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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Mission Bay Park has for decades been one of San Diego's principal tourism and leisure destinations, providing seven square miles of water and land for recreation and attracting millions of visitors from across the nation and abroad. On a peak summer day well over 100,000 people will use the Park, engaging in a diverse range of activities from group picnicking, sailing, and visiting Sea World, to swimming, fishing, jogging and bicycling.

As more people settle in the region, new recreation demands will be placed upon the Park responding to new interests, perceptions and values about how to engage the outdoor environment for relaxation and play. The fundamental goal of the Master Plan Update is to identify these new demands and chart a course for the continuing development of the Park which will sustain the diversity and quality of recreation and protect and enhance the Bay's environment for future generations to come.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mission Bay Park attracts a high level of interest from a great variety of constituent groups: organizations, institutions, businesses and individuals. To tap this interest and put it to work to the benefit of the Master Plan Update, an active and meaningful public participation process was established at the outset of the planning project.

The public participation process relied on a previously prepared Community Outreach Program, which targeted community groups; a statistically valid, random telephone survey of over 800 San Diego households; two public workshops; regularly scheduled and advertised public meetings with the Mission Bay Planners (an advisory group sanctioned by City Council which included the entire Mission Bay Park Committee); and regular meetings with a steering committee composed of directors and management staff from key City of San Diego departments.

A critical component in the mobilization of public input was the operation of a professionally organized media campaign. All the relevant newspaper, radio and television stations were contacted using press information packs, individual interviews throughout the planning process, and regular press releases. Feature articles in all the media, including business, environmental, and current news coverage, helped to foster public awareness of the issues being debated. This campaign contributed to a high public attendance at the public meetings and workshops. It is to this comprehensive public input that the Master Plan Update owes its recommendations, which were approved by the Mission Bay Planners in draft form in November, 1992.

### **A BALANCED APPROACH: RECREATION, COMMERCE, ENVIRONMENT**

The diversity and quality of recreation in Mission Bay Park depends on the balanced provision of public recreation, the sustainable management of environmental resources, and the operation of economically successful commercial leisure enterprises.



*Public Participation*

### **Recreation**

This Plan maintains and expands upon Mission Bay Park's traditional land and water use objectives. With over 100 acres of proposed new parkland, the Park will further be regarded as a regional destination for waterside recreation, picnicking, walking and bicycling, and simply enjoying the Bay views. These developed areas will be supported by extensive natural areas, principally in Fiesta Island, for more passive, nature-oriented recreation.

### **Commerce**

From a commercial perspective, the Park will continue to host a number of economically important leisure-industry leases, such as a major aquatic park, resort hotels and recreational vehicle camping, as well as not-for-profit leases such as youth camping and sailing facilities. It is not the objective of this Plan, however, to expand dedicated lease areas to the detriment of the public use of the land. The total land lease area under this Plan remains below the 25 percent cap imposed by City Charter. The total water lease area also remains below the City Charter cap, which is 6.5 percent. What this Plan does promote is the intensification of certain existing leases in order to maximize their revenue potential.

### **Environment**

In recognition of this generation's increasing attention towards environmental issues, and of this region's concern over the quality of the Bay's natural environment in particular, this Plan incorporates a decisive commitment to environmental health. This commitment is supported by comprehensive proposals aimed at improving the Bay's water quality and continuing the conservation and enhancement of the Park's wetland and upland habitats for the benefit of both wildlife and people. Key environmental recommendations include the establishment of an 80-acre wetland area at the outfall of Rose Creek, and the creation of an overflow parking lot in South Shores. If properly designed, the wetland will help filter pollutants entering the Bay through Rose Creek, which drains a 58-square mile area, provide increased habitat for wildlife along the Pacific Coast Flyway, and provide the setting for nature-oriented recreational activities such as bird-watching and canoeing. The overflow parking lot will help reduce automobile traffic in the Park, which reduces harmful emissions and congestion, and helps preserve more of the land for recreation, commercial and upland habitat functions.

## **“PARKS WITHIN A PARK”**

Because the Park’s land and water resources are finite, achieving an optimum combination of recreational, commercial and environmental functions depends strictly on the efficient use of the Park’s land and water areas. In other words, the Park must yield “maximum sustainable benefit” out of a limited set of resources. This efficiency depends in part on the congregation of compatible uses in distinctive regions around the Park so as to gain multiple benefits from any given land and water area. This approach, in effect, creates distinctive recreation areas within the Park, or “Parks Within a Park.”

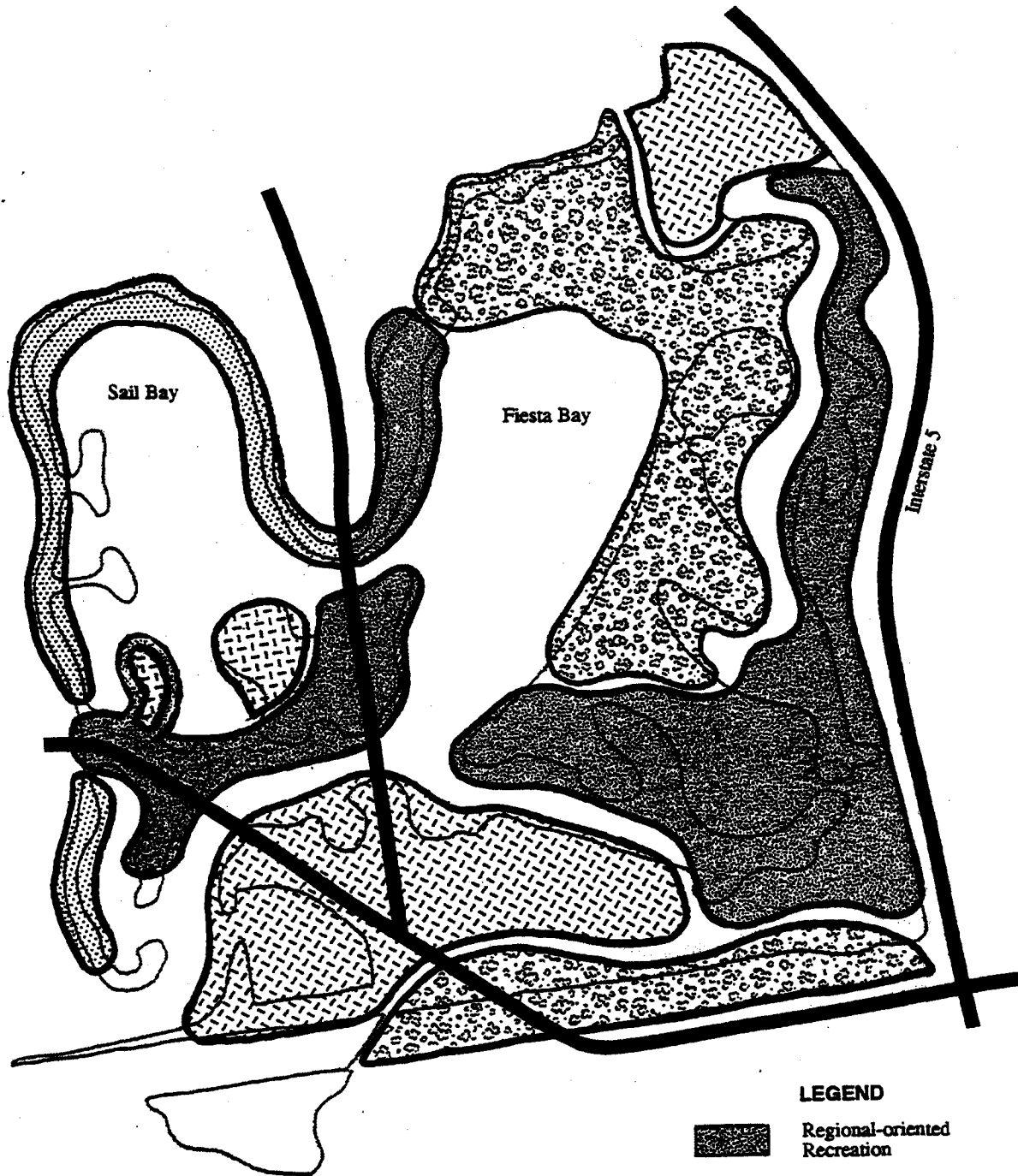
One of the main features of the “Parks Within a Park” concept is the consolidation of natural resources in the northeast quadrant of the Park, partly in Fiesta Island (mostly upland habitats) and partly in the areas west of the Rose Creek outfall (mostly wetland habitat). Such a land use allocation augments the habitat value of both the existing preserves and proposed new habitats, and maximizes their potential function as a setting for passive, nature-oriented recreation.

## **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **i. Water Quality**





It is broadly recognized that the Park’s economic and recreational future depends on the quality of the Bay’s water. In response to fluctuating quality of the Bay waters, this Plan proposes a comprehensive set of measures involving state-of-the-art biological, mechanical, public education and recreation management programs.

