



Staff Report to the Zoning Administrator

**Application Number:
261029**

Applicant: County of Santa Cruz

Owner: Multiple Agencies

APN: No situs address

Site Address: North Coast – See Project Description for site locations

Agenda Date: February 13, 2026

Agenda Item #: 3

Time: After 9:00 a.m.

Project Description: Proposal to install signage prohibiting parking between 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. in the existing Panther Beach, Shark Fin Cove Beach, Davenport Beach, and Davenport Pier public parking areas.

Location: Panther Beach, Shark Fin Cove Beach, Davenport Beach, and Davenport Pier parking areas.

Permits Required: Coastal Development Permit and Minor Site Development Permit

Supervisory District: Third District (District Supervisor: Cummings)

Staff Recommendation:

- Determine that the proposal is exempt from further Environmental Review under the California Environmental Quality Act.
- Approval of Application 261029, based on the attached findings and conditions.

Project Description and Setting

The proposed project would prohibit parking in the existing public parking areas at Panther Beach, Shark Fin Cove, Davenport Beach, and Davenport Pier from 12:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. daily through installation of no parking signs, and through enforcement of the signed parking restriction. Coastal visitors who are parked in the subject parking areas between that time would be ticketed. The County is proposing the parking restrictions due to persistent occurrences of illicit drug use, vandalism, damage to coastal resources, and other dangerous activities that have resulted in deaths and at-sea rescues along North Coast beaches.

A Coastal Development Permit (CDP) is required because installation of new signage meets the definition of “development” pursuant Santa Cruz County Code (SCCC) Section 13.20.050 and the Coastal Act. A Minor Site Development Permit (MSP) is also required pursuant to SCCC 13.10.582 and 13.11.037-1.

The Panther Beach parking lot occupies a long, narrow strip between the Santa Cruz County Branch Rail Line (SCBRL) right-of-way and Highway 1. It is located approximately

two miles south of the town of Davenport. The parcel is owned by the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) (APN: 059-012-05) and is partially within the Caltrans right-of-way. As part of the North Coast Rail Trail, or Segment 5 of the Coastal Rail Trail, construction is nearing completion at the Panther Beach parking area to pave the lot and incorporate new amenities, including trash/recycling containers, bike racks, benches, access paths to the trail, and restroom facilities.

The Shark Fin Cove parking area is a long, narrow strip located between the SCBRL right-of-way and Highway 1. It is located approximately 0.5 miles south of the town of Davenport. The existing parking area is unpaved and consists of gravel and compacted soils. It is currently an informal parking area that is located within the Caltrans right-of-way. The County, in partnership with Caltrans, is currently in the beginning planning phases to construct a formal parking lot at Shark Fin Cove.

The Davenport Beach parking area is located on the coastal side of Highway 1 across from the Ocean Street intersection in the town of Davenport, between the SCBRL right-of-way and Highway 1. The existing parking area is unpaved and consists of gravel and compacted soils. It is currently an informal parking area that is located partially on a parcel owned by the RTC (APN: 058-072-03) and the Caltrans right-of-way. As part of the North Coast Rail Trail, the Davenport Beach parking area is planned to be improved with paving and 43 marked parking spaces, a restroom facility, trash/recycling containers, bike racks, benches, and path to the trail. The privately owned southern portion of the existing parking area, which is currently closed to public access, would remain unpaved and available for informal parking, as allowed by the landowner, and is not included as part of this project.

The Davenport Pier parking area is located on the coastal side of Highway 1 at the Cement Plant Road intersection, between the SCBRL right-of-way and Highway 1. It is located approximately 0.3 miles north of the town of Davenport. The parking area is unpaved and consists of gravel and compacted soils. It is currently an informal parking area that is located partially on a parcel owned by the RTC (APN: 058-072-04) and the Caltrans right-of-way.

All four proposed parking areas lie within the appeals jurisdiction of the Coastal Commission; therefore, because the proposed project is considered development, the project is not exempt from review under Coastal Zone regulations. As such, a Coastal Development Permit is required.

All sites are located within the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PR) zone district with exception of Panther Beach, which is within the Public & Community Facilities (PF) zone district. Pursuant to SCCC 13.11.037-1, a Minor Site Development permit is required to ensure the proposed signage is compatible and appropriately integrated with the surrounding land uses.

Project Background

The beaches along the County's North Coast have experienced increases in visitors causing, at times, documented illicit drug use, vandalism, damage to coastal resources, and dangerous activities that have resulted in deaths and at-sea rescues. Many of these beaches are inaccessible by vehicles, making effective law enforcement impossible.

