

California Coastal Trail San Mateo County Midcoast Pillar Point to Mirada Surf

Trails Team – Midcoast Parks and Recreation Committee
Final Report
March 23, 2010



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Introduction

This report by the Trails Team of the Midcoast Parks & Recreation Committee (MPRC) focuses on the California Coastal Trail from Pillar Point south to the recently completed trail section at Mirada Surf. The report addresses:

- The route for the trail, including near and long term options
- Considerations for creating an action plan for implementation.

The Midcoast California Coastal Trail will extend from Half Moon Bay to Devil's Slide to occupy the current Highway 1 route after completion of the new tunnel.



The trail has been completed over much of the central shoreline of Half Moon Bay in projects taken on by California State Parks and the City of Half Moon Bay. The completed trail along Half Moon Bay is a consistently wide (10 – 12 feet) multi-use (pedestrian and bicycle) trail with many open ocean, bluff, and shoreline views. A distinctive feature of the trail through the remainder of the Midcoast will be a variety of trail styles and transitions through diverse terrains.

Team Profile

The Trails Team is a group of local volunteers from the Midcoast Parks and Recreation Committee, a Midcoast extension of the San Mateo County Parks Department, led by Parks Director Dave Holland and supported by his staff. It is anticipated that a non-profit Friends of the Midcoast California Coastal Trail will be formed to assist the project work through fund raising, publicity, work projects and addressing concerns that impact trail quality.

Guidelines

Important guidance comes from “Completing the California Coastal Trail” (CCCT) by the Coastal Conservancy and other relevant sources:

- Consistent with County and California trail standards, the trail will have a minimum four foot width with a variety of surfaces - graveled, paved, boardwalk, etc. (San Mateo County Trail Plan).
- The San Mateo County Trail Plan Design and Management Guidelines will be followed to ensure the improvements developed are consistent with County General Plan policies.
- To achieve timely and tangible results with the resources that are available, both interim and long-term alignments of the trail will be identified. (CCCT, p. 14)
- A primary objective is to keep pedestrian users close to the beach and on the west side of Highway 1. The trail will be braided in certain sections with separate options for different modes of travel. (CCCT, pp. 12-14)
- A flexible policy of supporting bicycle use and following the suggestions of CCCT for having good signage, shared access and encourage good motorist awareness will be followed (pp. 36-37).
- The diverse segments of the trail will make it difficult to provide quality opportunities for equestrians, but routing will be alert to possibilities (pp. 37-38).
- In this era of limited resources, the key point is to make the trail happen, even if it is not perfect. It is important to have a designated trail versus no trail at all. Signage on trail segments that may need more improvements in the future is considered a critical step, since it "puts down an anchor" and establishes that the trail exists. (Una Glass, Executive Director, Coastwalk California)

The Project: Pillar Point to Mirada Surf



Pillar Point to Denniston Creek

1	Pillar Point Parking Lot
2	Pillar Point Marsh
3	Princeton Waterfront

Denniston Creek to Boat Launch Ramp

4	Capistrano - Empty Corner Lot
5	Capistrano Road - Beach Section
6	Harbor Docks
7	Inner Harbor Beach

Boat Launch Ramp to Mirada Surf

8	Outer Harbor South
9	Surfers Beach Day-Use Lot
10	Surfers Beach
11	Coronado / Highway 1 Intersection
12	Mirada Surf West

Pillar Point to Denniston Creek



1. Pillar Point Parking Lot is a small unimproved lot next to Pillar Point Marsh at the end of West Point Ave. where it enters the Air Force Tracking Station. It is the trailhead for the West Shoreline Access Trail which follows the edge of the marsh to the outer harbor beach, then follows the shoreline to the west breakwater and Mavericks beach. Across West Point Ave. from the parking lot is gated access to Pillar Point Bluff with informal trails leading to Ross's Cove and the Jean Lauer section of the California Coastal Trail.

Recommendations: Improve lot, signage, and upgrade to vault toilet

2. Pillar Point Marsh is divided into fresh and salt-water environments by an old earthen dam topped by the raised roadbed of West Point Ave. which is the only vehicle access to Pillar Point.

West Point Ave. is narrow, with no shoulders, has a steep drop-off on both sides, and much of it is closely lined with thick marsh willows creating a long blind curve. It is a no-parking designated fire lane. Bikes use this route. Pedestrians have to walk in the road, hugging the edge of the pavement when cars come by.



Alternate beach route between West Shoreline Access Trail and the harbor end of West Point Ave. is usually walkable, though monthly highest tides and storm surge enter and drain from the marsh cutting changing channels across the beach.

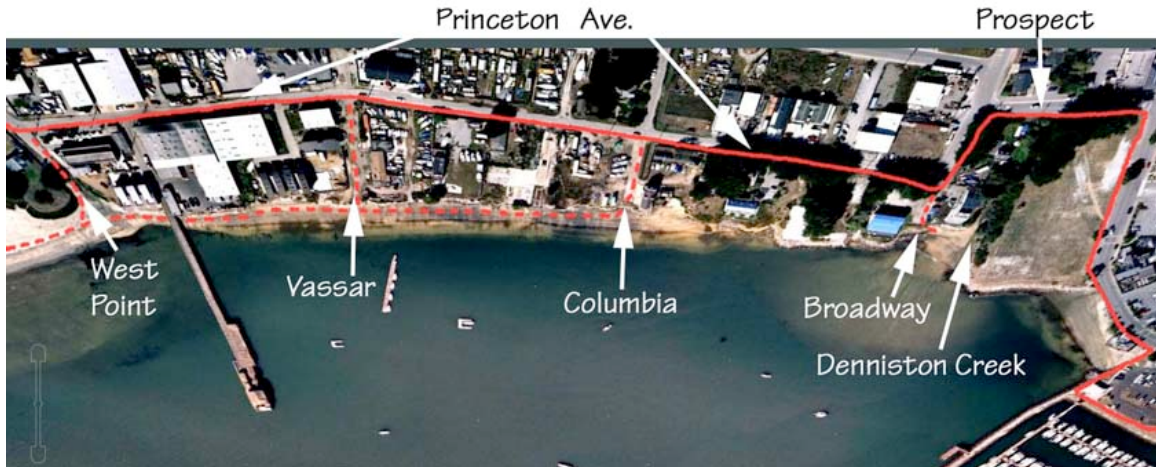
Recommendations:

- Willows on the south side of West Point Ave. should be cut back at least 6 feet from the road edge to improve visibility. They will require regular maintenance.
- Create a separate pedestrian trail along the roadway.
- Signage/map should indicate the alternate beach route.