- Biological measures include the establishment of salt-water marshes that can naturally filter pollutants as they enter the Bay through the creeks that drain the Bay’s watershed. The principal marsh area would be located generally west of the Rose Creek outfall; smaller marshes are proposed at the Tecolote Creek outfall and on East Shores south of the Visitor and Information Center.



**"Parks within a Park"**  
(Main Recreation Orientation)  
*figure 1*

**LEGEND**

-  Regional-oriented Recreation
-  Commercial-oriented Recreation
-  Neighborhood-oriented Recreation
-  Habitat-oriented Recreation / Preservation

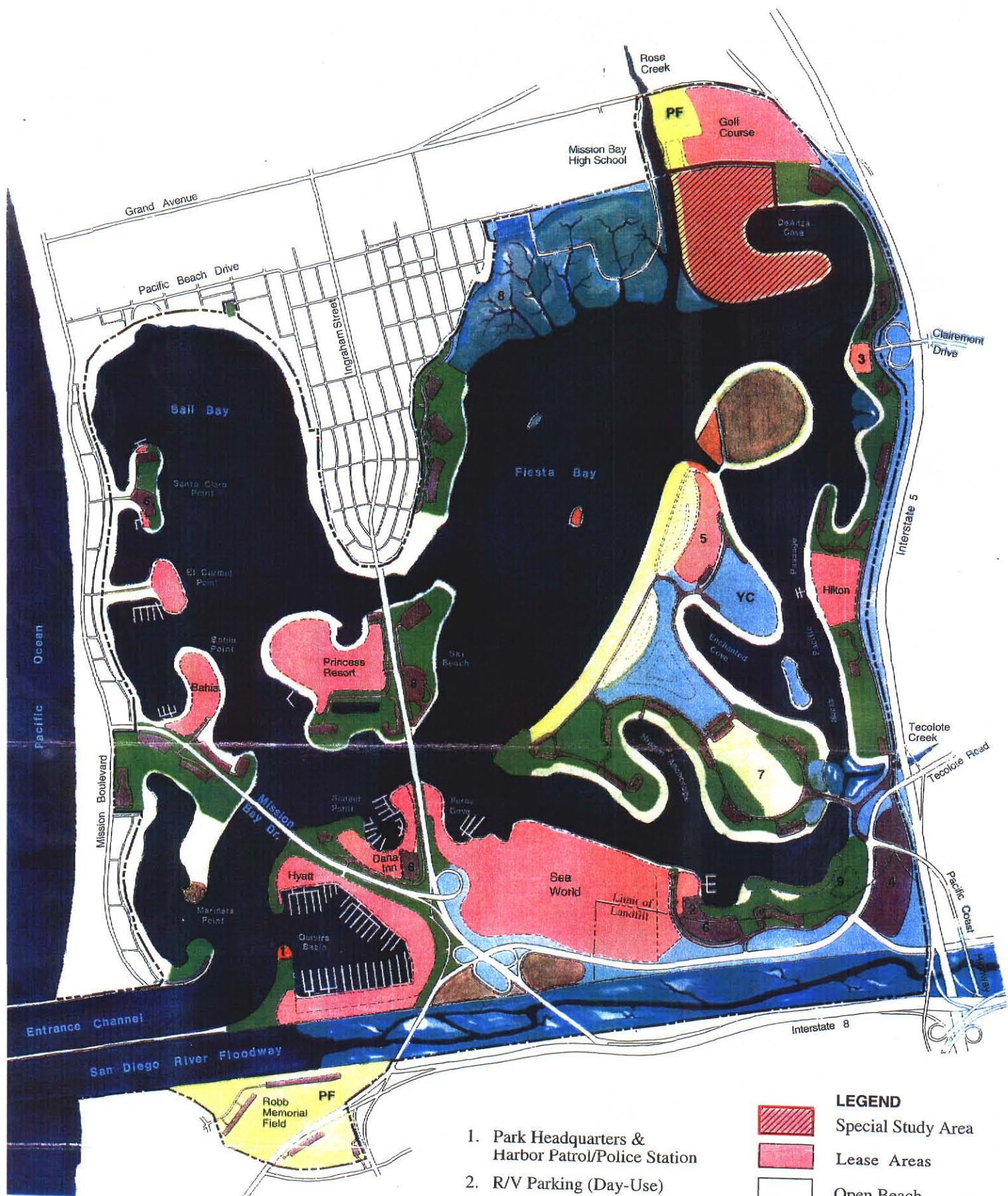
- Mechanical measures include completion of the City's interceptor system, construction of upstream catchment basins, and the provision of additional sanitary flushing stations for boats and recreational vehicles.
- Public education and management measures include a program of watershed pollution awareness education and a specific pollution control campaign for boating, automobile, and park maintenance operations.

**ii. Regional Recreation**

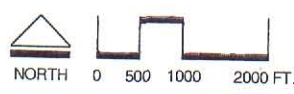
The turf and beach areas along the Park's shorelines support the most intensive public recreational activity in Mission Bay. These areas draw users from throughout the San Diego region. With the County's population on the rise, the capacity of the Park to accommodate this activity must be commensurately increased.

- This Plan proposes a 50 percent increase in new regional parkland. About 100 acres of regional parkland are proposed in Fiesta Island, mostly in the current sludge bed area. Another 40 acres are proposed in South Shores.
- The Over-the-Line sand arena is proposed to be relocated from the western to the eastern end of Fiesta Island's main peninsula. This will expand its area, improve spectator facilities, and place it within walking distance of the Park's major future parking and transit facilities.
- New large group picnic facilities are proposed in South Shores and Fiesta Island in close proximity to wide, open turf areas suitable for related active games and sports. Existing group picnic events are to be phased out from Crown Point Shores and be transferred to South Shores and Fiesta Island once these areas are developed.
- League sports are proposed to remain in Robb Field and the Pacific Beach Athletic Fields. No additional areas for "league-play" are proposed, except for the potential use of the Ski Club lease area, which will be relocated to the new South Shores embayment.















# Mission Bay Park San Diego, California



## Land Use

- | LEGEND  |                    |
|---|--------------------|
|  | Special Study Area |
|  | Lease Areas        |
|  | Open Beach         |
|  | Parkland           |
|  | Playfields         |
|  | Youth Camping      |
|  | Wetland Habitat    |
|  | Upland Preserve    |
|  | Coastal Landscape  |
|  | Salt Pan           |
- 
1. Park Headquarters & Harbor Patrol/Police Station
  2. R/V Parking (Day-Use)
  3. Visitor/Information Center
  4. Overflow Parking
  5. Primitive Camping
  6. Boat Ramp/Trailer Parking
  7. Sand Arena
  8. Northern Wildlife Preserve
  9. Public Amphitheater & Promenade

**iii. Tourist Attractions**

An important part of Mission Bay's recreational value lies in its tourist-serving facilities such as the resort hotels, special events and various camping facilities. This Plan recognizes and supports this diversity of tourist attractions, but without approaching the limit of land and water area devoted to dedicated leases as dictated by the City's Charter.

- This Plan provides from 350 to 950 potential new hotel rooms, largely within current lease areas in Bahia Point, Sunset Point, De Anza Point and Quivira Basin. An overall increase in revenue is thus achieved while minimizing the taking of land for commercial purposes.
- Overnight facilities for recreational vehicles are proposed as a potential use in De Anza Cove as part of the De Anza Special Study Area. At this location, recreational vehicle camping would enjoy optimum water access for swimming and watercraft rentals. Being well served by Interstate 5 (I-5) and local commercial streets, this location also generates minimal traffic conflicts in surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- An approximately 16.5-acre commercial lease area is proposed in South Shores east of Sea World. This facility is suitable for several potential uses, including the expansion of Sea World attractions, a hotel, or other public recreation and tourist enterprises. The intent is for this parcel to serve a "best use" function that clearly contributes to the Park's image as an aquatic-oriented recreation destination.



