



Agenda Item D.2
DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEM
Meeting Date: February 5, 2013

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Steve Wagner, Public Works Director

CONTACT: Anne Wells, Advance Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Ellwood Mesa Trails and Habitat Restoration Design Project

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a presentation and authorize staff to initiate environmental review for the Ellwood Mesa Trails and Habitat Restoration Design Project.

BACKGROUND:

In 2004, the City, County of Santa Barbara (County) and University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) released the Ellwood-Devereux Coast Open Space and Habitat Management Plan (Open Space Plan). The Open Space Plan is a multi-jurisdictional collaboration to comprehensively protect and enhance the 652-acre coastal resource located on the lower Devereux Creek watershed. The City adopted the Open Space Plan in 2004 and uses the plan to guide management of public access and natural resource protection on the 230-acre City-owned Ellwood Mesa-Sperling Preserve.

The California Coastal Trail (Coastal Trail) and Juan Bautista de Anza Trail (Anza Trail) are identified as critical links in the Open Space Plan trail system and connect the Ellwood Mesa-Sperling Preserve parking lot on the west with Isla Vista to the east. The Coastal and Anza trail alignments and supporting policies are included in the Goleta General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan (General Plan) Open Space Element.

On August 7, 2012, the City Council, authorized staff to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and the Santa Barbara Trails Council (SBTC) for the Ellwood Mesa Trails and Habitat Restoration Design Project (proposed project). The scope of the work includes the design, engineering, environmental review, and permitting associated with possible future development of the Coastal and Anza trails on the Ellwood Mesa-Sperling Preserve. City and SBTC staff are working collaboratively to implement the scope of work.

This report summarizes the efforts to obtain public input on the proposed project and incorporate the comments received into the initial project scope.

DISCUSSION:

Prior to conducting public outreach, staff spent considerable time in the field to assess trail boundaries, map existing conditions, and identify potential design issues. The Coastal and Anza trails, as mapped in Attachment 1, were identified based on the alignments shown on General Plan Figure 3-2 Park and Recreation Plan Map. Detailed trail maps, including existing topography, were generated following the field work. During field work, erosion and potholes were noted as degrading the integrity of the trail system and negatively impacting adjacent habitats. Various re-surfacing techniques were researched to address trail integrity and restore adjacent habitats.

Potential design issues were identified in the field including: (1) eroded gullied areas located immediately south of the Hollister Avenue parking lot, (2) Devereux Creek crossing south of the gullied areas, and (3) eroded beach access points at what are referred to as Access Points E and F in the General Plan. Strategies to address these issue areas are provided in the General Plan and include bridges/culverts, stairs or other types of engineering solutions. Staff verified and further expanded upon the General Plan design strategies through these field visits. Staff also identified and developed a range of alternative design solutions for consideration in the public workshops.

Restoration concepts were developed to support the trail design. A plant species list was created based on plants known to occur in the Devereux Creek watershed. Specific lists were developed for the Coastal Trail, the Anza Trail, gullied areas, Devereux Creek, beach access points and more.

With the completion of preliminary trail design and restoration concepts, staff proceeded with the public outreach process.

Public Outreach

The City hosted a public workshop on September 6, 2012 to present a range of trail design and restoration concepts and receive public feedback at issue-specific workshop stations. Public feedback on the design features, erosion issues, and restoration solutions was received from the nearly 100 people attending the workshop.

A public site walk of the possible Anza and Coastal trail alignments was hosted by staff on September 8, 2012. The site walk enabled staff to provide site specific trail and restoration design concepts and gain further insight regarding public concerns.

A second workshop was held on December 5, 2012 to present more detailed Coastal and Anza trails design alternatives that were reflective of the public feedback from the first workshop and site walk. Design principles that focused on minimal change to the trail system were presented to the public for feedback.

In summary, the majority of the feedback that was received at the workshops and site walk reflected the desire for a design that had reduced trail widths and natural tread, an alternative that is supported by the General Plan and Open Space Plan. The desire for the preservation of existing trails, specifically, the parallel bluff top trails, was also a consistent public comment.