3. Princeton Waterfront

Proposed trail route through Princeton is via Princeton Ave., Broadway, and Prospect to Denniston Creek. Princeton Ave. is 3 blocks long, parallels and is closest to the waterfront, with intermittent harbor views and potential beach access. Princeton Ave. has only local traffic, in contrast to other streets through Princeton which carry considerable through traffic. At the east end of Princeton Ave, a short jog north on Broadway connects the trail to Prospect Way which is a very busy street, being the sole southern outlet for Princeton, Pillar Ridge, and Seal Cove neighborhoods. These streets, between West Point Ave. and Denniston Creek, have no sidewalks or curbs, storm drainage is poor, and unpaved shoulders are often blocked by parked, stored, or abandoned vehicles, leaving bikes and even pedestrians in the street.





There are four short unpaved road stubs connecting Princeton Ave. to the shoreline for views and possible beach access. From west to east:

- **West Point Ave.:** The grade change from road to beach is easy, but an intermittent seawater pond forms in a low area created by past storm erosion and subsequent barrier beach buildup. When the pond is present beach access depends on climbing over ice-plant-covered ledge or getting wet feet. The beach west of West Point is walkable even at high tide. Just east of West Point, at Romeo Pier, an extensive section of recent unpermitted riprap on the beach blocks passage even when the beach further east is still above the tide line.
- **Vassar:** 2002 Coastal Access Improvement Plan includes plans for ramp through riprap at Vassar.
- **Columbia:** Beach access is hindered by riprap. Improving access at this point would gain the most beach-walking benefit because the two blocks between West Point and Columbia are walkable except at high tide. Thus Coastal Trail walkers could take an alternate beach route between Pillar Point and Columbia except at each day's highest tide.
- **Broadway:** 2002 Coastal Access Improvement Plan includes plans for stairs to beach at the mouth of Denniston Creek. There is a 20-foot-wide trail easement across the creek mouth and a 10-foot-wide trail easement along the east side of the creek to Prospect Way. The harbor bluff east of Columbia is mostly armored and the beach is underwater except at very low tides.

Recommendations:

- Coordinate with Department of Public Works on street improvements planned for 2011 to ensure adequate provision for CCT pedestrian and bicycle safety. Previous street improvements in Princeton have only repaved and added V-channel gutters, leaving pedestrians and bicycles in the gutter and street. Consider one-way traffic on Princeton to accommodate all users safely without losing parking space. Paving Vassar between Princeton and Harvard would be necessary for good circulation if Princeton Ave. were one way. Tree removal on Princeton at Broadway will be minimized to the extent practicable. Speed bumps or other traffic calming measures should be considered if necessary where increased trail use is proposed.
- Improve beach access at four shoreline street stubs, including landscaping and weed management. The most complete beach alternative along the Princeton shoreline would be created by improving access at Columbia.
- The Princeton waterfront needs a clear and accepted plan for dealing with erosion, construction at the shoreline, and illegal/ haphazard riprap, all of which impact public access and enjoyment of this coastal resource.



Denniston Creek to Boat Launch Ramp



4. Denniston Creek & Capistrano/Prospect corner lot

Near-term, route the trail along existing sidewalk at street edge of empty corner lot. Prospect sidewalk is 5-1/2 ft wide east of the creek. Capistrano sidewalk is 7 ft wide with jogs around parking cutouts. An existing wide informal trail cuts diagonally across the empty lot and is a popular bike and pedestrian route avoiding narrow and busy streets. Another informal trail follows the creek and harbor edge of the lot. All these routes converge at the 5-1/2 ft wide bottleneck at Denniston Creek culvert and Prospect Way. Parking and trail confusion exists on Prospect

Recommendations:

- On Prospect Way at the creek culvert, alleviate bottleneck by widening sidewalk and reducing parking cutout. Paint curb red on either side of parking cutout.



- On Prospect Way west of creek, create uniform sidewalk or multi-use trail extending to Broadway, separated from street and parking.



- If development of the lot is proposed, seek to obtain a multi-use trail easement. A 10 ft. wide trail easement exists along the creek, but none at harbor edge. A 20 ft. wide trail easement exists across the mouth of Denniston Creek.
- If stairs to beach are built at foot of Broadway, consider constructing stairs to beach at junction of creek trail easements.
- Long term: If appropriate trail easements are obtained, consider feasibility of bridge across mouth of Denniston Creek connecting foot of Broadway to corner lot.

5. Capistrano Road at Beach section

The sidewalk is 5 ft wide at this section & often congested with restaurant patrons. Capistrano narrows at this section with no parking allowed. It is a designated bike route but bicyclists often use the sidewalk due to busy, narrow street with no bike lanes. At the south end of this trail section there is no ramp at the curb for bikes entering/exiting the harbor. Sometimes delivery trucks park in front of the restaurant blocking the entire lane.



The beach at this section is walkable except at the highest tides but its use as an alternate route is limited by riprap, particularly difficult at the north end. An existing small complex of planters, stairs, & sidewalks at the north end above the beach leads naturally to the spot for stairs to the beach.