#### **iv. "Natural" Recreation Areas**

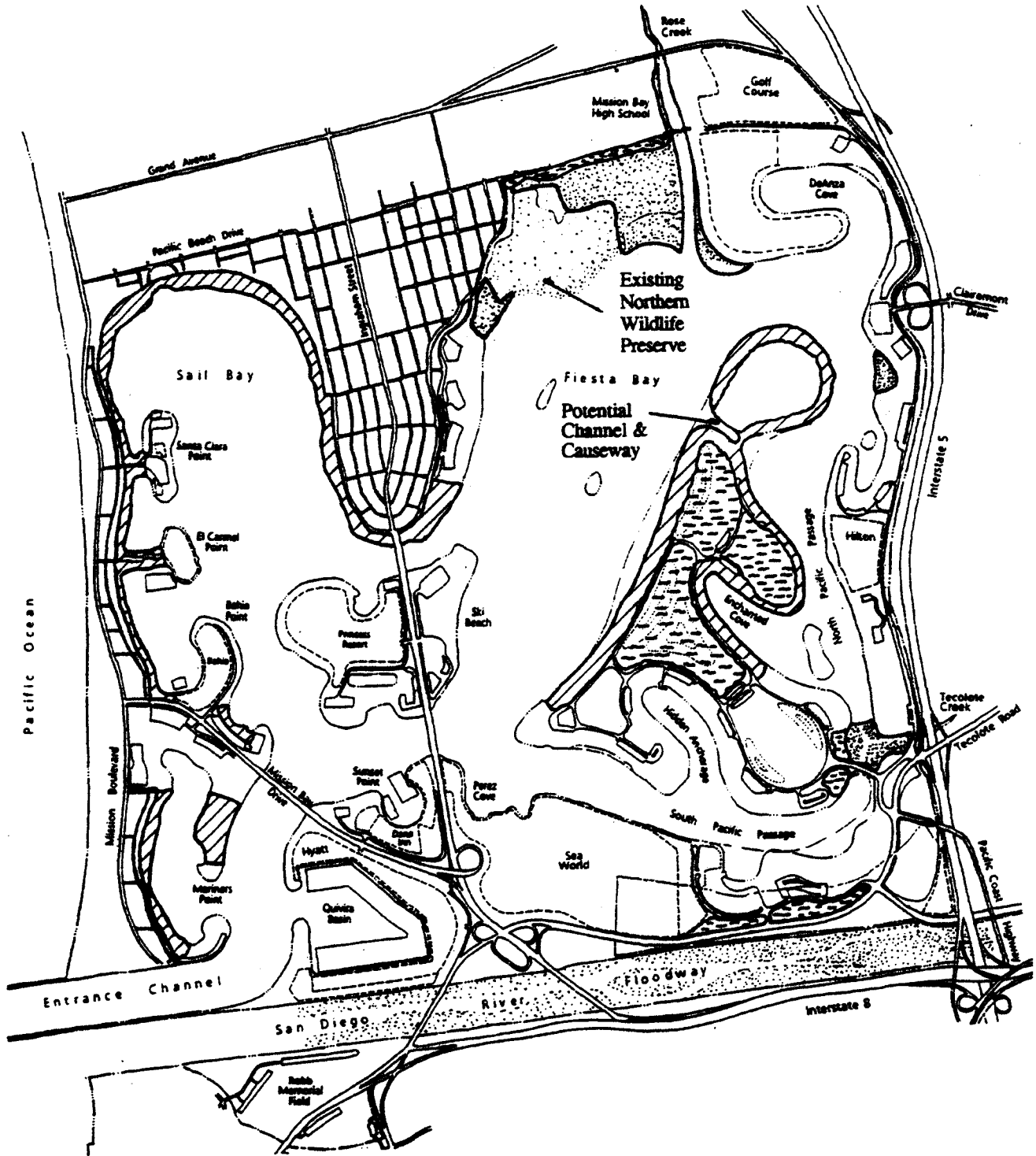
The rise of environmental awareness in recent decades has been paralleled by an increase in the desire for more natural recreation venues. The telephone survey conducted as part of the Master Plan Update revealed that a majority of San Diego residents would like to experience parts of Mission Bay in a more natural condition.

- The north half of Fiesta Island is proposed to remain essentially in a natural state, with large areas in coastal sage scrub available for hiking, jogging, bicycling, and primitive camping.
- The wetland areas proposed at the Rose Creek outfall would provide a natural setting for bird-watching, kayaking, rowing and canoeing.

#### **v. Wildlife Habitats**

In response to an extraordinary level of public demand for preservation and enhancement of natural resources, this Plan includes a number of proposals aimed at improving the Park's wildlife habitats. (These same areas are also planned to pro-actively respond to future state and federal requirements for habitat mitigation).

- An 80-acre saltwater marsh is proposed west of Rose Creek adjacent to the existing Northern Wildlife Preserve. This recommendation requires the relocation of the Recreational Vehicle Park (Campland on the Bay), possibly to the east side of the Creek as a potential use in the proposed De Anza Special Study Area. Smaller marshes are also proposed at the outfall of Tecolote Creek and in North Pacific Passage.
- About 40 acres of eelgrass beds are proposed in Fiesta Bay. These result from (1) the dredging of East Ski Island, which allows a desired shortening of the Thunderboats event, (2) the "shaving" of Fiesta Island's western shore to form a mile-long crescent beach, which improves the potential use of the beach for swimming and special events viewing, and (3) the potential implementation of a channel across the Island's north end, which enhances the viability of the existing Least Tern preserve in the northern peninsula.






Note: Existing Northern Wildlife Preserve area is not intended as a recreation area beyond its aesthetic and educational values.



**"Natural" Recreation Areas**

figure 3

**LEGEND**

-  Upland Area
-  Wetland Area
-  Open Beach

- Another 4 acres of eelgrass beds are proposed as part of a new embayment in the south shore of Fiesta Island facing Sea World. ~~Along with a protective jetty<sup>1)</sup>~~, the embayment would provide tranquil, south-facing waters for wading adjacent to new parkland. Should additional eelgrass beds be needed for mitigation purposes, this embayment could be doubled in size.

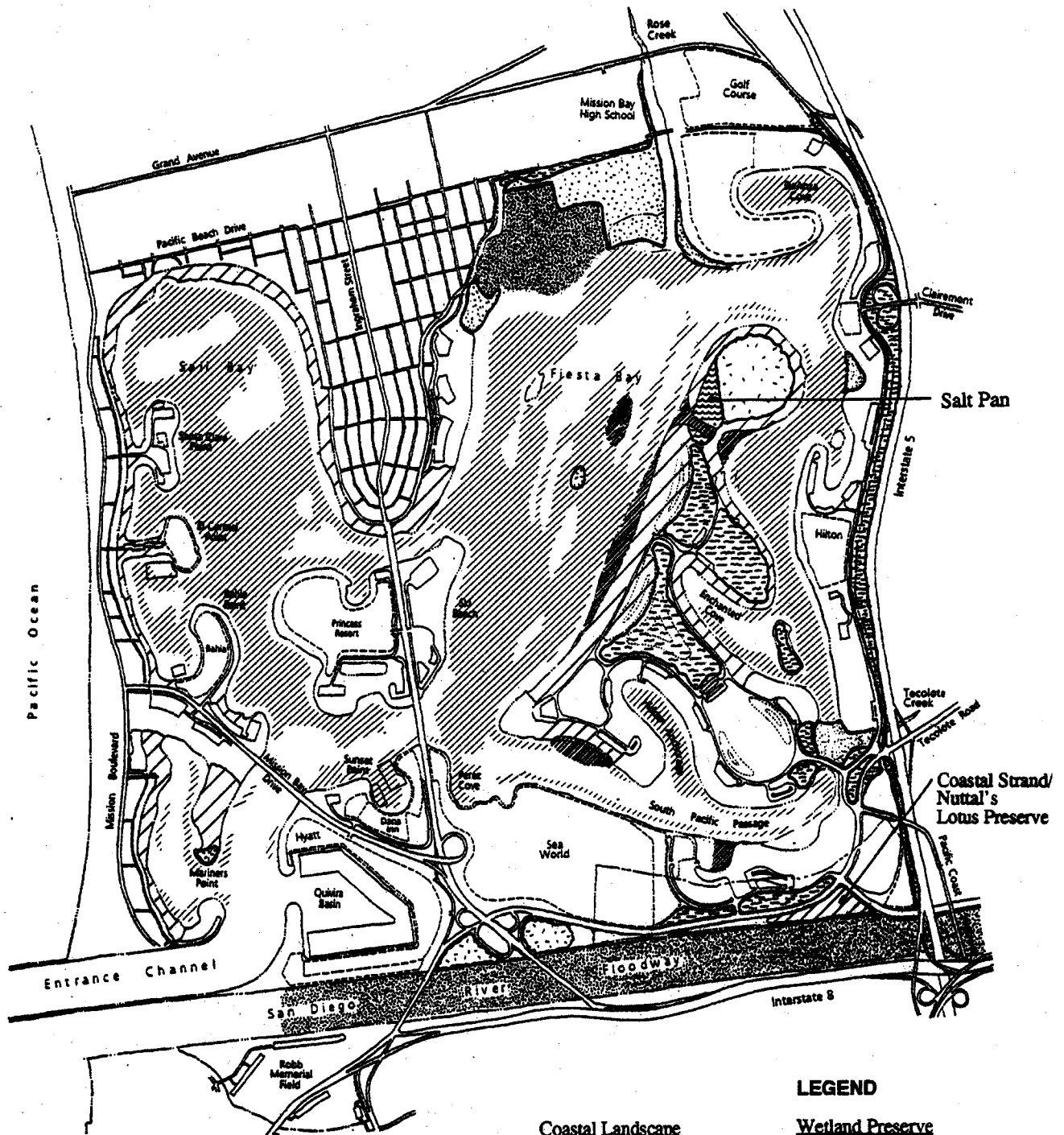
1. References to the protective jetty were deleted per California Coastal Commission's suggested modification, accepted by the City Council on 5/13/97, Resolution R-288657, but was not actually removed from this section in earlier versions of the plan.

