

INFORMATION
BULLETIN

560

January 2023

Requirements for Site Reconnaissance and Testing in Environmentally Sensitive Lands

This Information Bulletin (IB) describes the permitting process and minimum submittal requirements for a ministerial grading permit (Process One) for reconnaissance and testing on a site that contains environmentally sensitive lands. Direct impacts to wetlands and recorded archaeological sites resulting from the proposed activity will not qualify for a ministerial grading permit. If the proposal cannot be modified to avoid impacts, then a Site Development Permit (SDP) would be required.

A grading permit shall expire by limitation and become void 24 months after the date of permit issuance, unless an exception is granted. See San Diego Municipal Code (SDMC) [§129.0650](#).

Impacts to wetlands, including vernal pools, shall be avoided pursuant to the Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL) regulations. See LDC [§143.0101](#). A Process One grading permit can be granted, provided the applicant restores any disturbed biological resources in accordance with the City's biological guidelines and ESL regulations. Additionally, an engineering bond will be required for projects not on behalf of or in coordination with a City department to ensure revegetation of any disturbed areas and required replacement of disturbed areas pursuant to the Biology Guidelines (see SDMC [§129.0119](#)).

The Historical Resources Regulations (SDMC [§143.0201](#)) apply to all proposed development within the City of San Diego when historical resources are present on the premises. Depending on site conditions, a Native American/Tribal Consultation per [AB-52/Public Resources Code](#) (dated Sept. 25, 2014) and Archeological monitoring may also be required. The applicant must provide documentation ensuring that no recorded archaeological sites will be impacted with this activity. The ESL and Historical Resources regulations also require both on-site biological monitoring and historical resource monitoring while testing is performed to avoid or minimize effects on resources.

To find out if your project contains environmentally sensitive lands and to research zoning and property information, visit the [Zoning and Parcel Information Portal \(ZAPP\)](#). This online service helps users conveniently access real-time information from their computer or mobile device 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Information regarding the location of archaeological sites is not available to the public and can only be obtained by an archaeological consultant or by contacting qualified City staff in the Environmental Analysis Section of the Development Services Department (DSD).

A traffic control permit may also be required if any work or staging occurs in the Public Right of Way. Please refer to [IB-177, "How to Obtain a Right-of-Way Permit for Traffic Control."](#)

I. What is Site Reconnaissance and Testing

In order to prepare geological technical studies, an applicant must conduct site reconnaissance for the purpose of basic data collection, research or resource evaluation. The information collected is used for site design and to prepare required environmental studies, geotechnical reports and historic resource site surveys.

II. Submittal Requirements

The following application package and plans are required to be submitted along with the appropriate fees and deposits.

All forms, documents and applications are now submitted electronically. Visit the DSD website at sandiego.gov/DSD to begin the submittal process. An applicant must be an Accela registered user to apply and submit documents in Accela Citizen Access. A detailed [User Guide](#) is also available.

Visit our website: sandiego.gov/dsd.

Upon request, this information is available in alternative formats for persons with disabilities.

DS-5560 (01-23)

A. Application Package

Submit the following documents:

1. Recommended – Public Project Memo. For applications submitted by or in coordination with a City department, provide a memo describing the project. The project description must include “Public Project Boring and Trenching for Geologic Reconnaissance.”
- 2.. Stormwater Requirements Applicability Checklist ([DS-560](#)).
3. [Deposit Account/Financially Responsible Party](#) (DS-3242). For a public project, the applicant must ensure a deposit account, an Internal Order (SAP), or WBS account number and fund number is opened to Development Services (1611).
4. Photographic Survey. Provide site photos (4" x 6" or larger) that show the existing vegetation on site and any proposed route of access. Include a key map indicating the location and direction each photograph was taken.
5. Biological Resources Survey Letter (if applicable). The biological resource survey letter must include a site plan showing MHPA boundaries, vegetation types, access route(s), testing methods and locations, site photos, and any restricted areas requiring staking, flagging and/or fencing.
6. Conditional - Cost Estimate. A cost estimate is not required for applications submitted by or in coordination with a City department. Provide a cost estimate for the grading and any restoration/erosion control work. Include any measures needed to comply with the Biological Guidelines. The estimate must be prepared by a registered civil engineer in consultation with the qualified biologist and/or qualified revegetation specialist using the most current [Land Development Review Division Unit Price List](#). In addition to the Unit Price List, a [spreadsheet](#) has been provided for the industry's use, and is a good resource to help reduce preparation and review costs for construction cost estimates. The final cost estimate will be used to calculate the construction bond (bonded at 100% with a 20%contingency). Please include a line item for each of the following, as applicable:
 - Excavation/Fill.
 - Revegetation/Erosion Control.
 - Hydroseeding and/or Planting & Irrigation (as required).
 - Traffic Control.
 - Habitat restoration and replacement required pursuant to the Biology Guidelines.
 - Biological monitor on-site.
 - Establishment period, 5-year monitoring and any anticipated remedial measures.