Recommendations:

- Improve access to beach at both ends.
- Consider feasibility of bypassing this section with a boardwalk, attaching to the seawall at the roadway (to minimize beach impact), then bending behind Barbara's Fishtrap and across to the harbor sidewalk. This concept would be dependent on obtaining an easement for the north terminus at Capistrano corner lot.

6. Harbor Docks

Use existing waterfront sidewalks.

7. Inner Harbor Beach

The segment along the south edge of the harbor dock has only a narrow informal trail between a small parking lot & the riprap waterfront. Currently people are either using the narrow dirt trail or the parking lot pavement.



An informal trail cuts across the open area inland of the kayak business and joins the completed multi-use trail along the road to the boat launch ramp. The Harbor District may have long-term plans to develop this open flat area by dredging and construction of new dock, parking lot, and restroom. The area was also proposed as possible site for a Community Center.



Recommendations:

- Consult with the Harbor District about the possibility of eliminating up to 8 parallel parking spaces along the outside edge of the lot to allow for the multi-use Coastal Trail there. Alternatively, could a formal pedestrian trail be created via the existing narrow informal trail route, and bikes via the parking lot?
- Provide a firmer multi-use surface for the soft sand areas of the informal trail connection behind the kayak stand.

Boat Launch Ramp to Mirada Surf



8. Outer Harbor South

Trail is complete except for formal designation and signage.

9. Surfers Beach Day-Use Lot

Multi-use trail around the outer edge is complete. Lot has outdoor shower.

Recommendations:

- Needs trash receptacles that won't blow over.
- Needs restroom.

10. Surfers Beach

This trail along the west edge of Hwy 1 is severely threatened by erosion. Recent re-armoring and trail paving along the northern section has gained a temporary reprieve. At the mid portion the bluff is so eroded there is inadequate space for the trail. The southern unpaved section has overgrown willows severely crowding the trail, and utility covers above grade creating trip hazards. Beach access is down the steep slippery grade where the bluff is most eroded. Beach access via an informal trail on the beach side of the ravine can only be accessed from Coronado and has the drawback of routing people close to the crumbling bluff edge. The beach is popular and gets heavy use in summer and on weekends.

Recommendations:

- Ultimately both trail and highway may need to move inland. In the meantime it seems worthwhile to make interim repairs for the trail and beach access.
- Explore short-term methods to bridge narrow eroded section of the trail, and improve beach access. Relatively inexpensive and easily replaced improvements would be prudent in this location.
- On-going willow pruning program is needed to keep the trail clear. Prune willows off level bluff area needed for trail, but leave willows on slopes to help hold soil. Remove pampas grass, an invasive weed.
- On the southern section raise grade to level of utility covers.



11. Coronado/ Hwy 1 intersection

- County/ Caltrans/ HMB agree on plan for old road remnants/ barriers, and smooth trail connection.
- Possible rest room site.
- Improve Hwy 1 crossing.
- Need trash receptacles that won't blow over.

12. Mirada Surf West

- Trail construction completed summer 2009
- Possible rest room site at south end near bridge
- Provide public parking at south end
- Consider one-way traffic on Magellan/Mirada Rd. to better accommodate CCT.

Appendix

- Reports from the study phase of this project
- San Mateo County Harbor District comments
- Comments from public meeting 1/26/10

Coastal Trail and Community Center Exploratory Walk – March 22, 2009

Walkers: Sandy Emerson, Lisa Boville, Sabrina Brennan, Lisa Ketcham, Neil Merrilees, Barry Parr, Leonard Woren

On an extremely windy Sunday, seven valiant walkers started from the RV parking lot to explore the route of the Coastal Trail from Mirada Surf to Pillar Point.

First Segment: transition between RV lot parking lot and Mirada Surf. A discussion began about the challenges of the transition between the Mirada Surf West Coastal Trail extension and Surfer's Beach – so we worked our way backwards along the cliffs and gullies, wetlands edges, and curb lane until we reached the Mirada Surf property at the abandoned roadway at Coronado. The erosion from the combined effects of the weather and the breakwater leaves precious little room to extend the Coastal Trail along this stretch. Proposed solutions were wide-ranging:

- Bridging the ravine (wouldn't make sense unless the erosion is corrected by breaching the breakwater). In any case, with global warming it's likely that this beach will disappear and that Highway One will need to be relocated, anyway.
- Having the Trail cross Highway One and continue as a trail or boardwalk following the alignment of Obispo;
- Creating a safe crossing with a pedestrian light from the "informal parking lot" area at the foot of Portola to Surfers' Beach
- Building a staircase down to Surfers' Beach (the current options are either to slide down a gully or pick your way over the rip rap). The staircase wouldn't pass the "50-year erosion setback" test, though.

Second Segment: Mirada Surf south to the bridge at Magellan. Although we recognize that the Mirada Surf trail alignment is well along in its planning, we have the following comments about some possible variables in implementation:

- Several participants voiced objections to having the trail paved, preferring gravel or other permeable surface. Sabrina mentioned that Blue Sky Café has paved its alley with permeable paving.
- There was a strong feeling that the trail should be kept to minimum width – the very wide bridge approaches at Magellan were alarming, although we don't know whether this width would continue for the trail itself. As we were in discussion, an RV used the bridge approach to make a 3-point turn, nicely illustrating our feeling that the bridge road-width is more like a road than a trail. The figure quoted for this bridge over the year-round creek was \$400,000.00. Whew! We discussed the flush toilet vs. vault toilet issue, and heard the history of this debate. [What are the current story poles at the toilet's location? Looks like a house??]
- On the way back to Surfers' Beach we noted that there could be a pedestrian bridge over Highway One just south of the elementary school, which would connect Mirada Surf West with Mirada Surf East.



- Although it's not part of the Coastal Trail, we were hoping that the staircase at the end of Magellan could be repaired.