## vi Water Recreation

The aim of the Plan's water use recommendations is to maintain an adequate level of safety and recreation enjoyment in the Park's various water areas. The means to this end is controlling the access to the Bay waters, that is, the number and location of boat ramps and related boat trailer parking. Consultations were held with representatives of the City's Lifeguard Services Division and the Police Department in an effort to arrive, through experience and practical knowledge, at the Bay's water use capacity and corresponding level of access.

- Current time-use allocations in Sail Bay are proposed to be maintained. In South Pacific Passage, west of the planned embayment, a "no-wake" zone should be instituted for the benefit of the early morning rowers.
- The Plan proposes parking for up to ~~634~~ 600<sup>2)</sup> boat trailers, distributed between the Dana Landing, Vacation Isle, De Anza and new South Shores ramps. Due to the high congestion and related navigation hazards experienced in North Pacific Passage, the De Anza ramp is proposed to be regulated as access and safety considerations may dictate, particularly on peak days. Unused areas of the ramp could be dedicated for day-use recreational vehicles and for launching non-motorized watercraft.

2. See Recommendation 43 that describes the calculations for the proposed 600 boat trailer spaces.



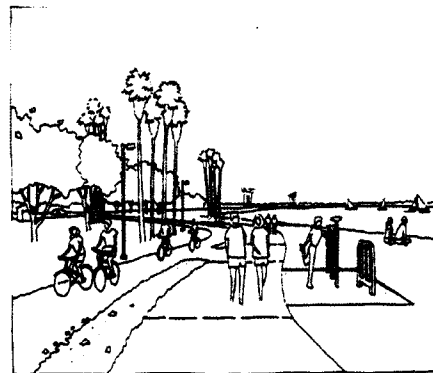
**Key Environmental Recommendations**  
*figure 4*

<b>Coastal Landscape</b>		<b>Wetland Preserve</b>	
	Coastal Sage Scrub		Existing
	Beach and Coastal Strand Vegetation		Proposed
<b>Upland Preserve</b>		<b>Eelgrass</b>	
			Existing
			Proposed

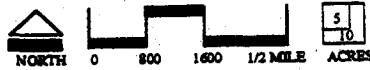
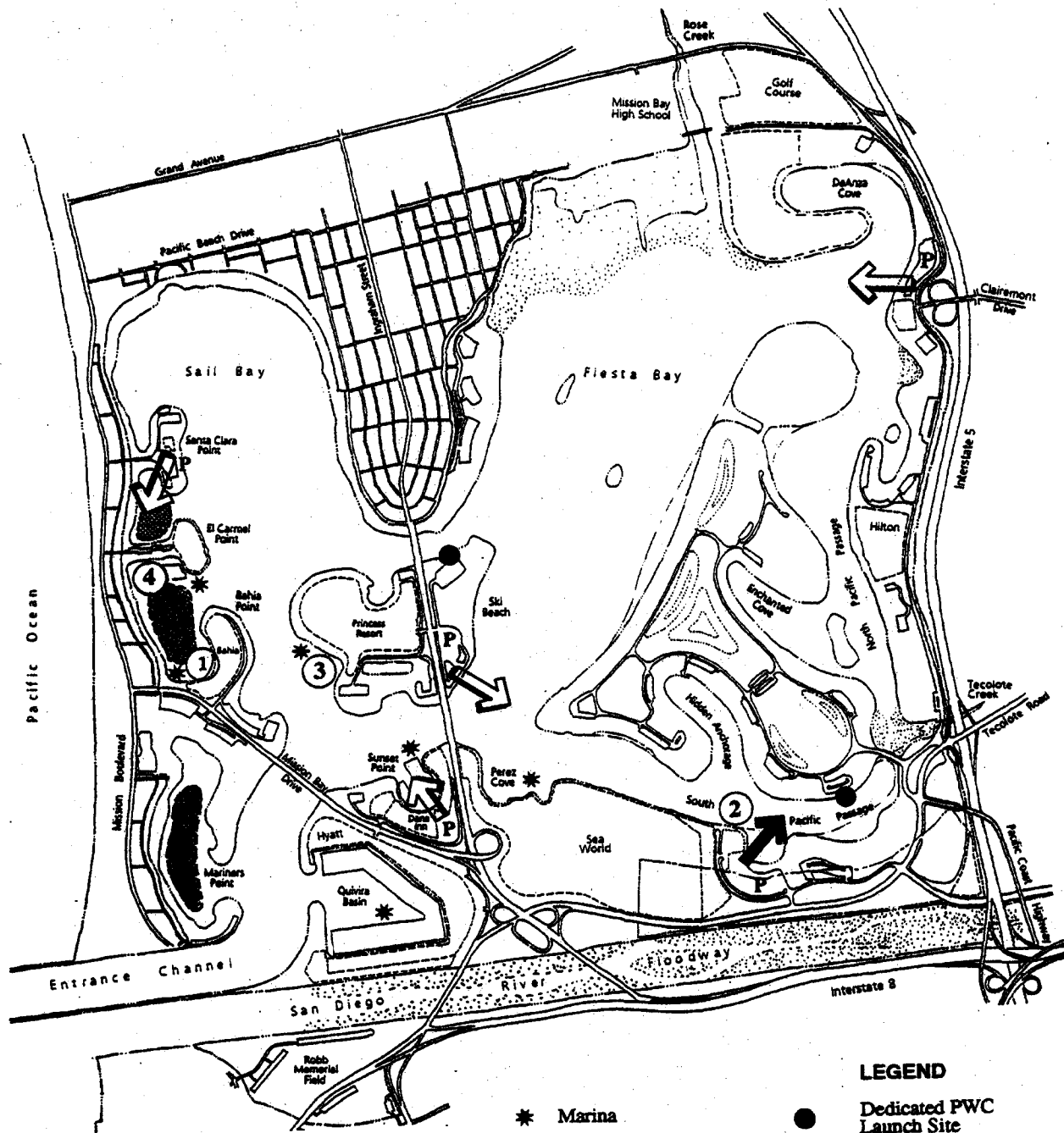
## vii. Access and Circulation

The Plan addresses vehicular parking, transit, bicycle and pedestrian improvements with the aim of making efficient use of the regional roadway and transit network while minimizing the impact of cars in the Park. The Plan also promotes the expansion of the pedestrian and bicycle pathways around the Park, which, according to the telephone survey, rate second to picnicking as the preferred recreation venue.

- An overflow parking lot is proposed at the eastern end of South Shores. This lot would capture up to 2,900 vehicles coming from the regional freeway and collector network, minimizing traffic through the Park during peak use times. By concentrating parking in an area of the Park which has marginal recreation value, more of the waterfront parkland areas in Fiesta Island and South Shores (about 18 acres) can be dedicated for active recreation areas.
- A tram system, potentially a peak-day concession, is proposed to transport visitors from the overflow parking to Fiesta Island, and possibly other areas in the Park and beyond to Mission Beach and Pacific Beach. The telephone survey indicates resident support for the tram concept and for paying a nominal fee for its use.
- The completion of the bicycle/pedestrian path is proposed, allowing users to circle the Park uninterrupted. This will require the construction of a bridge over Rose Creek, an overpass at Sea World's entrance roadway, and a raised path or boardwalk under Ingraham Street connecting Sail Bay with Crown Point Shores. In addition, over 5 miles of waterfront pathways are proposed in Fiesta Island.
- To enhance the use of the paths, separate but adjoining courses for pedestrians and bicyclists/skaters are proposed. It is recommended that existing paths be retrofitted to the new standards to the extent possible.



