

DATE ISSUED: June 2, 2005 **REPORT NO. PC-05-196**

ATTENTION: **Planning Commission, Agenda of June 9, 2005**

SUBJECT: LAKE HODGES PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLE BRIDGE, PROJECT NO. 5429

OWNER/ City of San Diego, Owner
APPLICANT: San Dieguito River Park, Joint Powers Authority, Applicant (Attachment No. 11)

SUMMARY

Issue(s): Should the Planning Commission approve or deny Site Development Permit No. 193075 to construct a 990-foot long pedestrian/bicycle bridge and related trail connections across Lake Hodges linking the Lake Hodges North Shore Trail with the Bernardo Bay trail staging area and Piedras Pintadas Trail?

Staff Recommendation: APPROVE Site Development Permit No. 193075.

Community Planning Group Recommendations: The project is located within the Rancho Bernardo Community Planning Board and the San Pasqual-Lake Hodges Planning Group areas. On May 19, 2005, the Rancho Bernardo Community Planning Board voted 17-0-0 to recommend approval with the following conditions (Attachment No. 9):

1. Approval of the portion of the project that extends from the trail staging area south to the Community Park shall be delayed until an appropriate alignment has been identified. This part of the project shall be separated from the rest of the Site Development Permit and processed as a second phase of the project;
2. Construction of the trail leading from the bridge to the staging area shall be conditioned upon the approval of the second phase of the Site Development Permit;
3. The River Park staff shall continue to work with the Rancho Bernardo Community

Planning Board and City staff to identify an alignment for the southern segment of the project that does not impact the visual quality of the Community Park entrance or the existing pedestrian uses in the area;

4. The Site Development Plan and City Lease shall include a condition that requires the maintenance and monitoring of the willows and mule fat to be planted as screening material in front of the cantilever trail's concrete piles. These activities shall be implemented for the life of the project to ensure the long-term health of this screening vegetation. Dead or dying vegetation shall be replaced in a timely manner. If the hydrology in the area changes and the plantings die due to a lack of water or from too much water, than this vegetation shall be replaced with other appropriate screening vegetation that can tolerate the changed conditions;

5. The Site Development Plan and City Lease shall include a condition that requires the development and implementation of a program to monitor the use of the bridge by various user groups. If a conflict between users is identified, measures shall be implemented in a timely manner and in consultation with City staff to ensure the quick resolution of such conflicts;

6. The Site Development Plan and City Lease shall include a condition that prohibits the opening of the pedestrian/bicycle bridge until bike lanes are provided along West Bernardo Drive, a signalized intersection is operational at the south end of the bridge, and there is a opening in the center median at the intersection to permit bicycle access to and from the bridge from the south side of West Bernardo Drive; and

7. The City lease and the JPA Board of Directors shall acknowledge that the Rancho Bernardo Community Plan designates West Bernardo Drive as a four lane major street and that at sometime in the future the road may have to be widened to accommodate additional traffic. Widening may result in the temporary closure and/or replacement of the pathway that is proposed to extend from the bridge to the trail staging area. In addition, the lease shall acknowledge that bike lanes will be maintained on West Bernardo Drive following widening and the median will remain open for bicycle access at the intersection with the south end of the bridge.

On May 5, 2005, the San Pasqual-Lake Hodges Planning Group voted 7-6 to recommend approval with the condition that proposed public path improvements must meet Class 1 bike path standards on the north side of the lake.

Other Recommendations: On December 16, 2004, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued Biological Opinion 1-6-04-F-2484 for the project (Attachment No. 8)

Environmental Review: The San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority (JPA), as Lead Agency and the City of San Diego, as the Responsible Agency for the project has conducted an Initial Study of the project, which determined that the proposed project

could have a potentially significant effect on biological resources, cultural resources, and geology and soils. Subsequent project revisions and specific mitigation measures have been identified in the project's Mitigated Negative Declaration, SCH No. 2005011085 and as conditioned in Site Development Permit No. 193075 to reduce the potential adverse effect to below a level of significant environmental effects. On May 20, 2005, the JPA Board certified the Mitigated Negative Declaration, SCH No. 2005011085 and adopted the Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program.

Fiscal Impact Statement: All costs associated with the processing of this project are paid from a deposit account maintained by the applicant.

Code Enforcement Impact: None with this action.