Third Segment: RV Lot to proposed Community Center site at HMB Kayak rental.

- Discussion of the locked restroom at the RV Lot. It should be open as per the lease agreement.
- The paved path below the Beach House and Sam's looks fine – narrow and easy. The memorial benches are nice. The access gate through the Beach House property should open both ways – there's no access from the trail side.
- The pedestrian bridge in the area of Sam's doesn't seem to make sense. The crossing should be at the foot of Portola, and there should be a toilet in the Surfer's Beach changing area, where the shower is.
- The proposed site for a marine-themed Community Center looks do-able, although its longevity would need to be calculated to take into account rising water levels.

Fourth Segment: Harbor parking lot to Barbara's Fishtrap.

- Participants (the three remaining at this point) felt that the Trail should continue along the edge of the parking lot, along the existing sidewalk.
- In a perfect world, the Trail would continue behind Barbara's Fishtrap on a bridge/boardwalk.
- There's no alternative to getting dumped into the busy sidewalk at Barbara's, at the moment. It was suggested that the landscaping be pulled in a bit.
- The bicycle path through the Oceano lot was discussed, but doesn't get any votes so far.

The last segments through Princeton Harbor out to the Pillar Point parking lot will be covered in a future walk.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandy Emerson

Princeton Harbor Coastal Trail Exploratory Walk, Part 2 – May 24, 2009

Walkers: Len Erickson, Sandy Emerson, Lisa Ketcham, Leonard Woren, Sabrina Brennan, Fran Pollard, Yuri Daher, and Michelle Daher

Harbor 3 – Parking/Dock Restroom

The walkers started in the smaller Harbor Parking Lot at the road to the small boat launch, noting that the trail (an unpaved path) past the kayak rental area leads naturally to the outer edge of the smaller parking lot. Up to 8 spaces could be removed from this smaller lot to accommodate the Trail.

Action – talk to Pete Grenell about re-stripping the smaller lot

Sabrina noted that the sidewalk that crosses the access to the docks is limited by 2 stair steps on each side – this could be eased by installing a ramp, although (in Sandy's opinion) this might prove highly attractive to skaters. The picnic tables behind the Harbormaster's office are along the trail alignment.

Harbor 4 – Docks/Commercial/Parking

The Trail continues on a paved sidewalk along the outer edge of the parking lot.

Princeton 1 – Barbara's/Brewery/Capistrano Beach

As before, the trail alignment seems clear until you get to Barbara's Fishtrap. At Barbara's beach (Capistrano beach) we spent a fair amount of time discussing the various options:

- Huge bridge and boardwalk across the whole span of the beach, with the exit at the vacant lot
- Or, put the Trail on the beach and improve beach access at both ends – this option avoids the crowded sidewalk past Barbara's

Action – consider drafting a grant to the Coastal Conservancy to improve beach access to Capistrano Beach

Princeton 2 – Capistrano/Prospect Intersection

From Capistrano Beach to the vacant lot, it would be good to get an easement to include the well-used use trail that cuts a diagonal path across the lot. This lot is owned by Keet Nerhan, and we believe it is now leased to the Mendoncas, who run Half Moon Bay Brewery.

Action – contact Keet Nerhan about Coastal Trail plans and request his support for the easement across the vacant lot.

Options re: the vacant lot include

- Having the Trail go around the outside edge, with perhaps a bridge over the riprap at the foot of Broadway. **Action** – find the proposal for beach access at the foot of Broadway.
- Cutting across the lot to the sidewalk along Prospect Ave.
-

Princeton 3 – Prospect/Broadway Intersection

- Notes: Prospect is a narrow and heavily used street, with a 5 ½ foot sidewalk. There are cutouts for parking along the sidewalk. At the corner of Prospect and Broadway, the sidewalk ends – there is an approximately 8 ½ foot distance between the property line fence and the roadway at the corner.
- There would need to be a guardrail of some sort at this corner to protect pedestrians

Princeton 4 – Princeton Avenue

- There was discussion of having the trail alignment along the beach or along the crumbling bluffs above the beach. It was noted that getting easements from the private property owners would be a challenge, in addition to the fact that the beach and bluffs are subject to erosion.

Princeton Harbor Coastal Trail Exploration – May 24, 2009

- Along Princeton Avenue, there is no sidewalk, and many cars park on the shoulder. The Trail alignment would necessitate cleaning up the shoulder and maybe paving or striping it.
- The Trail alignment along Princeton would be more beautiful if there were plantings and general cleanup along its length. Princeton is a functional roadway that has not been “fixed up”.
- However, we believe there is a plan to widen Princeton and repave it, and install swale gutters in the same style as neighboring Harvard Ave. **Action:** if this re-paving occurs, could we get striping for a bicycle lane/ped lane/ or permeable material for the gutters.
- Note: there is a proposal before Planning (?status- approved 9/18. currently being appealed?) to build three more Fred Herring buildings along Princeton Ave. These buildings would be fully 36’ in height and would completely block sunlight to the Daher’s house. They are in the same controversial style as the other Herring buildings in the Harbor; in this location they would strongly affect the viewshed and general neighborhood ambience of the Harbor. Although they are nominally designed for a “marine-related use” they will primarily function as condos. **Action:** determine status of this proposal and find Lennie Roberts’ letter on this matter.

Princeton 5 – West Point Ave.

At the foot of West Point Ave. the options are to cut across the beach or to turn right and follow West Point Avenue. Beach access is often limited by gullies cut by runoff and seasonal creeks, so the Trail alignment would be varying and temporary.

Pillar Pt. Marsh 1

Along West Point Ave., there were concerns about how to separate pedestrians from the traffic – the road (built along a dam constructed by the Air Force) is constricted by willows and other vegetation, and there is a steep dropoff to either side.

Pillar Pt Marsh 2

There are dangerous blind curves. **Action:** recommend striping and bush clearing. ?and guardrails?