Additionally, enforcement agencies that patrol the North Coast have limited resources and are unable to dedicate staff to monitor the beaches overnight. This leaves regulation of the adjacent parking areas the only effective enforcement mechanism.

Most visitors to the North Coast are law abiding and respectful of our precious coastal resources. Today these impacts have increased to the point where intervention is needed to help protect environmental resources, ensure the health and safety of visitors and residents, while also providing public access. Issues include graffiti on cliff faces, trash that is left on the beaches from overnight parties, and RVs that sit for extended periods of time and the associated trash that is strewn about in the vicinity (see Exhibit F for photos documenting some of these issues). With the number of visitors to the area increasing due to the development of the North Coast Rail Trail and the Cotoni-Coast Dairies, the existing problems are likely to worsen unless interventions are implemented to ensure safe access and responsible stewardship of the North Coast's natural resources. North Coast residents, State Parks, County Parks, the Sheriff's Office, and the Third District office have been concerned for many years with illegal activities and continued damage to coastal resources as it is difficult to access the North Coast beaches.

The Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument is newly open, and the North Coast Rail Trail is projected to open in 2026. Both attractions include improved parking, interpretive signage, trash/recycling receptacles, addition of bathroom facilities, and bicycle racks, both of which are expected to be extremely popular, resulting in a significant increase in the number of visitors. Additionally, the North Coast Facilities Management Plan (NC-FMP)¹, created in 2024, identifies various projects along the North Coast intended to improve visitor access and experience. These and other on-going efforts demonstrate commitment by the County and partnering agencies to maximizing public coastal access by planning for improvement and maintenance of the area's facilities. Priorities under the Coastal Act include maximizing public access, protecting coastal environmental resources, and ensuring public health and safety.

Health and Safety

While the North Coast beaches offer significant benefits to residents and visitors, they also present notable public safety risks, especially after dark. These beaches are among the most rugged and challenging coastal access points in the county, with steep, rocky paths that increase the likelihood of injuries. Ocean conditions are hazardous, with sneaker waves frequently inundating visitors, and the area's limited visibility from the roadway limits access for emergency services and routine patrols. New visitors, often unaware of the area's rugged terrain and dangerous ocean conditions, face heightened risks that have led to ocean rescues and drowning incidents. State and local enforcement agencies have expressed concern that the addition of new recreational facilities could attract more visitors, further increasing health and safety risks.

The North Coast has been historically underserved by enforcement agencies. State Parks, the agency with jurisdiction over many of the beach areas, has limited resources and is unable to dedicate a ranger to patrol North Coast beaches overnight. During the nightshift, due to staff constraints, available rangers are stationed at the more populated,

¹ https://parks.santacruzcountyca.gov/Portals/12/2024/Planning/CCRU-2.0_North_Coast_Plan_v44_reduced.pdf

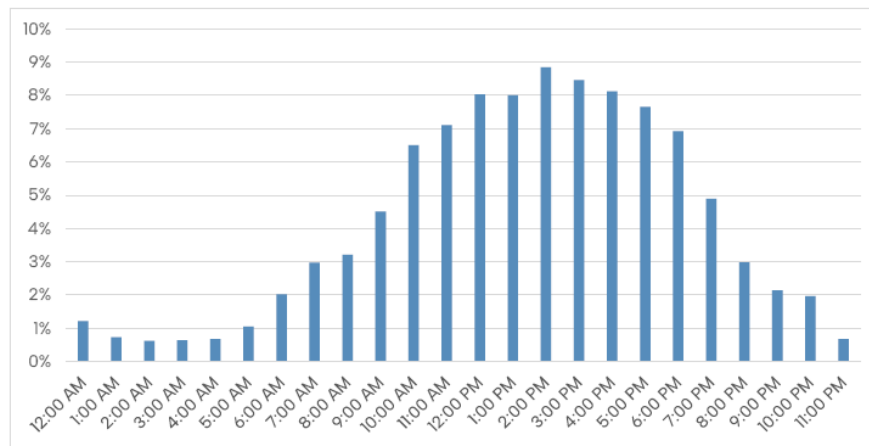
urban beaches in mid- and south county rather than in the more remote North Coast beaches areas. Similarly, the Sheriff’s Office does not staff a dedicated deputy to the North Coast and is otherwise reliant upon deputies responding from Live Oak or the San Lorenzo Valley to patrol these areas.

Since June 2023, State Parks has issued 15 citations, arrested five individuals, responded to five aquatic rescues, three medical incidents, and one fatality during the overnight hours along the project area. According to data from the Sheriff’s Office Medical Examiner, since 2022, there have been 10 non-natural deaths in Davenport, three were related to motor vehicle accidents (including a pedestrian), six suicides (including one drowning), and one drowning. Additionally, there is well known drug use, vandalism, and other illicit and destructive activity to natural resources in the area, particularly overnight.