*Bike & Pedestrian Path*



**Water Access**

figure 5

- |                                   |                                |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| * Marina                          | ● Dedicated PWC Launch Site    |
| P Boat Trailer Parking            | ■ Mooring Basins               |
| ○ Potential Water Lease Expansion | ↔ Existing Boat Ramp to Remain |
| 1. Bahia Hotel                    | ➔ New Boat Ramp                |
| 2. Mission Bay Boat & Ski Club    |                                |
| 3. Princess Hotel                 |                                |
| 4. Mission Bay Yacht Club         |                                |

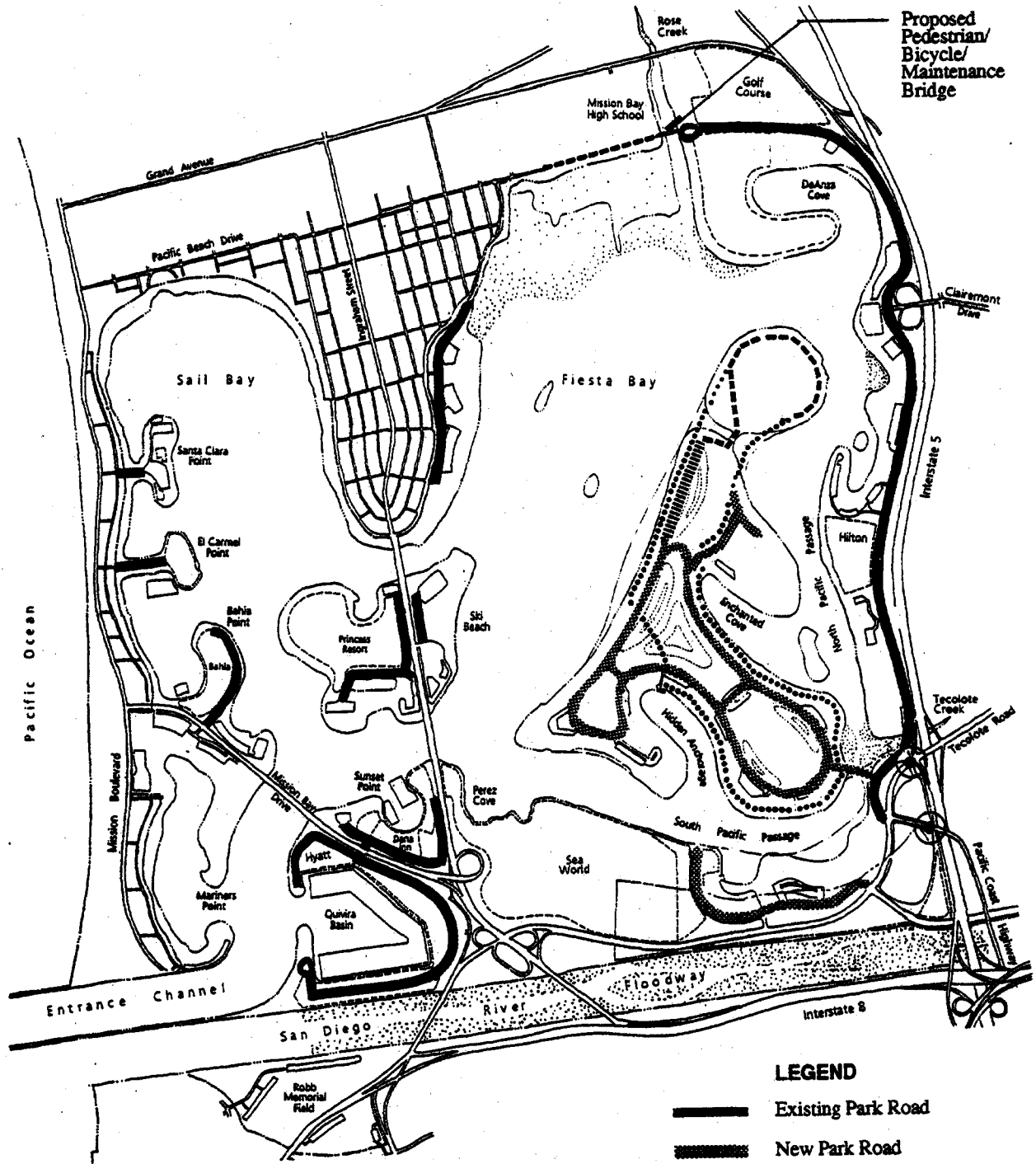


viii. Aesthetics and Design

Design Guidelines are included as Appendix G in this Master Plan Update. The Guidelines aim to steer the design and implementation of future Park improvements, both public and private, towards an aesthetic that captures and manifests the Bay's aquatic environment.

Existing facilities undergoing renovation should adhere to the intent of the Guidelines to the greatest extent possible. It is recognized, however, that existing conditions may not permit the full implementation of the Guidelines in all cases.

- Reinforcement of the Park's coastal setting is proposed as a broad landscape objective. Specific recommendations include turning the boundary of the Park, the areas between the Park road and the major regional roads in particular, into a coastal sage scrub landscape.
- To ensure continued public access to the shore, minimum setbacks from development areas are proposed: 50 feet from the mean-high water line in bulkhead conditions; 150 feet in beach conditions.
- In an effort to promote a uniquely appropriate building architecture that responds to the Bay environment, the Guidelines discourage overtly and excessive thematic styles.
- To gain more interesting roof forms, a special 10-foot "rooftop design allowance" is proposed as an addition to the current 30-foot coastal height restriction. An additional 5 feet in height in Quivira Basin and the Dana Inn lease area is proposed to permit the provision of one level of underground parking and thus enhance the redevelopment potential of these sites. These recommendations would require a simple majority vote by the citizens. The overall redevelopment of these sites does not depend on this vote, however, they are only enhanced by it.
- In order to allow greater flexibility in designing new facilities within the SeaWorld leasehold, the City of San Diego's Coastal Zone Height Limit Overlay Zone was amended by public vote in November, 1998. The zoning code amendment allows potential development to a maximum height of 160 feet within the SeaWorld property. However, specific criteria governing the location, height, scale, massing and visual impacts of all SeaWorld development shall be governed by the Coastal Act and the Sea World Master Plan, which is incorporated by reference into the Mission Bay Park Master Plan and LCP Land Use Plan. All potential development shall require a coastal development permit issued in accordance with Coastal Act requirements.









Proposed Pedestrian/  
Bicycle/  
Maintenance  
Bridge

Pacific Ocean

Entrance Channel

San Diego River

**LEGEND**

-  Existing Park Road
-  New Park Road
-  Removed Park Road
-  Special Event Access & Parking
-  Maintenance/ Emergency Access
-  Proposed Underpass



**Proposed Roadway System**

*figure 6*

Specific recommendations for the incorporation of art into the Park are included under this Plan document.

### **ix. Capital Costs and Funding**

The proposed Park improvements represent a public investment of about \$171 million (1992 dollars). New and additional private investment in the Park could reach over \$200 million over the next 20 years. These improvements will generate substantial revenue for the City in the form of lease revenues, Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT), sales taxes, employment taxes, development fees, etc. Part of the success of the Park will depend on an adequate, sustained level of both public and private improvements.

Three basic funding strategies are available to pursue the implementation of the proposed Park improvements:

- All Park-generated revenues including land lease revenue, TOT share, Sludge Mitigation funds, and tax increment are reinvested in the Park through an enterprise account. This scenario produces an estimated \$52 million funding shortfall over this Plan's 20-year life.
- Only the incremental revenues from intensified leases, plus the other sources mentioned above, would be used to fund improvements. This scenario yields an \$85 million funding shortfall.
- No land lease, TOT, or tax increment revenues are dedicated for Park improvements; only Sludge Mitigation funds would be available. This scenario would generate a \$154 million funding shortfall.

Clearly, the first option yields the most revenue towards the development of the Park and is recommended for consideration. However, in light of the City's historic reluctance to accord such funds to an enterprise account, the second option should receive alternate consideration.

Both new and existing revenue sources are proposed to bridge the gap in funding shortfalls, no matter which enterprise account option, or none, is ultimately chosen. These include State and Federal Grants, Wetland Mitigation Funds, Certificates of Participation (replenished by new revenue sources), and an Open Space Financing District Bond.

## **LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM**

### **Introduction**

The California Coastal Act of 1976 established a coastal zone boundary and mandated that all jurisdictions within that boundary prepare a Local Coastal Program (LCP). The LCP brings the jurisdiction's planning process into conformance with the 1976 Coastal Act.

The entire Mission Bay Park is located within the Coastal Zone. Consequently, this Master Plan has the responsibility of including planning and development standards to protect and preserve the state's coastal resources pursuant to the adoption and certification of the City of San Diego's LCP.

This Mission Bay Park Master Plan Update/LCP Land Use Plan has incorporated the coastal issues that have been identified by and for the community, and has developed policies and recommendations in the various elements of the Master Plan Update as summarized below:

### **Public Access**

The Master Plan Update incorporates recommendations for improving vehicular, emergency, bicycle and pedestrian access to the Park. Over 5,000 new parking spaces are being recommended along with a tram system serving the principal recreation areas, new pedestrian walkways around Fiesta Island and South Shores, and completion of a bicycle path around the Bay. In all, the Park will contain over 12 miles of paths along the waterfront. Provisions for waterfront access for persons with disabilities is also recommended in the Plan, including dedicated parking in close proximity to the shore and paths leading directly to the water.

The Master Plan Update also recommends implementation of the previously planned South Shores boat ramp, and the regulated use of the existing De Anza boat ramp to ensure continued, safe and enjoyable access to the Bay by motor, sail and human-powered craft.