It might be possible to build a boardwalk across the marsh just past Driftwood Lumber – but this is an expensive and long-term project, given the environmental sensitivity of the marsh.

Pillar Pt. Parking.

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Mirada Surf to Pillar Point Coastal Trail Through-Walk – June 20, 2009

Mirada Surf to Pillar Point Coastal Trail Through-Walk – June 20, 2009

Walkers: Sandy Emerson, Lisa Ketcham, Leonard Woren

This was a final through-walk to confirm or change earlier findings.

Recommendations are below.

Segment names refer to the Midcoast Trail Table

Section 1: Mirada Surf West – Project nearing completion.

Section 2: Coronado & Highway 1 Intersection

Recommendations:

- Improve access to pedestrian crossing for bicycles and strollers
- Make smooth and logical transition between Mirada Surf West trail and an improved walkway along the west edge of the highway
- Install bathroom and trash receptacles.

Section 3: Joining Section – Surfers' Beach access

Recommendations:

- Improve walkway along west edge of highway
- Need barriers for pedestrian protection
- Create boardwalk and ramp access to the beach – probably widen existing walkway. Possibly use south edge of ravine along use trail.

Section 4: Surfers Beach Sidewalk

Recommendations:

- Need path/access through the riprap to the beach, at the north end of this sidewalk

Section 5: Surfers Beach Drop Off

Recommendations:

- Create marked trail through RV parking lot
- Add bathroom and trash receptacles

Section 6: Harbor 1 – South Interior Beach

Recommendations:

- Trail complete – add signage

Section 7: Harbor 2 – Open Space/Kayak Stand

Recommendations:

- Improve existing use trail
- Add marked walkway for pedestrians to cross road from end of Beach House sidewalk to use trail

Section 8: Harbor 3 – Parking Lot/Dock Restroom

Recommendations:

- Create trail at edge of parking lot – if possible, re-stripe the parking spaces
- Or, use existing use trail just outside the parking lot
- Cut over at restroom to walkway over dock road and past Harbormaster's Office

Mirada Surf to Pillar Point Coastal Trail Through-Walk – June 20, 2009

Section 9: Harbor 4 – Docks/Commercial/Parking

Recommendations:

- Use existing walkway: add signage

Section 10: Princeton 1 – Barbara’s /Small Beach

Recommendations:

- Improve access to small beach at both ends
- For high tide access, use sidewalk but post signs “walk your bike”
- No easy route in this area – Barbara’s fish trap sidewalk is often crowded.

Section 11: Princeton 2 – Capistrano to Prospect intersection

Recommendations:

- go around edge of vacant lot (water side)
- Cut back to Prospect along Denniston Creek
- Alternatives: existing sidewalk, or the social trail

Section 12: Princeton 3 – Prospect/Broadway Intersection

Recommendations:

- Create better walkway past the curb cuts area – prohibit parking
- Create pedestrian protection at the corner – barriers
- Mark trail connection across Broadway to Princeton Ave.

Section 13: Princeton 4 – Princeton Avenue

Recommendations:

- Clean up old sidewalk behind the trees
- Stripe/sign the roadway
- Coordinate with any plans to improve/widen Princeton Ave. (DPW)
- Improve beach access at Columbia and Vassar road ends

Section 14: Princeton 5 – West Point Ave.

Recommendations:

- Start boardwalk at Harbor end of West Point- create boardwalk along marsh outer edge
- Improve beach access at end of West Point
- High tide alternate route: West Point Avenue along Pillar Pt. Access Rd. to Pillar Pt. Parking lot

Section 15: Pillar Pt. Marsh 1 – Entrance Pillar Pt. Access Road

- We do NOT recommend starting the boardwalk across the Marsh from the Pillar Pt. access road – too stressful for birds, and potentially damaging to the habitat

Section 16: Pillar Pt. Marsh 2 – Access Rd. Curve

- Cut back vegetation
- Add pedestrian protection (barriers) – BUT it’s not possible to widen this road
- Dangerous, but the only alternative at high tide

Section 17: Pillar Pt. Parking Lot

- Project in progress: improve lot , signage, and bathroom



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Peter Grenell, General Manager

June 24, 2009

Sabrina Brennan
Member, Midcoast Community Council
165 LaGrande Ave.
Moss Beach, CA 94038

Ref: Completion of Coastal Trail Segment Through Pillar Point Harbor

Dear Sabrina:

This letter follows up our meeting yesterday with Pillar Point Harbor Master Dan Temko regarding planning and implementation of a Coastal Trail segment through Princeton and Pillar Point Harbor, connecting further to El Granada and Half Moon Bay. I trust the enclosed information will assist you and other participants in scoping and planning activities during the upcoming Trails workshop.

Our intent here is to briefly review our Coastal Trail planning efforts to date with respect to the Harbor and the Princeton shoreline, provide more detailed information on the advantages of a trail route through Pillar Point Inner Harbor, to summarize a possible Harbor District role in the trail effort, and to suggest some avenues to pursue to bring the Trail to fruition.

Please note that in its Midcoast Local Coastal Program Update concerning the Role of Other Agencies, the County noted in Section 10.49: "Encourage the San Mateo County Harbor District to continue its efforts developing and maintaining public shoreline access on the District's coastal properties."

HARBOR DISTRICT COASTAL TRAIL-RELATED ACTIVITIES TO DATE

1. Pillar Point Inner Harbor

The District's 1991 Pillar Point Harbor Master Plan & Urban Waterfront Restoration Plan, prepared with Coastal Conservancy assistance, included a public access-related objective: "Provide increased public access.... (m)aintain continuous public access along the harbor waterfront, and provide a public access path from the Inner harbor to the east outer breakwater and to the beach area immediately west of the Inner Harbor." This



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objective was partially achieved, but gaps remain. Other parts of the plan have either been accomplished or are now out-of-date.