Trail and Restoration Design Principles

Building on the feedback received from the public, staff developed the following trail and restoration design principles:

1. Trails should be natural, wider in some places and narrower in others, with an average width of 6 feet in areas without significant traffic and 8 feet in more heavily used areas.
2. Borders should be natural and include addition of native plants to enhance the habitat along the trail corridors and the trails should have a natural surface composed of native soil (not materials such as decomposed granite).
3. The trail design should compliment existing parallel trails along the blufftop that allows users to move freely and enjoy views while traveling between and on the parallel trails and the Coastal Trail.
4. Restoration along the trail corridors should be designed to improve the natural setting of the Ellwood Mesa-Sperling Preserve and enhance user experience. Non-native plants, such as fennel and mustard, should be removed along the blufftop to improve visibility and to enhance the native habitat, especially in environmentally sensitive areas.
5. Gully and creek crossings should include designs that allow for safe passage while at the same time be as non-intrusive and natural as possible. Use of boardwalk-style designs as close to the surrounding surface is important as they would not require use of handrails and have the least impact on the viewshed.
6. Alternatives should include options that require the least amount of change as possible.

Proposed Trail and Restoration Design Project Summary

In response to public input and consistent with project design principles, staff prepared a detailed trail and restoration design for the Coastal and Anza trails on Ellwood Mesa (the proposed project). The proposed project is consistent with and implements policy directives in the General Plan and the Open Space Plan. The proposed project design is intended to comply with the accessibility guidelines under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) to ensure that the Coastal and Anza trails would be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.

More specifically, the Coastal Trail design is based on the use of existing trail surfaces and existing native soil tread with varying trail widths. The trail is multi-use, consistent with existing conditions. In some locations, the trail will be groomed to control storm water runoff. Trail erosion and potholing will be backfilled and compacted to minimize ponding and erosion. The trail design emphasizes restoration along the Coastal Trail to

narrow sections of the existing trail where it is currently widened from off-trail disturbance, and repair eroded areas to ensure that the trail can support foot traffic after rain events.

The Anza Trail design includes a combined surface for pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians. Similar to the Coastal Trail, the Anza Trail route uses existing trail surfaces and existing native soil tread with varying trail widths. While minor grading is proposed to address erosion and inadequate drainage, most of the trail surface will remain natural and ungraded. This ungraded trail surface is intended to slow down trail users to minimize the risk of trail user conflicts. At one location, the trail will be re-routed to avoid a vernal pool, as prescribed in the General Plan. Restoration features are designed to create an edge effect along the Anza Trail at key locations to control storm water runoff, define the trail boundary, and protect the adjacent native habitats.

Engineering solutions for the three trail “issue areas” (gullies, Devereux Creek, and beach access points) are included in the proposed project design. Design solutions are based on direction in the General Plan. Solutions include a low-profile wood bridge and a culvert at the gullied area south of the Hollister Parking lot and a boardwalk at the Devereux Creek crossing. Design solutions at the two beach access points include a combination of removing old asphalt, grading to control runoff, repairing eroded areas, adding switch backs to reduce steep slopes, and adding natural stairs where the steep slopes cannot be avoided. As part of the development of the proposed project description, alternative solutions, such as trail re-routing and modified engineering strategies, were developed for each of the three trail issue areas.

Proposed Environmental Review Schedule

The proposed project design, including alternative design strategies, is intended to serve as the project description for future environmental review. Staff seeks Council's authorization to initiate environmental review of the proposed Coastal and Anza trail and restoration design project, located on the Ellwood Mesa-Sperling Preserve. Environmental review will afford staff with an opportunity to refine the project design and host additional public meetings. If authorized by City Council, staff will proceed with environmental review, related public outreach, and regulatory agency coordination.

ALTERNATIVES:

None are recommended at this time.

FISCAL IMPACTS:

The SBTC obtained grant funds to cover the costs associated with the preliminary engineering and environmental phases of the project. The MOU with the SBTC allocates up to \$10,000 for City staff time and permitting costs related to this effort. As such, there are no related fiscal impacts. Future funds for construction will be identified once the environmental phase is complete.