### **Recreational and Visitor Servicing Facilities**

Mission Bay Park offers a myriad of recreational opportunities to the public at no cost including tourist information, parking, Park Rangers for a safer and more enjoyable experience while in the Park, close, convenient access from all major freeways, and many

sporting events including professional volleyball, personal watercraft (PWC), waterski, and Over-the-Line tournaments.

Other free park facilities include picnic shelters, barbecues, designated swim zones staffed with Lifeguards during the summer months, basketball courts, children's play areas including a new accessible playground located at South Tecolote Shores, a horseshoe court located at Hospitality Point, sand volleyball courts, fire rings, recreational vehicle pump-out station located at the Visitor's Information Center, public boat launches, a fitness course, and extensive bicycle/pedestrian paths throughout the entire Park. In addition to all these amenities, Mission Bay is also the home of several wildlife preserves providing bird watchers an opportunity to observe a variety of sea birds including the federally endangered Least Tern, the Brown Pelican, and the Light-footed Clapper Rail.

The Master Plan Update recommends the expansion of guest housing facilities in the Park. Over one thousand new hotel rooms are envisioned in the Plan, located in Marina Village, Bahia Point, Sunset Point, and, potentially, in De Anza Point in a specially designated, ~~171~~ 76-acre Special Study Area <sup>1)</sup>. As they do today, these facilities will likely range in services and amenities so as to provide accommodations to a wide sector of the public. Overnight accommodations for recreation vehicles are also possible under the Plan as part of the De Anza Special Study Area.

The Master Plan Update also proposes the incorporation of a 16.5-acre parcel in South Shores for commercial purposes in accordance to a "best-use" objective from a recreation standpoint. An expansion of Sea World and a water-oriented theme park have been raised as possible uses for this parcel.

It should be noted that the above mentioned commercial facilities do not raise the dedicated lease areas of the Park above 25 percent of the Park's land area or 6.5 percent of the Park's water area, which are the maximums allowed under the City Charter.

### **Community Park and Recreation Areas**

The Master Plan Update recommends a 50 percent increase in areas dedicated for active or regional-serving recreation. This increase is equivalent to 100 acres of new turf and adjoining beach area. Most of the new parkland is proposed in the southern portion of Fiesta Island and in South Shores.

1. The plan originally included 80 acres of proposed wetlands habitat in the 171-acre Special Study Area. The City Council removed the 80 acres of proposed wetlands from the SSA on 8/2/94 by R-284399, making it 91 acres (171 - 80 = 91). The acreage was revised from 91 to 76 acres (removing 15 acres for public parkland) by the California Coastal Commission's suggested modifications accepted by the City Council on 5/13/97, Resolution R-288657. See Recommendation 25 on page 53.

These areas are optimally served by public transit facilities and by regional roadways, helping to minimize vehicular congestion in the Park and on surrounding city streets. New playgrounds, fields for informal sports, picnic grounds, and an upgraded sand area for the Over-the-Line Tournament are proposed as part of the new recreation development.

### **Provisions for Low-Income and Moderate-Income Housing**

Provisions for private housing are inconsistent with the public use of Mission Bay Park and are therefore, not proposed in the Master Plan Update. In accordance with the Kapiloff Bill, and as confirmed by the City Attorney, the current lease for the De Anza Mobile Estates in De Anza Point is scheduled to expire in 2003. Disposition of this lease area will follow the overall disposition of the De Anza Special Study area as City Council may mandate at a future date. The Plan does not recommend specific uses for the ~~171~~ 76-acre Special Study Area, except for a ~~minimum of 80~~ maximum of 60 acres of ~~new wetland habitat~~ guest housing<sup>1)</sup>.

1. This sentence is revised to be consistent with the Special Study Area recommendations stating that a maximum of 60 acres can be developed as guest housing. See also Recommendation 25 on page 53.

### **Preservation of Water, Marine and Biological Resources**

The Master Plan Update incorporates a comprehensive water quality improvement program for Mission Bay, including the creation of nearly 100 acres of salt marshes, 80 of them at the mouth of Rose Creek to help trap contaminants before they enter the Bay's main water bodies. Most of the new marshes will be located either contiguous or in close proximity to the Northern Wildlife Preserve, which under the Plan is retained in its present configuration. The Plan also proposes about 20 acres of new eelgrass beds, resulting from the reconfiguration of the west shore of Fiesta Island and from a proposed channel cut across the Island on its northern section. The marsh and eelgrass areas will help enhance the Bay's marine and biological resources by augmenting the availability of habitat for shore birds and invertebrate populations, and by helping improve the Bay's overall water quality.

Under the Plan, existing Least Tern preserves are proposed to be retained and/or relocated to alternate sites once such sites are proven, by breeding terns, to be demonstrably suitable. The Plan also proposes extensive areas of coastal landscape containing coastal sage scrub and dune plant communities. These landscapes are envisioned mainly in the mid and western sections of Fiesta Island.



### **Beach and Coastal Bluff Preservation**

The Master Plan Update recommends the preservation of all of the Park's natural bluff areas, namely the bluffs on Riviera and Crown Point Shores. Existing beach areas are recommended to be preserved, except for the small beach south of the Visitor Center, which the Plan envisions as marsh to help improve the water quality in that area of North Pacific Passage. This loss, however, is mitigated by the addition of a larger and protected beach area in the southern end of Fiesta Island facing South Pacific Passage.

### **Impact of Buildout on Coastal Access**

The Master Plan Update recommends the addition of new dedicated lease areas facing the Bay: one acre in Bahia Point; 2.5 acres on Sunset Point; and 16.5 acres in South Shores. Commercial uses are also possible in the De Anza Special Study Area. In all of the above lease areas, and in Marina Village, the Design Guidelines, prepared as part of the Master Plan Update, recommend the retention of public access along the waterfront. A 150-foot setback is proposed from the mean high waterline where such leases face a beach area; a 50-foot setback is proposed where a dedicated lease faces a bulkhead or rip-rap revetment.

### **Visual Resources**

The Design Guidelines recommend the preservation of significant views into the Park from surrounding hillside development and roadways, such as Interstate 5 (I-5), and from the main entrance roads such as Pacific Coast Highway and Tecolote Road. In addition, the Guidelines call for specific landscape and architectural standards to ensure the compatible integration of any new development, private or public, with the Bay environment.

To enhance the visibility of the Park from high vantage points (surrounding hillsides, Sea World's tower and airplanes) more varied roof profiles are recommended for strategic areas of the Park, by relaxing the coastal height limit mandated by City Ordinance. This "roofscape variance" would require a majority vote of the people to implement.

### **Public Works**

The Master Plan Update recommends new infrastructure in terms of roadways, emergency service, restroom facilities, paths and parking to meet the anticipated needs of future Park visitors.

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## II. INTRODUCTION



Mission Bay Park celebrates in its landscape the interface of life's four essential elements: land, water, air and fire (Southern California's sunshine!). The coincidence of these four elements gave visionary civic leaders the inspiration for the Park's original conception, a great water-oriented urban park providing recreation for the region and an economic tourism boon to San Diego's economy. That the Park has been substantially realized is a testament both to the determination of San Diego's leaders and citizens, and to the wonder of the place itself.

This Master Plan Update is a vital part of the continued evolution and development of Mission Bay Park. As history unfolds and times change, so too must a great park like Mission Bay. Its layout and management must respond to new challenges, new ideas. It must address unforeseen problems like congestion and pollution. It must adapt to demographic changes, new forms of recreation, and new conceptions of our relationship to our outdoor environment.

## **MISSION BAY PARK: A BRIEF HISTORY**

Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo's expedition discovered in 1542 what they called "False Bay": a vast tidal marsh coursed by the braided outflowing channels of the San Diego River. Little changed in the Bay until 1852, when personnel of the United States Army built a dike on the south side of the San Diego River, eliminating its outfall into San Diego Bay. Late in the 19th century, the Bay's first recreational development occurred – a ramshackle collection of hunting and fishing buildings which was later obliterated by a flood.

In 1944, a San Diego Chamber of Commerce committee recommended developing Mission Bay into a tourist attraction, as part of an overall effort to diversify the City's largely military economy. In the late 40's the conversion of Mission Bay into an intensively used aquatic park began in earnest through massive dredging and filling operations.

By the early 1960s most of the dredging to create the water and land bodies evident today had been completed. Twenty-five million cubic yards of sand and silt had been dredged and used as fill to create the land forms, making the Bay a virtual artificial environment.

## **WHY A PLAN NOW?**

The Park's celebrated history has engendered a very well used, highly valued recreational resource that is enjoyed by millions of people each year. So why is there a need for a new plan?

### **Changing Values**

Mission Bay Park was conceived at a time when nature was viewed primarily as a resource to be exploited for the betterment of human life. In keeping with the earlier pioneer spirit, "wilderness" was something which awaited taming for a better use, to be subjected to the metaphorical plough of progress. Early accounts of Mission Bay's "improvement" praise the achievement of transforming the "useless marsh" into a public benefit.