B. Plans

These plans will not be required to be signed by the City Engineer. Construction Stormwater BMP requirements must be in compliance with the San Diego Municipal Stormwater Permit (California Regional Water Quality Control Board - San Diego Region, Order No. 2001-01). Plans must include the following:

Title Sheet - Provide the following information on the first sheet of the plans:

1. A bullet point narrative that details the project's complete scope of work, including all items of work to be done with clear and complete symbols and unique hatch patterns for each type of associated work or sensitive resource.
2. Show the Project Team - List name and phone number of all consultants, including engineers, designers and contractors.
3. Show legal description and Assessor Parcel Number(s) for the property that development is proposed on.
4. Developer and owner's information must be provided.
5. Grading quantities information must be provided.
6. Vicinity Map.
7. Topography source company and date of preparation.
8. Typical temporary construction access road cross-section (if applicable).
9. Geotechnical Engineer's Company and Licensee information.

Visit our website: sandiego.gov/dsd.

Upon request, this information is available in alternative formats for persons with disabilities.

DS-5560 (01-23)

10. Engineer of Work signature block with company's name and completed address and phone/ fax number, stamp and signature.
11. A key map showing the shaded area for the proposed grading and construction access roadways (existing and proposed) to each boring/trenching location on the key map.
12. Sign and stamp a Declaration of Responsible Charge as follows:

Declaration of Responsible Charge: I hereby declare that I am the Engineer of work for this project, that I have exercised responsible charge over the design of the project as defined in section 6703 of the business and professions code, and the design is consistent with current standards. I understand that the check of project drawings and specifications by the City of San Diego is confined to a review only and does not relieve me, as Engineer of work, of my responsibilities for project design.

Signature/Stamp/Expiration Date

1. Include the following note:
All work shall be done in accordance with this plan, the Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction, the City of San Diego Regional Standard Drawings, as last amended, relevant sections of the Land Development Code and Land Development Manual
2. Provide space on the plans for the following information:
 - A. Job Order Number
 - B. Project Number
 - C. Approval Number
3. There will be additional notes required on the plans. Please visit DSD's [Design Guidelines & Template webpage](#) for information.

Boring and Trenching Plan

1. Show the limit of disturbance and limit of grading for all work including access route(s) and staging areas. Include accurate topographic information.
2. Show proposed cut/fill slopes associated with all access roads, to daylight.
3. Identify future development boundaries.
4. Show and identify exact locations of each boring and trench. Example: Horizontal alignment (N,E) coordinates.
5. Label on-site and off-site properties by legal description, APN, etc.
6. Letter of permission is required if there is off-site grading proposed and/or any temporary construction access roadway is crossing adjacent properties.
7. Centerline stationing of temporary construction access roads does not need to be provided on the plans.
8. Show and identify the location and widths of all access roads, even where grading is not thought to be required.
9. Note on the plan the type of equipment to be used and the method.
10. Show existing structures, topography and vegetation on site and within 100 feet from the property line. Include MHPA boundary lines on all plan view sheets.
11. Provide planting and irrigation information consistent with the [Land Development Manual Project Submittal Requirements, Section 3](#). Information may be provided on a separate Landscape Revegetation Plan or may be included with the Boring and Trenching Plan, provided the information is clear.
12. Show and identify existing and proposed vegetation. Note habitat types.
13. Show any wetlands, including vernal pools, that exist on the site.
14. Differentiate between hydroseed and container plantings.
15. Provide notes on plans for inspections, letters of verification, establishment and maintenance.
16. Provide vegetation type information on an orthophoto plan which includes the locations of borings, trenches, access roads, and any restricted/sensitive areas requiring staking, flagging and/or fencing.

Visit our website: sandiego.gov/dsd.

Upon request, this information is available in alternative formats for persons with disabilities.

DS-5560 (01-23)

III. Permit Issuance – If the project is on behalf of or in coordination with a City department, proceed to Section IV.

When your project is ready for issuance, the following will be required prior to issuance:

- A. Provide an approved cost estimate.
- B. Provide a Performance Bond in accordance with the approved cost estimate.

IV. Construction/Inspection

Prior to beginning any work and for activities associated with restoration of any disturbances:

- A. The Owner/Permittee is responsible for scheduling the required pre-construction meeting with the Mitigation Monitoring Coordination (MMC) Section.
- B. The MMC Section must be contacted to coordinate compliance with the exploration plan as well as biological and historical resource conditions, including the need for Native American monitoring.

MMC will notify the Resident Engineer (RE) when work is complete. The RE will then notify the bond release coordinator that the bond may be released, if applicable.

V. Fee/Deposit

Applicable fees/deposits must be paid at the time of submittal or ensure an Internal Order (SAP), or WBS account number and fund number is opened prior to submittal. For projects not on behalf of or in coordination with a city department, refer to [IB-502, “Fee/Deposit Schedule for Construction Permits Grading and Public Right of Way.”](#)

Reference Table
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • San Diego Municipal Code (SDMC) • Zoning and Parcel Information Portal (ZAPP) • “How to Obtain a Right-of-Way Permit for Traffic Control” (IB-177) • User Guide • Deposit Account/Financially Responsible Party (DS-3242) • Land Development Review Division Unit Price List • Spreadsheet • Design Guidelines & Templates • Fee/Deposit Schedule for Construction Permits Grading and Public Right of Way (IB-502) • Land Development Manual, Project Submittal Requirements (Section 3)