Housing Impact Statement: The project proposes to construct a pedestrian and bicycle bridge across Lake Hodges. No residential units are proposed in this project.

BACKGROUND

The proposed project is located within the City of San Diego's Lake Hodges Reservoir, approximately 600 to 1,000 feet west of Interstate 15 and north of West Bernardo Drive, in the AR-1-1 Zone of the Rancho Bernardo and San Pasqual Community Plan areas. Lake Hodges is a potable water reservoir within the San Dieguito River Valley that is owned and managed by the City of San Diego Water Department. Lake Hodges and the surrounding area is also a regional recreational resource and includes boating and fishing activities on the lake itself and a network of trails around the lake.

The San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park Joint Powers Authority, also known as the San Dieguito River Park, is the agency responsible for creating a natural open space park in the San Dieguito River Valley. The San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority (JPA) was formed as a separate agency on June 12, 1989, by the County of San Diego and the Cities of Del Mar, Escondido, Poway, San Diego and Solana Beach. It was empowered to acquire, plan, design, improve, operate and maintain the San Dieguito River Park.

The San Dieguito River Park Focused Planning Area (FPA) has been adopted by the six member agencies of the JPA as a regional park planning boundary. The Focused Planning Area (FPA) for the San Dieguito River Park extends along a 55-mile corridor that begins at the mouth of the San Dieguito River in Del Mar, and ends at the desert just east of Volcan Mountain. The FPA encompasses the San Dieguito River Valley and its major tributary canyons, as well as Lake Hodges.

Currently there is no non-vehicular north/south crossing over the San Dieguito River Valley east of Via de Santa Fe in Fairbanks Ranch for a distance of 19 miles, with the exception of the Interstate 15 freeway bridge. The freeway bridge does provide access for bicyclists in order to cross the lake. Several popular recreational facilities such as the Hodges North Shore Trail (a

segment of the planned 55-mile long Coast to Crest Trail), the Lake Hodges boat dock, and the restored Sikes Adobe Farmhouse are on the north side of the lake. The south side includes the Piedras Pintadas Interpretive Trail, Rancho Bernardo Community Park, and the Bernardo Bay Natural Area. Consistent with the San Dieguito River Park Concept Plan (1994), the adopted San Pasqual Valley Plan (1995), and City's Bicycle Master Plan (2002), the JPA with funds from the Federal Highway Administration Transportation Enhancement Activity (TEA) grant administered by the California Department of Transportation, District 11, proposes to construct a pedestrian/bicycle bridge and related trail connections across Lake Hodges linking the Lake Hodges North Shore Trail with the Bernardo Bay trail staging area and Piedras Pintadas Trail.

DISCUSSION

Project Description:

The project proposes to construct an approximately 990 feet long, 14 feet wide bridge across Lake Hodges with two support piers situated in the lake. Each pier would rest on a 19-foot by 24-foot footing supported by 20 drilled, pre-cast, pre-stressed concrete piles that would be fabricated off-site and positioned in the lake by a crane. The piles and footings would be buried below the existing grade of the lakebed bottom. The proposed bridge type, called a "stress ribbon" design, would consist of a series of precast concrete panels strung along cables extended across the lake. The cables would be anchored into each abutment using rock anchors and "stressed" with tension at each abutment to create a rigid, continuous bridge platform. The bridge height above the water level would vary across each segment of the structure with the minimum vertical clearances of 10.5 to 17.9 feet above the lake surface when the lake is full at 315 feet above mean sea level.

The north abutment would be a below-grade concrete structure approximately 31- by 36-feet in size. Permanent below-grade rock anchors would be installed to secure the abutment and bridge cables structurally. The bridge abutment would connect to the North Shore Trail, realigned slightly to accommodate the bridge abutment. Riprap would be placed down slope of the abutment at the toe of the lakeshore to provide scour protection. The southern bridge abutment would be below-grade and would be approximately 26 feet long by 31 feet wide and about 10 feet deep. A total of four 9-foot diameter shafts would be drilled into the soil below grade to structurally support the abutment and cables. The bridge abutment would connect to the proposed Class I bike path to be constructed along West Bernardo Drive. Riprap would be installed down slope of the abutment at the toe of the lakeshore to protect the structure from scour.