According to the 17th century American Puritan John Eliot, wilderness was the place "...where nothing appeareth but hard labour, wants, and wilderness-temptation."

During the 18th century, Romanticism blossomed in America and intellectuals and poets began to perceive nature very differently, appreciating its aesthetic qualities. By the late 19th century, men like John James Audubon and Henry David Thoreau were actively seeking the preservation of nature. But the fact that they felt compelled to do so reveals how strongly Americans still adhered to the pioneers' attitude.

Until well into the 20th century – well into the time of Mission Bay's transformation into a park – there was still a pervasive belief, especially in the Western United States, that there was a boundless amount of "nature out there" and that we could freely and without consequence convert as much of it as we wished to serve our own purposes. Since that time we have discovered acid rain, toxic pollutants, the "greenhouse" effect, and ozone depletion. We have learned, through the painful mistakes of yesterday's ignorance and myopia, that we cannot view the natural environment as something apart from the human race, but that we must find sustainable ways to coexist with it.

As a microcosm and symbolic statement of our relationship to nature, the future of Mission Bay Park must reflect our contemporary environmental values.

### **Water Quality Degradation**

There is a more compelling reason to examine the future of the Park than simply a change in societal values, and that is that the very life of the Park is threatened by the contamination of its waters. As the watershed which drains into the Bay has become more and more urbanized, the flow of pollution into the Bay's waters has progressively increased. High levels of coliform bacteria are causing closures of portions of the Bay for swimming and other water-contact forms of recreation. Unless substantially remedied, this situation will drastically reduce the Bay's recreational value, as well as its reputation as an attractive tourist destination.

### **New Recreation Demands**

A third major impetus for a new plan has come from the development of new forms of recreation which were not, and could not have been, foreseen even a decade ago. In the water, the advent and explosion in the use of personal watercraft (jet skis) has presented a new and fast growing challenge to the safe and equitable distribution of limited water area among various water groups.

On land, in-line skating has added a high-speed dimension to use of the Park's network of paths. Another significant change lies in the public's increasing demand to recreate in more natural landscape settings – to watch wildlife, hike through coastal vegetation, or paddle a canoe through a coastal wetland.

The combination of a fluctuating water quality, new forms of recreation, and a change in how people view the natural environment has given the Master Plan Update an urgent purpose.

### **A PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP**

The Park, as it stands today, is the result of an unusual and significant level of effort involving both the public and private sectors of San Diego's economy.

Through 1970, the Park was the recipient of over \$64 million in private and public investments. (This figure represents the actual dollars spent; in today's dollars the sum would be substantially higher). With additions to Sea World and to several of the resort hotels, this figure is well over \$100 million. Much of the public investment has been financed through general obligation bonds, which demonstrates the level of public commitment to the Park.

Over the next 20 years it is estimated that another \$370 million will be invested in the Park, with as much as \$200 million potentially contributed by the private sector. The Park is, in effect, a very successful public/private partnership and, as a result, a significant player in San Diego's economy. As with any major public/private partnership, its future rests in the willingness of both sectors to continue their cooperation and support.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH AND PARTICIPATION**

The support of both the private and public sectors for the continuing development of the Park rests on a common vision for the place, one which must be drawn from the needs, aspirations, and values of the citizens of San Diego. To gain this fundamental support, an extensive program of public outreach and involvement was introduced at the outset of the planning process. The various components of public input described below were promoted through a concentrated media campaign which sought to heighten public awareness and advance notice of opportunities for public input.

### **Public Outreach Program**

In preparation for the Master Plan Update, the City commissioned the Mission Bay Master Plan Update Community Outreach Report (1990). This outreach program targeted community groups to elicit views about the Park and how it should be improved further.

*“Not a Disneyland...”*

In general, the Report stresses the importance of Mission Bay as a passive public park oriented towards recreational uses that take advantage of the water setting and cautions against excessive commercialization of its resources. One statement read, “...Mission Bay Park is not a place for T-shirt and trinket shops or a Disneyland.”

### **Telephone Survey**

A statistically valid, random telephone survey of over 800 County of San Diego households was commissioned to secure a balanced and comprehensive view on who uses the Park, what they value of it, what improvements should be made, etc., but also to learn who does not use the Park and why.

*Natural Resource Enhancement...*

Among the significant survey findings, which are described in more detail in subsequent sections of this Plan, is the overwhelming concern for the Bay’s natural environment. Of the respondents surveyed, 86.5 percent rated water quality as a critical issue, while 71.7 percent rated the preservation and enhancement of the Park’s natural resources as “very important.” Furthermore, more than half of the respondents favor dedicating areas of the Park for natural enhancement purposes. These responses assume special significance in light of the fact that 16 percent of the population do not visit the Park because it is either too polluted or does not meet their recreation needs.

### **Mission Bay Planners**

The Mission Bay Planners was formed as a Council-sanctioned citizen advisory group to help guide this Plan in accordance with the general public will. Throughout the planning process, the Planners held regularly scheduled public meetings to elicit views about the



Park, record and mediate the debates on key issues, and advise the consultant team on preferred land use, water use, circulation, economic, environmental and design concepts. This forum was converted twice into an open public workshop format to secure commentary and opinions from as broad a group of constituencies as possible.

To expedite the review and resolution of the issues, the Planners organized seven subcommittees which addressed, respectively, the land use, water use, environment, circulation, economics, Fiesta Island and South Shores, and the aesthetics and design aspects of this Plan.

### **Steering Committee**

In addition to the Mission Bay Planners, regular meetings were held with directors and management staff from key City departments: Park and Recreation, Planning, Police, Property, Engineering and Development, Water Utilities, and the Manager's Office. These meetings provided the planning process with an essential "reality check" while also contributing valuable options for implementation.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Under the direct advice and with the full participation of the Planners and the Subcommittees, a comprehensive set of goals and objectives for the Park were drafted. These goals and objectives, which are included in full under Appendix A, were prepared prior to the formulation of specific planning concepts. They became, in effect, the "guiding light" steering this Plan and, on more than one occasion, a mediating agent between conflicting interests and demands.

A summary of the goals pertaining to each Section of this Plan is included at the beginning of each Section in bold, italicized text.

## **A DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE**

The traditional ideas about Mission Bay Park are all still present and valid. It is, and will remain, a place for water recreation of all sorts, a place for picnicking and enjoying the quality of the water's edge, and as San Diego's premier resort destination.

Added to all these ideas, however, is the emergence of the environment as a key generational concern. In the words of Steve Alexander, Chair of the Mission Bay Planners, “we live in an ‘environmental’ environment.” In no previous planning process have environmental concerns been so earnestly and clearly voiced. Through public outreach programs, meetings and telephone surveys, radio coverage and newspaper editorials, concerns about water quality, noise and air pollution, the conservation and creation of habitat areas have risen to the frontline of the public debate.

At the most fundamental level, shifting the direction of Mission Bay Park to account for its long-term ecological health is a choice for the future. The City is grappling with maintaining its image as a place which offers “quality of life” opportunities - outdoor living, a clean environment, a beautiful natural setting, wonderful recreation. Pursuing environmental health with vigor will allow the Park to continue in its role as one of the jewels in San Diego’s “quality of life” crown.

### **ORGANIZATION AND SCOPE OF THE PLAN**

The proposals that follow represent the starting line on the course that can realize the collective vision for the Park. The proposals are organized following the division of issues facing the Park as they were analyzed, presented, and discussed before the Mission Bay Planners: Land Use, Water Use, Environment, Circulation, Fiesta Island and South Shores, Aesthetics and Design, and Economics. Two additional Sections are included: Planning Approach and Implementation.

To facilitate its use in the preparation and review of actual improvements, the Aesthetics and Design Section is included under separate cover as the “Mission Bay Park Design Guidelines”.

It should be acknowledged that by its very nature, a plan is a statement of intent, not of specific solutions. It is a framework, a tool with which to work towards an end. Due to the more comprehensive scope of the improvements proposed for Fiesta Island and South Shores, more detailed concepts are included for these two areas of the Park.



