban runoff funneled into the area via a culvert under the Albertson's shopping center that would otherwise flow indirectly into the San Dieguito River. The trail segment in this area would be raised above the water table, and flows coming from the north would be directed underneath.

This part of the project, which affects Module TP41, proposes to:

- Create a series of five connected ponds;
- Remove invasive species; protect in place the native trees;
- Create a berm for the trail and side slopes for ponds;
- Install water quality control devices including a trash rack, sediment trap, and oily wastewater separator;
- Install weirs, culverts and other piping necessary to make the ponds work from a hydrologic perspective;
- Install a hard surface trail on the berms; install interpretive signage; and replant the full area with wetland and riparian species; and
- Maintain portions of the wetland treatment ponds on a three-year cycle.

### Community Plan Analysis:

The proposed project is located within two plan areas and as such two separate analysis sections have been provided in this report. The first is addressing the Torrey Pines Community Plan while the second addresses the North City Future Urbanizing Area Framework Plan.

#### Torrey Pines Community Plan area

A portion of the project site is located within the Torrey Pines community plan area and designated for open space. The open space designation is intended to preserve sensitive resources and a viable network of habitat for plant and animal communities. The proposed San Dieguito River Valley Restoration project is consistent with this designation as it proposes to restore the wetland habitat of the San Dieguito River Valley.

The proposed project conforms to the overall goals for the open space designation and specific proposals for the San Dieguito Lagoon and River Valley contained within the Torrey Pines Community Plan. The specific proposals for the San Dieguito River Valley include the enlargement of the lagoon, the creation of a sustainable tidal prism, and the enhancement of the natural features within the valley. The proposed restoration project purposes to accomplish these goals in the broader context of restoring the San Dieguito Lagoon and River Valley and preserving the open space.

#### North City Future Urbanizing Area Framework Plan

The portion of the project site east of the I-5 Freeway is within the Future Urbanizing Area (FUA). Future Urbanizing is an interim development phase identified by the Progress Guide and General Plan to prevent premature urban development and manage public and private resources efficiently.

The portions of the FUA within the northern part of the city are subject to the policies of the 1995 North City Future Urbanizing Area (NCFUA) Framework Plan. The Framework Plan provides a blueprint for development of a 12,000 acre NCFUA, including requirements for shifting the 5 planning subareas to allow urbanization.

The portion of the project site generally located within the floodplain of the San Dieguito River is designated for open space conservation by the Framework Plan. Open space areas onsite are also identified as part of the Environmental Tier, the natural resource preserve identified by the Framework Plan and the Progress Guide and General Plan. The Environmental Tier was subsequently incorporated into the Multi-Habitat Planning Area, the preserve component of the MSCP. Two residentially designated areas are located within the project site. These areas are located above the floodplain with proximity to the two major roadways within the river valley, Via de la Valle and El Camino Real.

The wetland restoration component of the project is consistent with the natural resource conservation objectives of the Framework Plan and the MSCP. The project also proposes to

dispose of fill material within the Environmental Tier/MHPA. The portion of the disposal sites within the MHPA will be contour graded and re-vegetated to control erosion. A native plant seed-mix is proposed intended to re-establish upland habitat consistent with the habitat conservation objectives of the Framework Plan and MSCP. The portions of the disposal sites designated for residential use are also be proposed to be re-vegetated as upland habitat.

#### Environmental Analysis:

The City of San Diego as Responsible Agency under CEQA has reviewed and considered an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) certified by the Joint Powers Authority (JPA), LDR No 55370, dated March 2, 2005, covering this activity. The EIR/EIS adopted by the JPA fully evaluates the proposed project and includes a mitigation monitoring and reporting where required in accordance with federal and state requirements. Additional mitigation of a minor amount is included by the proposed draft Site Development Permit No. 161395 and Coastal Development Permit No. 191995 to address an impact of 0.25 acres of coastal sage scrub. This impact will be fully mitigated in accordance with the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Regulations (ESL). The applicant is proposing to pay a fee for habitat acquisition to address the impact as allowed through the ESL regulations. No other impacts have been identified which require mitigation not covered in the certified EIR/EIS.

#### CONCLUSION

The proposed San Dieguito River Valley Restoration and Coast to Crest Trail project conforms to the land use designation and design guidelines specified by the Torrey Pines Community Plan and the North City Future Urbanizing Area Plan, Subarea II of the Progress Guide and General Plan. The project would provide the necessary open space improvements to be consistent with San Dieguito River Park Plan and is not incompatible with existing surrounding developments. All issues identified by staff through the review of the project have been satisfactorily resolved in accordance with adopted City policies and regulations. Draft conditions of approval have been prepared for the project (Attachment 5). Findings required to approve the project are included in a draft resolution (Attachments 6).

#### ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve Site Development Permit No. 161395 and Coastal Development Permit No. 191995, with modifications.
2. Deny Site Development Permit No. 161395 and Coastal Development Permit No. 191995, if the findings required to approve the project cannot be affirmed.

Respectfully submitted,

---

John S. Fisher  
Development Project Manager  
Customer Support and Information Division  
Development Services Department

HALBERT/JSF

Attachments:

1. Aerial Photograph
2. Project Vicinity Map
3. Project Plans
4. Draft Permit with Conditions
5. Draft Resolution with Findings
6. Community Planning Group Recommendation

Rev 1-24-05 dcj