Legal Review:

Reviewed By:

Approved By:

Tim W. Giles
City Attorney

Michelle Greene
Administrative Services
Director

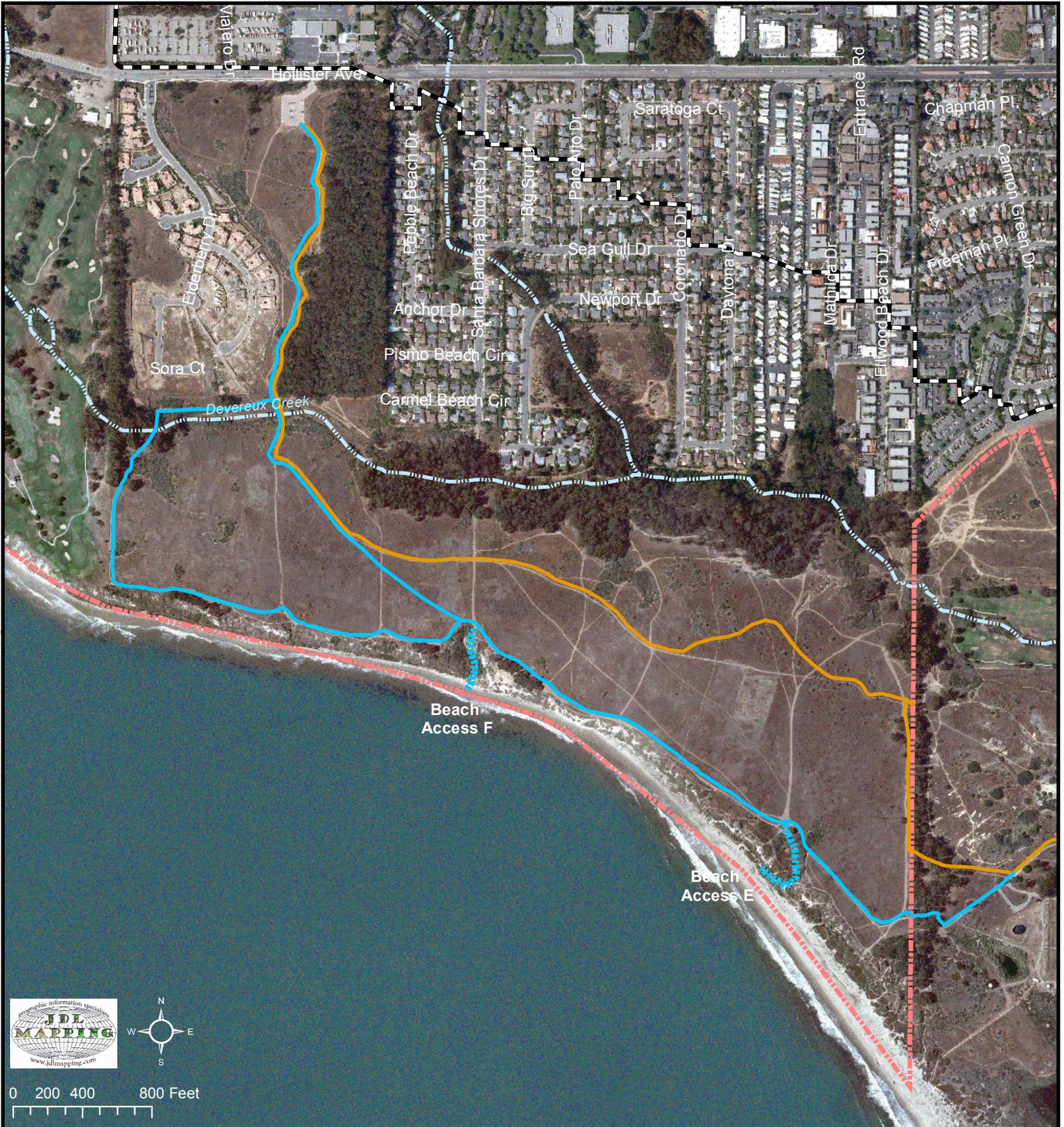
Daniel Singer
City Manager

ATTACHMENT:

1. Ellwood Mesa-Sperling Preserve Coastal Trail and Anza Trail Map

Attachment 1

Ellwood Mesa-Sperling Preserve
Coastal Trail and Anza Trail Map



0 200 400 800 Feet

Legend

Trail Features

-  Proposed Coastal Trail
-  Proposed Juan Baustista de Anza Trail

Other Features

-  Open Space Boundary
-  Goleta City Boundary
-  Coastal Zone

Ellwood Mesa - Sperling Preserve Trails and Habitat Restoration Design Project

January 2013