Visitor Demand

Peak visitation to the North Coast occurs in the Spring and Summer seasons, during the weekends, and between 12:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.². As demonstrated in Figure A below, less than 2% of visits took place between 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m.

Figure A: North Coast Overall Visitation by Time of Day



Source: Draft North Coast Transportation Demand Model. Fehr & Peers, 2025.

Table 1 shows occupancy of various parking areas along the North Coast. Of the 13 sites surveyed in 2025, none of the four proposed lots saw the greatest parking demand (note that Davenport Pier was not included) and there are additional 13 parking areas that are as popular as the proposed sites. Therefore, there are alternative parking areas for visitors wishing to access the area overnight.

Additionally, as shown on the table below, during a typical weekend afternoon, parking occupancy at Panther Beach, Shark Fin Cove, and Davenport Beach was generally between 50%-65%. Even in peak demand periods there is still parking available to visitors.

² Information obtained from the North Coast Transportation Demand Plan Draft Existing Conditions Report. <https://www.sccrtc.org/projects/streets-highways/north-coast-tdm-plan/>

Table 1: Weekend Parking Utilization

Parking Location	2017 Parking Occupancy ¹	2025 Parking Occupancy ²
Waddell Beach	-	50%
Greyhound Rock Beach	-	20%
Scott Creek Beach	-	100%
Davenport Landing Beach	-	100%
Davenport Beach	45%	20%
Shark Fin Cove	35%	50%
Bonny Doon Beach	35%	55%
Panther / Yellowbank Beach	5%	10% ³
Laguna Creek Beach	15%	80%
Four Mile Beach	5%	65%
Wilder Ranch State Park (paid lot)	-	100%
Wilder Ranch State Park (roadside)	100%	90%

Note:

1. Kimley-Horn, North Coast Rail Trail Final Environmental Report, Appendix K (October 28, 2017).
2. Fehr & Peers field visit, Sunday March 23, 2025 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM.
3. During the field visit majority of the parking area by Panther / Yellowbank Beach was closed for construction.

Source: *Draft North Coast Transportation Demand Model. Fehr & Peers, 2025.*

Additionally, as shown in Figure B, the Access & Mobility Element of the General Plan, identifies 15 coastal access points along the North Coast. The project only proposes limited parking restrictions on three out of 15 coastal access points (note that Shark Fin Cove Beach is not included in Figure B). As such, the proposed project will not result in a restriction to all coastal access points and that it tailors the restrictions to address significant public health, safety and protection of natural resources while maximizing coastal access.

Figure B: General Plan North County Coastal Access



Source: County of Santa Cruz

Existing Parking Conditions

In the parking areas located between Panther Beach and Davenport there are approximately 625 parking spaces. The additional parking areas are Rodoni Farms with 20 spaces, Bonny Doon Beach with 55 spaces, and Davenport Crack with 120 spaces, equaling approximately 195 parking spaces available, as shown in Figure C below. The proposed restrictions would affect approximately 430 spaces, or 69% of the total parking supply³.

There are also additional parking lots on Highway 1 north and south of the project area: Four Mile Beach (unpaved, off-street parking area), Laguna Creek Beach (unpaved, off-street parking area), Davenport Landing Beach (unpaved, off-street parking area), Scotts Creek Beach (roadside parking area), Cliffs Beach (roadside parking area), Pelican Rock (roadside parking area), and Waddell Beach (unpaved, off-street parking area).

³ Number of parking spaces obtained from the North Coast Transportation Demand Plan Draft Existing Conditions Report. <https://www.sccrtc.org/projects/streets-highways/north-coast-tdm-plan/> and the Shark Fin Cove Beach Access Parking Lot Improvement Project Caltrans D5 DEER Application.

Figure C: Parking Supply Estimates Along the North Coast



Source: Draft North Coast Transportation Demand Model. Fehr & Peers, 2025.

There are currently signs restricting overnight parking from the hours of 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. at the Shark Fin Cove Beach and Davenport Landing Beach parking areas. The same signage was also previously present at the Panther Beach parking lot, but it was removed as part of the lot improvements.