1935



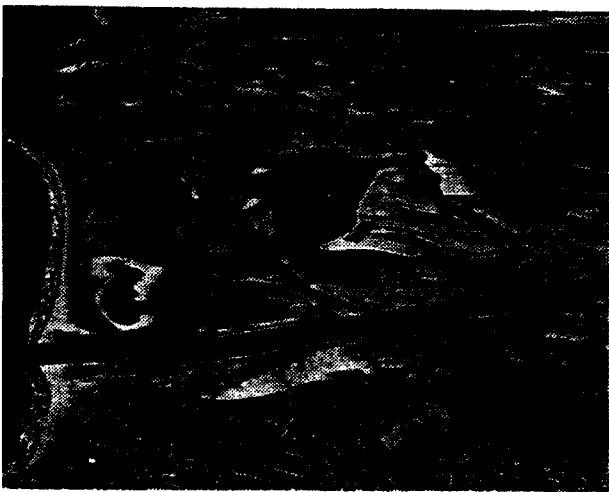
1954



1958



1960



1966



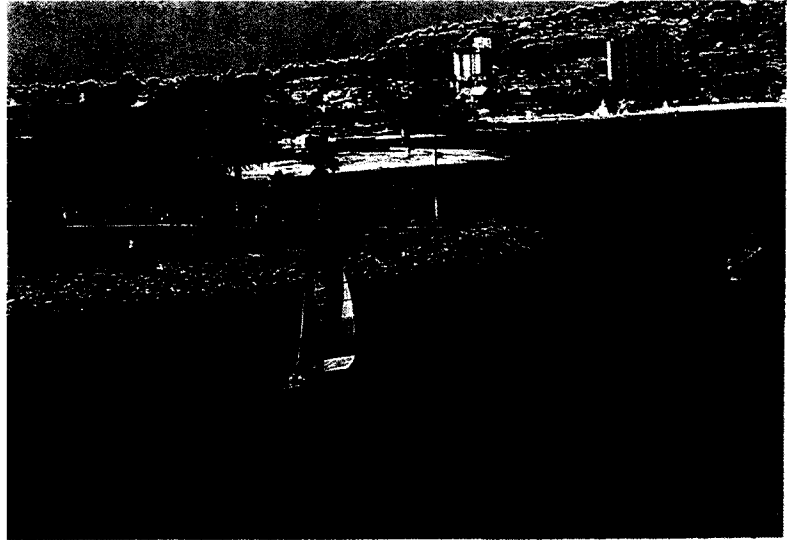
1994

**HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

*figure 7*

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### III. PLANNING APPROACH



#### **“PARKS WITHIN A PARK”**

The Park’s land and water resources are limited. They cannot expand further, except by taking from one to add to the other. As more people flock to Mission Bay Park in the future, these resources will be increasingly taxed in delivering a quality recreational experience.

Any situation involving a limited resource in high demand requires an efficient management approach, one that can render a “maximum sustainable benefit.” In Mission Bay Park, maximum sustainable benefit means ensuring that the greatest possible number of users continue to enjoy the Park without compromising its ability to meet the recreational choices and needs of the future.

To achieve this goal, every square foot of the Park’s land and water should be planned to yield the most benefit for as many functions as possible. For example, Sail Bay currently serves multiple user groups including sailors, rowers, and water skiers, youth water-sport camps and swimmers. Designating seasons and hours of use based on speeds helps each water user derive maximum benefit from Sail Bay.

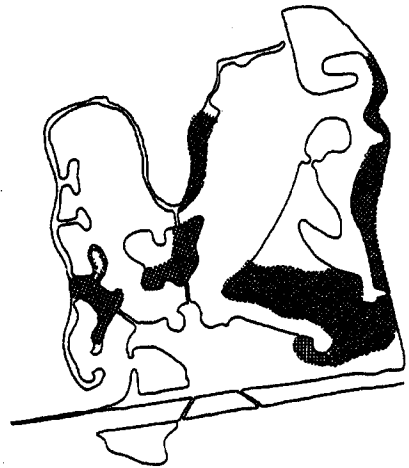
In addition to programming hours of use, other measures can further enhance the efficient use of the Park's resources: separating conflicting uses, allocating special areas for special uses, and perhaps most importantly, concentrating compatible uses so as to develop a recreational and environmental synergy among them.

**Recommendations**

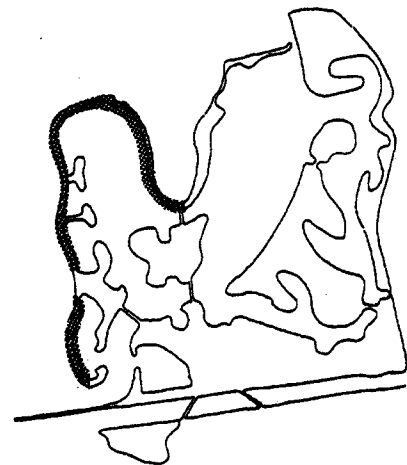
**1. "Park Regions":** In the pursuit of a "maximum sustainable benefit" approach, the Park should be organized according to "regions" of compatible uses. For example, regional parkland areas should be located where best served by the transportation infrastructure; this would make efficient use of roadways, public transit, and parking facilities. Similarly, natural habitat areas should be consolidated to the extent possible so that their wildlife, mitigation, water quality improvement, and recreational functions can perform synergistically, maximizing their value to the Park.

More importantly, by allowing recreational areas to coalesce as distinctive "regions" around the Park, a sharpened perception of the landscape emerges, which enhances the overall recreation experience. For example, by consolidating habitat areas in one place, a more pronounced feeling of being "immersed" in nature is experienced. Similarly, concentrating regional parkland around an active body of water magnifies the Park's function as a regional, water-oriented playground.

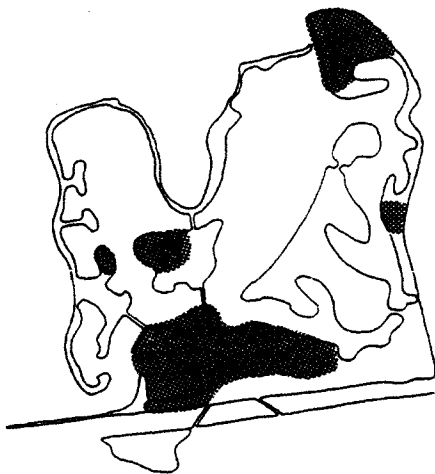
Because it yields distinctive recreation areas within a single Park, this approach has been labeled the "Parks Within a Park" concept. "Parks Within a Park" essentially means that Mission Bay Park will comprise an integrated diversity of recreational experiences – each with its own integrity.



**Regional-oriented  
Recreation**



**Neighborhood-oriented:  
Recreation**



**Commercial-oriented Recreation**

**2. Recreation Orientations:** In viewing the broad types of recreation available in Mission Bay Park, four basic orientations emerge: regional, neighborhood, commercial, and habitat.

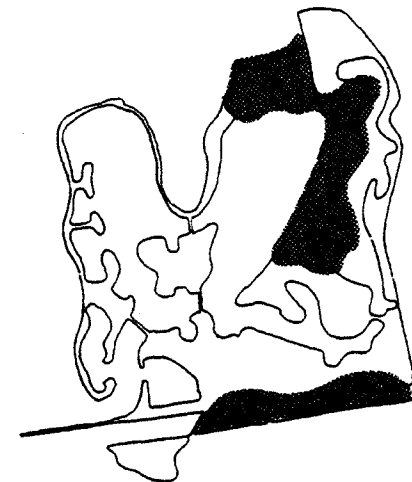
**Regional-oriented** recreation refers to regional parkland activities such as group picnicking, bicycling, and attendance of special events, such as the Over-the-Line tournament.

**Neighborhood-oriented** recreation refers to more local recreation, including facilities like game courts and children’s play areas.

**Commercial-oriented** recreation refers to resort hotels, Sea World, and other commercial operations, such as recreational vehicle camping.

**Habitat-oriented** recreation refers to wetland and upland habitats serving more passive activities, including trails for hiking and jogging, or wetland areas for rowing and canoeing.

Pedestrian and bicycle paths are common to all areas. These paths are viewed as the essential common thread that will bind the Park into a single recreational fabric.



**Habitat-oriented Recreation/Preservation**

**3. Distribution of Recreation Orientations:** As is described in more detail in further sections of this Plan, the Park’s recreation orientations should be concentrated in the following areas:

**Regional:** Eastern South Shores, Bonita Cove, East Shores, East Vacation Isle, Crown Point Shores, and the southern portion of Fiesta Island.

**Neighborhood:** West Shore, Sail Bay, and Riviera Shores.

**Commercial:** Western South Shores, Northwest Vacation Isle, Dana and Quivira Basins, Bahia Point and northeast corner.

**Habitat:** Southern and Northern Wildlife Preserve areas, the central and northern portions of Fiesta Island, and Least Tern nesting sites.



These categories and locations in no way restrict full use of all Park areas by the general public, in recognition that the entirety of Mission Bay Park is of regional, statewide, national, and even international significance.

Although termed differently, the “Parks Within a Park” concept is not a new approach to the planning and design of parks. In Boston’s famous “Emerald Necklace,” Frederick Law Olmsted created an integrated, connected series of distinctive recreational landscapes including wetlands and picturesque meadows and play areas. As one drives by these landscapes, different yet harmonious images of the city emerge. For Mission Bay Park, the “Parks Within a Park” concept can deliver a much needed sense of landscape and recreational coherence – and an essential efficiency of use.