Recent Inner Harbor trail activity: Within the past couple of years, we discussed a Coastal Trail alignment through the Inner Harbor (see attachment) with Coastal Conservancy staff as part of a possible updated Pillar Point Urban Waterfront Plan. This plan initially was to include dredging a basin for and installation of new boat berths, extension of the existing sheet-pile bulkhead to and along the Perched Beach area (where Half Moon Bay Kayak is operating), extending the public access promenade along the bulkhead and connecting to the existing trail to Surfers Beach in the vicinity of the small boat launch ramp. The plan had other elements as well, not immediately relevant to this discussion. Action on the boat berths was suspended following completion of studies on the dredging component; this led to a hold on the Waterfront Plan.

2. Princeton Shoreline

In response to a request from the Coastal Commission over ten years ago for assistance in identifying a comprehensive solution at Princeton to the issues of shoreline protection and removal of privately placed riprap without permits, the District commissioned a preliminary "snapshot" engineering study of erosion control along the Princeton beach shoreline. Three alternative solutions were suggested, which included attention to preserving and enhancing public access to and along this shoreline. New and improved lateral access was envisioned from Broadway along a new shoreline protection structure, and continuing northwestward along a possible beach boardwalk from near Columbia St. to West Point Ave. New stairways would connect to the lateral beach trail from Columbia, Vassar, and West Point street-ends.

Because (a) the Harbor District's jurisdiction comes up only to mean high water, (b) the District's basic mission is harbor operations, not parks and recreation, and (c) the District's financial and staff resources are inadequate to address this substantial effort, the Harbor Commission adopted a limited but supportive, facilitating role. This included providing information by staff to the County and participating in numerous inter-agency meetings convened Supervisor Gordon toward finding a solution to the shoreline protection and public access needs. In the absence of the County adopting a lead role to take action, further activities have been on hold.

Most recently, the District's General Manager and the County Parks Director discussed opportunities for restroom improvements at the District's West parking lot that serves



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visitors to Pillar Point Marsh, birdwatchers, and those going out to Pillar Point. Also discussed was Coastal Trail access through Princeton (see below for alternatives discussed).

A SAFE AND SCENIC TRAIL ALIGNMENT THROUGH PILLAR POINT INNER HARBOR

The attached map outlines a recommended trail route through the Inner Harbor. At its western end, it would link to a trail coming from Princeton. At its eastern end, it would connect directly to the existing trail from the small boat launch ramp to Surfers Beach. The segment in between requires practically no new construction or funding, except for a gap at the eastern end of the promenade on top of the bulkhead to the existing trail at the ramp. This could be accomplished either along the approach road to the ramp or across Perched Beach (see below).

3. Interim Access Possibility: Perched Beach

Years ago, the Coastal Conservancy adopted a low-cost approach to providing minimally safe but usable access when conditions were temporarily or otherwise inappropriate to support permanent full-standard access. This approach, used in a few instances, was called "Interim Access". Such interim access could be provided across Perched Beach – a de facto trail has been made by the public already – until such time as the Harbor District determines whether any future development may occur on Perched Beach.

4. Advantages of this Safe and Scenic alignment over an inland alternative

1. Requires no land acquisition or other agreements regarding land use.
2. Requires minimal funding, to address the gap along or through Perched Beach.
3. Can be quickly implemented.
4. Provides the optimum trail location: directly along the shoreline, the essence of the Coastal Trail.
5. Given #3 above, provides maximum interest to the public for viewing the harbor and its activities, as a contrast to other parts of the overall trail segment.
6. Provides direct access to existing restroom and food facilities for the public at no additional project cost.



San Mateo County Harbor District

Board of Harbor Commissioners

Leo Padreddi, President
Sally Campbell, Vice President
Pietro Parravano, Treasurer
James Tucker, Secretary
Ken Lundie, Commissioner

Peter Grenell, General Manager

A TRAIL ALIGNMENT ALONG THE PRINCETON SHORELINE

5. Preferred Alignment: Shoreline as part of shoreline protection/erosion control

As outlined in section 2 above, this alignment, like the one outlined for Pillar Point Inner Harbor, would provide the optimum shoreline trail access. It would provide safety, superb harbor views, and immediate beach access. It would be accessible from the Princeton street-ends. Designated vehicle parking could be provided at these street-ends. An early Conservancy-funded public access project in the City of Morro Bay included such arrangements, with the access being directly to the harbor area.

This route would require funding to construct this portion of the trail segment. Such funding would be part of a package that would include money for the needed shoreline protection element. The latter, as discussed in the many meetings with Princeton citizens and the County, would involve placement of clean, uncontaminated sand on the Princeton beach as part of the Harbor District's maintenance dredging activity, and perhaps using geotubes to maintain stability of the restored beach. Additionally, some sort of hard-edged solution would be needed in the area where the illegal riprap was placed by the former owner of the Beach House area. This entire approach would resolve the Coastal Commission's issues regarding shoreline and access.

6. Interim Alignment: Princeton Avenue

As a temporary alternative, the trail could be routed from West Point Avenue along Princeton Avenue, jogging around Broadway, Poplar Way, and Capistrano to the link point at the Inner Harbor. This interim expedient has the disadvantages of safety issues, poor pavement surface, and no grade separation for trail hikers from vehicular traffic. Only signs would be needed to demarcate the alignment.

LINKING PRINCETON WITH THE INNER HARBOR

7. Preferred Alignment

Ideally, the Coastal Trail segment through Princeton would cross a new bridge over Denniston Creek, pass along the bluff edge of the vacant parcel across Capistrano from the Half Moon Bay Brewing Company, then continue to meet the link point into the Inner



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Harbor either by going along Capistrano or swinging outboard of the Fish Trap restaurant on a new trail structure. This route would require construction funding and acquisition of a trail easement across the privately owned vacant parcel.