A Class I bike path consisting of an 8-foot wide bicycle path with 2-foot wide shoulders on each side would be constructed from the southern bridge abutment southwestward, along the northwest shoulder of West Bernardo Drive, connecting to the Bernardo Bay staging area and terminating at the construction staging area, approximately 900 feet north of the Rancho Bernardo Community Park entrance, for a total distance of 1790 linear feet. The first 690 linear feet of the bike path along the lakeshore would be placed on a concrete slab cantilevered over the lakeshore and supported by a series of 18-inch diameter pre-cast concrete piles at 15 feet on center (i.e., approximately 48 piles total). The cantilevered structure or viaduct would extend

approximately six feet beyond the lakeshore, partially hiding the piles from view and providing seating opportunities for trail users. The existing slope along the lakeshore would be planted with native willows in front of the concrete piles to further screen them from view. The existing slope along the lake side of West Bernardo Drive is made of engineered fill that was placed there when West Bernardo Drive was constructed. The existing slope is unstable and will be stabilized prior to the cantilevered bike path being installed.

The project footprint is approximately two acres, which includes both permanent and temporary construction areas. The total project would involve 254 cubic yards (cy) of cut and 2,708 cy of fill. Proposed project impacts wetland and sensitive vegetation habitats requires the JPA to process a Site Development Permit with deviations to the environmentally sensitive lands regulations for impacts to wetlands.

Community Plan Analysis:

Both the Rancho Bernardo Community Plan and the San Pasqual Valley Plan identify the project area as Open Space. The Park and Recreation Element of the San Pasqual Valley Plan includes the construction of a pedestrian/bicycle bridge across the Hodges Reservoir as a specific proposal. The Rancho Bernardo Community Plan includes language supporting carefully-designed hiking and bicycling trails in the open space areas and discusses the need for consistency with the San Dieguito Regional Park planning effort.

Environmental Analysis:

The San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority (JPA), as Lead Agency and the City of San Diego, as the Responsible Agency for the project has conducted an Initial Study of the project, which determined that the proposed project could have a potentially significant effect on biological resources, cultural resources, and geology and soils. Subsequent project revisions, specific mitigation measures, and permit conditions have been incorporated into the project. The project, as revised now avoids or mitigates the potentially significant environmental effects previously identified. On May 20, 2005, the JPA Board certified the Mitigated Negative Declaration, SCH No. 2005011085 and adopted the Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program.

A biological survey and report for the proposed project was conducted by Helix Environmental Planning, Inc. The report found that the project would have impacts to Diegan coastal sage scrub, Diegan coastal sage scrub-disturbed, southern willow scrub, and reservoir habitat (southern willow scrub/disturbed wetland vegetation). The project would permanently impact 0.38 acre of combined Diegan coastal sage scrub habitats and 0.05 acre of southern willow scrub habitat. The Diegan coastal sage scrub habitat would be mitigated through payment into the City's Habitat Acquisition Fund. Southern willow scrub and reservoir impacts would be mitigated by creating 0.05 acre of southern willow scrub habitat and another 0.05 acre of riparian enhancement at the City's Cloverdale Creek mitigation site for a total mitigation of 0.1 acre. Mitigation for temporary impacts to 0.46 acre of Diegan coastal sage scrub and Diegan coastal

sage scrub-disturbed shall be accomplished by seeding the area of temporary impact. Temporary impacts to 0.01 hectare (0.03 acre) of southern willow scrub will be mitigated by planting cuttings taken from adjacent willow trees after construction is complete in the area of impact. Additionally, a native seed mix shall be spread in the temporary impact area. Additionally, 0.03 acre of riparian habitat at Cloverdale Creek shall be enhanced through the removal of non-native, invasive plant species.

One federally and state listed endangered species, the least Bell's vireo, and one federally listed threatened species, the coastal California gnatcatcher were observed in the area. Project impacts to the listed species have been addressed through consultations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and issuance of a biological opinion. In addition, to protect the least Bell's vireo and coastal California gnatcatcher in the MHPA, no clearing, grubbing, grading, or other disruptive construction activities shall occur in occupied vireo habitat from March 15 to September 30 and in occupied gnatcatcher habitat from February 15 to August 31 unless certain requirements have been met.

The subject site is located within a one-mile radius of known cultural resources. Based upon the grading activity for the site, monitoring of grading activities would be performed by a qualified historic/archaeological monitor as defined in the City of San Diego Historical Resources Guidelines. The Site Development Permit has been specifically conditioned with the protocol requirement for recovery and curation of resources encountered during excavation.