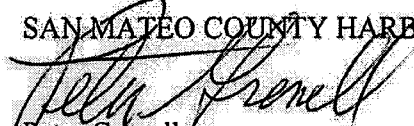
8. Interim Alignment: Broadway, Prospect Way, Capistrano

A temporary alternative was outlined in paragraph 6 above.

The preceding, with the attached maps, captures the gist of our thinking and summarizes our trail-related activities to this point. Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions, and maintain contact as the Coastal Trail process continues. This is a worthy effort long recognized by the County in its coastal planning, the Harbor District, and the community itself.

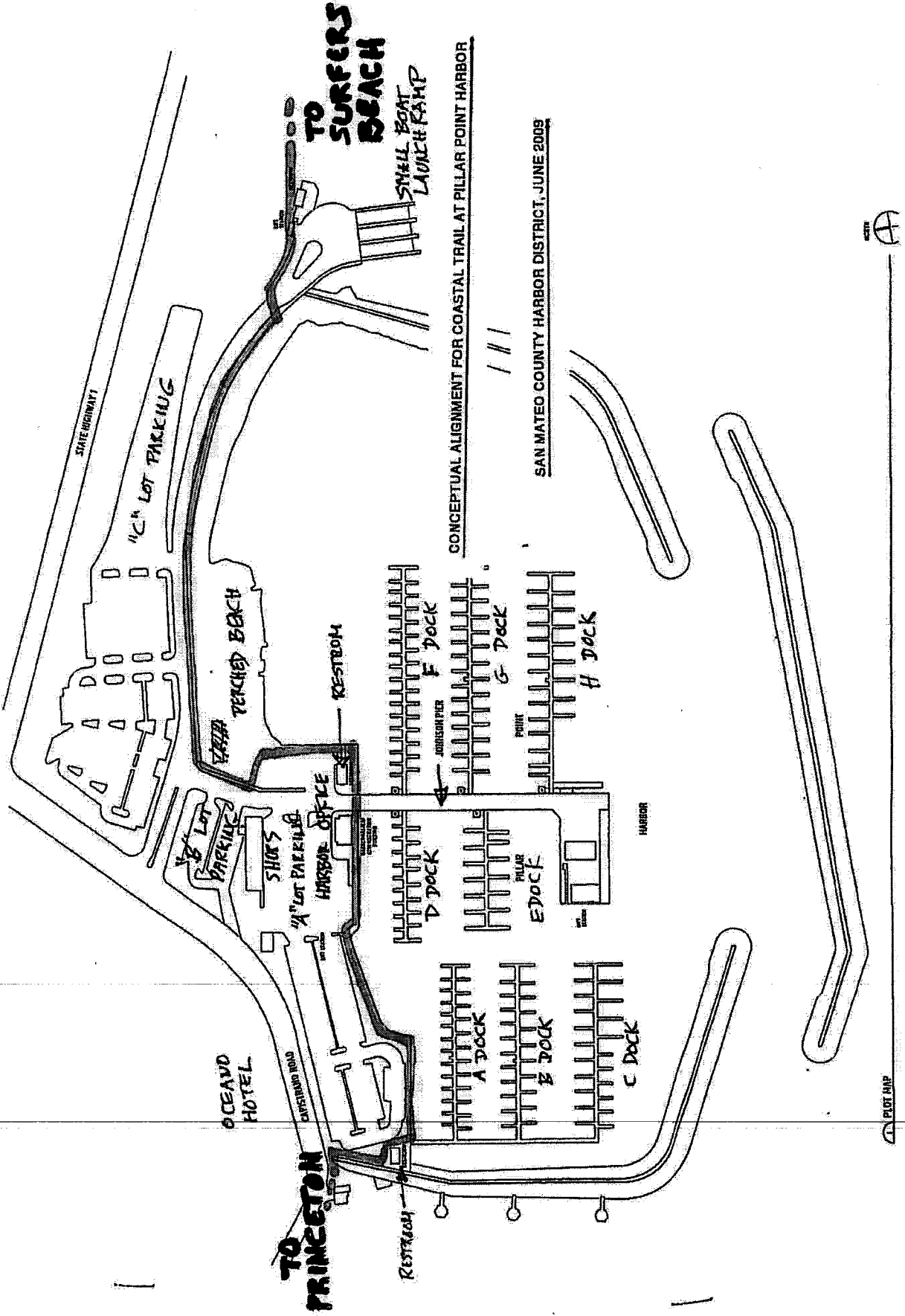
Sincerely,

SAN MATEO COUNTY HARBOR DISTRICT

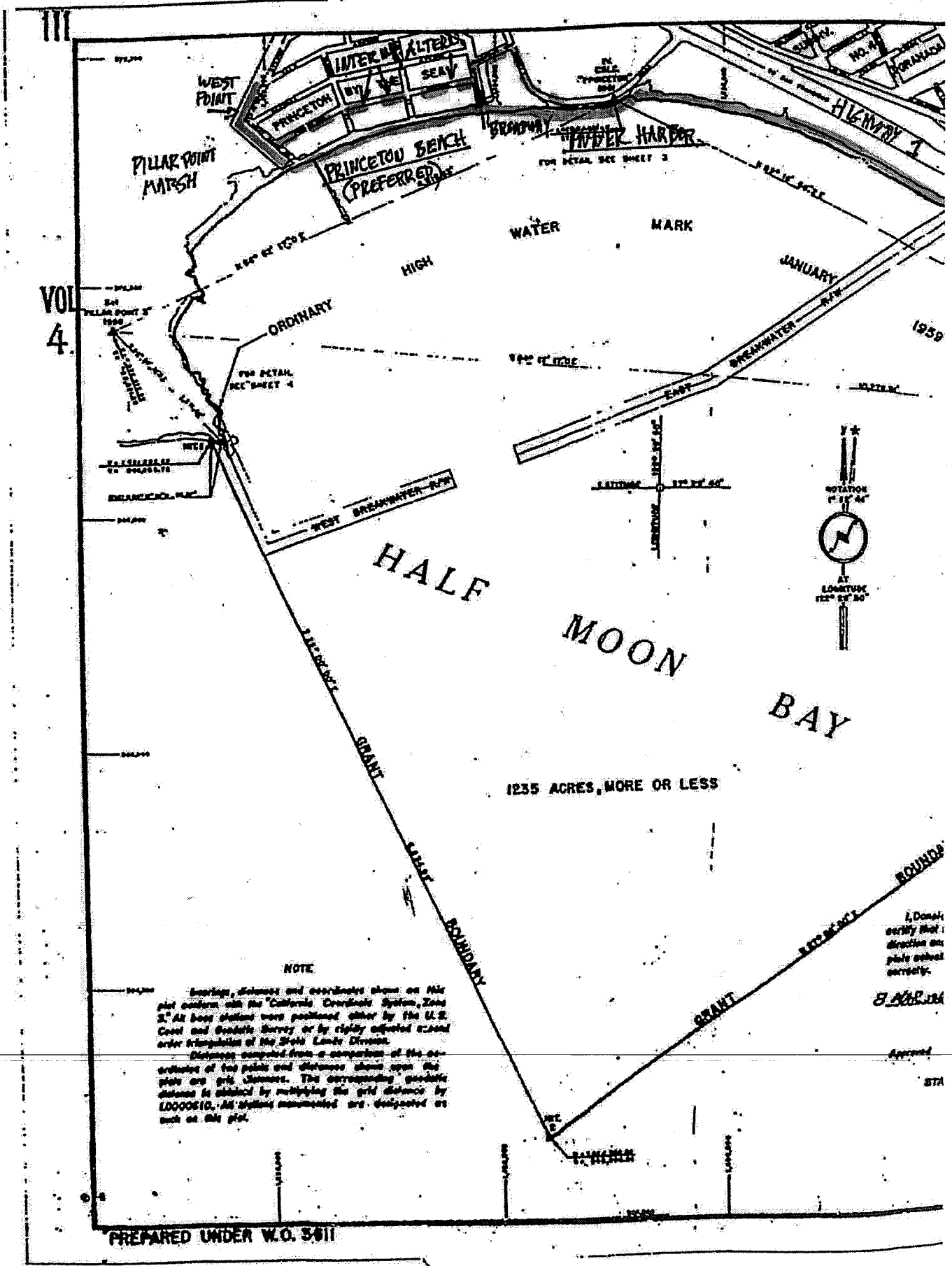


Peter Grenell
General Manager

Cc: Senator Leland Y. Yee, 8th District
Assemblyman Jerry A. Hill, 19th District
Supervisor Rich Gordon, 3rd District
Board of Harbor Commissioners
Dave Holland, Director, San Mateo County Recreation and Parks Division
Terri Nevins, State Coastal Conservancy
Janet Diehl, State Coastal Conservancy
Dan Temko, Harbor Master, Pillar Point Harbor



PILOT MAP



VOL 4

1959

HALF MOON BAY

1235 ACRES, MORE OR LESS

NOTE.

bearings, distances and coordinates shown on this plat conform with the California Coordinate System, Zone 2. All base stations were positioned either by the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey or by tightly adjusted second order triangulation of the State Lands Division. Distances computed from a comparison of the coordinates of two points and distances shown upon this plat are grid distances. The corresponding geodetic distance is obtained by multiplying the grid distance by 1.000010. All station monuments are designated as such on this plat.

I, Donaherty, certify that the direction and distance on this plat are correct.

[Signature]

Approved

STA

CA Coastal Trail Conceptual Plan from Miramar to Moss Beach
Half Moon Bay Yacht Club
1/26/10

- Will tree removal will be necessary to make way for the trail across from the gym on Princeton?
- Princeton street improvements for 100 and 200 block of Princeton are scheduled by County Public works for 2011. The County Public Works Department owns 8 feet more of Right of Way than has been improved and a trail/bike lane (colorized) could be placed on the road, but parking (i.e. on one side) would need to be addressed.
- There are concerns that trail development could eliminate existing parking needs.
- Unpaved streets in Princeton have parking opportunities.
- Can speed bumps be placed on Princeton to calm traffic where increased trail use would be promoted?
- Is County Planning requiring adequate off-street parking be provided when approving developments in Princeton?
- County Public Works should have a different standard for public access where the California Coastal Trail is involved on a public street.
- Are there other streets in Princeton to place the California Coastal Trail instead of Princeton given the potential impact to businesses?
- Can the HMB airport property be used to facilitate the California Coastal Trail?
- A safe pedestrian and bike path along Airport Street is a high priority to connect the community.
- What is the process for improving street ends to the beach in Princeton?
- What is the process for making Mirada Road one way?
- A legislative request of \$500,000 has been made to facilitate trail access across the 400 feet of danger north of Coronado west of Highway 1. There are questions about if that will be money well spent if that section of Highway 1 needs to be relocated further east eventually anyway?
- The Pillar Point breakwater built in 1961 needs to be “fixed” to address erosion problems occurring south of it.

- Signage on streets without road improvements could invite safety problems.
 - Toilet and parking improvements need to be part of the trail development considerations.
 - Clarification is needed about the opportunity to formalize parking on the Burnham Strip east of Highway 1.
 - There is opposition to placing parking on the east side of Highway 1 on the Burnham Strip.
 - The Seal Cove area needs further study. County Public Works has indicated they plan to make no street improvements in the area any time soon. There are potential paper streets that could be improved for trail use, but there are traffic problems that need to be resolved associated with the closing of Ocean Blvd.
 - Can from Princeton shuttles to Harbor District large parking lots be required for Special Event Permits in the future?
 - What would be the process to initiate a parking study for Princeton?
-