Project-Related Issues:

The proposed project is located at Lake Hodges, a City-owned potable water reservoir property that is managed by the City's Water Department. Prior to obtaining any grading or construction permits the JPA will be required to obtain property rights from the City for use of the City property.

The JPA proposes to construct the project in phases with the first phase to include the bridge structure and the second phase to construct the south cantilevered structure and the Class 1, South Shore Trail pedestrian/bike path. The South Shore Trail is currently proposed to extend from the south bridge abutment to the South Shore Trail construction staging area, approximately 1,750 linear feet south along West Bernardo Drive. Due to traffic safety concerns, City staff has requested the JPA to extend the trail to West Bernardo Drive and the entryway to Rancho Bernardo Community Park, a signalized intersection that would allow for safe transit of pedestrians and bicyclists. The JPA is coordinating the trail extension with the City Parks and Recreation Department and the Rancho Bernardo Planning Board however, the alignment has not been established to include within this Site Development Permit application. The City staff has conditioned the proposed Permit that would not allow issuing any construction permits for the Phase II - South Shore Trail until the JPA obtains the necessary approvals from the City to extend the trail to the signalized intersection of West Bernardo Dr. and Rancho Bernardo Community Park entry way. Should the Phase I – Bridge be completed prior to Phase II, the proposed Permit is conditioned to allow public use of the bridge once a signalized intersection at

the Interstate15/West Bernardo Drive freeway on-ramp is installed by Caltrans as part of their Interstate15 Managed Lanes Project. The proposed bridge would take advantage of the signal and provide a controlled crossing for road cyclists that want to transition from the bridge to the road network.

The Rancho Bernardo Community Planning Board and San Pasqual-Lake Hodges Planning Group both recommended approval of the project with conditions. The JPA has agreed to the conditions and as indicated on Attachment No. 10, the proposed permit, MMRP, property rights agreement, or standard development review process would address the Group's conditions.

Critical Project Features to Consider During Substantial Conformance Review

- LAND USE: The land use should be consistent with the San Pasqual and Rancho Bernardo Community Plans, Multiple Species Conservation Plan, the underlying zone, and the use defined within the permit for the project.
- INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT: The development should not exceed the area and square footages evaluated within the MND SCH. No. 2005011085 and associated technical reports that have been prepared for the project.
- SITE DESIGN: The design should not expand beyond what has been proposed as described in the permit and shown on exhibits of approval.
- PARKING/CIRCULATION: No parking facilities are proposed as described in the permit and shown on exhibits of approval.
- ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS: Potential impacts should not expand beyond those disclosed within MND SCH. No. 200511085
- LANDSCAPING: Landscaping and revegetation onsite should conform to the conditions within the permit,

Conclusion:

Staff recommends approval of the proposal as requested. The project is consistent with the San Dieguito River Park Concept Plan and is identified as a future project in the City of San Diego's San Pasqual Valley Plan (1995) and would not conflict with these plans. In addition, the bridge is identified as a "top priority" Class I bicycle transportation facility in the City's Bicycle Master Plan (City of San Diego 2002). The project is also consistent with City of San Diego's Multiple Species Conservation Plan (MSCP). The Rancho Bernardo and San Pasqual Community Planning Groups voted to approve the project as proposed. The proposed project has incorporated mitigation to bring all impacts associated with the project to below a level of significance.

ALTERNATIVES

1. **Approve Site Development Permit No. 193075, with modifications.**
2. **Deny Site Development Permit No. 193075, if the findings required to approve the project cannot be affirmed.**

Respectfully submitted,

Marcela Escobar-Eck
Deputy Director, Customer Support
and Information Division
Development Services Department

Tim Daly
Project Manager, Customer Support
and Information Division
Development Services Department

ESCOBAR-ECK/TPD

Attachments:

1. Aerial Photograph
2. Community Plan Land Use Map
3. Project Location Map
4. Project Data Sheet
5. Project Plans
6. Draft Permit with Conditions
7. Draft Resolution with Findings
8. USFWS Biological Opinion
9. Community Planning Group Recommendation
10. Response to Community Planning Group conditions
11. Ownership Disclosure Statement
12. Project Chronology

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