Coastal Development Permit History

In 1999, the Santa Cruz County Sheriff’s Office obtained CDP 00-0464 establishing the Davenport Nighttime Parking District (Parking District) to address the increased nighttime occurrence of serious crimes and other health and safety concerns in the “old town” area of Davenport, which included all of Davenport Avenue from Old Coast Road between Highway 1 and Marine View. The Parking District instituted a permit parking program for the hours of 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. wherein violators would be ticketed. CDP 00-0464 was amended in 2011 to expand the geographic extent of the Davenport Parking Program to include Ocean Street, Center Street, Marine View Avenue (publicly maintained portion only), and Church Street within the town of Davenport.

In 2022, CDP-0001-21 was approved for the North Coast Rail Trail, a 7.5-mile multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trail that would extend along the railroad corridor. The project includes two paved parking lots at Panther Beach and Davenport Beach. Approval of

CDP-0001-21 was conditioned to require no overnight closure of the trail or the two parking lots. Additionally, an amendment to A-3-SCO-98-101 to allow paving of the Davenport parking lot was required.

In 2000, CDP A-3-SCO-98-101 was approved for 3500 Highway 1, which included construction of a parking lot at Davenport Beach, but disallowed paved parking on the site. CDP A-3-SCO-98-101 was amended in 2022 to allow a paved parking area.

Zoning and General Plan Consistency

The existing Panther Beach parking area is approximately 2 acres, located in the Public & Community Facilities (PF) zone district, a designation which allows parking lots. Proposed signage is an associated and permitted use subject to a minor site development permit pursuant to Chapter 13.11. Although the zoning is inconsistent with the site's Agriculture (AG) and Resource Conservation (O-C) General Plan designations, these are allowed uses. Pursuant to State Bill (SB) 821 (2023), a jurisdiction can approve a development application based on the General Plan and not the inconsistent zoning district.

The existing Shark Fin Cove parking area is approximately 0.63 acres, located in the PF, Parks, Recreation, & Open Space (PR), and Special Use (SU) zone districts, designations which allow parking lots and proposed signage, subject to a minor site development permit pursuant to Chapter 13.11. The existing parking lot and proposed signs are permitted uses within those zone districts subject to Chapter 13.11, and the zonings are consistent with the site's AG, Neighborhood Commercial (C-N), and Parks, Recreation, & Open Space (O-R) General Plan designations.

The existing Davenport Beach parking area is approximately 0.5 acres, located in the PR zone district, a designation which allows for the existing parking lot and installation of proposed signage, subject to a minor site development permit pursuant to Chapter 13.11. The proposed signs are a principal permitted use within the zone district subject to Chapter 13.11, and the zoning is consistent with the site's O-R General Plan designation.

The existing Davenport Pier parking area is approximately 0.79 acres, located within the Caltrans right-of-way. The zone district for the adjacent parcel on the west side of Highway 1 is zoned PR. The placement of the proposed signs is considered a permitted public facility use that is allowable in the PR zone district subject to a site development permit pursuant to Chapter 13.11. The PR zone district is consistent with the O-R General Plan designation.

SCCC 13.11 Site Development Permit and Design Review.

Per SCCC 13.11.037-1: Site Development Permit Chart, signs require approval of a Minor Site Development Permit and must comply with SCCC sections 13.10.580-13.10.587. The proposed project will be sited and designed to be visually compatible and integrated with the character of the area. The existing sites serve as public parking to coastal access points along the North Coast and, in the near future, to the North Coast Rail Trail facility. A complete list of Findings for the Minor Site Development Permit is included with this report (Exhibit B).

SCCC 13.20.050 Projects Requiring Coastal Development Permit Approval.

Per SCCC 13.20.050, any development in the Coastal Zone shall obtain a Coastal Development Permit from the County in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 13.10. Pursuant to SCCC 13.20.040 definition of “Development”, erection of signs is considered a development activity. As all four existing sites are located within the Coastal Zone, a Coastal Development Permit is required for signage. A complete list of Findings for the Coastal Development Permit is included with this report (Exhibit B).

Local Coastal Program (LCP) Consistency

The proposed signage is in conformance with the County’s certified Local Coastal Program (LCP), in that the signage will be sited and designed to be visually compatible, in scale with, and integrated with the character of the surrounding landscape to the maximum extent possible. While the project sites are located between the shoreline and the first public road, only necessary signage will be erected, and signage is designed to reduce the visual impacts to the greatest extent possible and in conformance with applicable design standards. However, the signage will implement a restriction on public parking areas used to access coastal resources between the hours of 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m.

General Plan Policies:

Policy AM-4.1.4 (LCP) Maintaining and Enhancing Public Right-of-Way Access.

Policy AM-4.1.4 states that oceanfront public rights-of-way are to be maintained and improved for beach access purposes and that existing major access areas as shown in Figure 3-8 shall be permanently protected for long-term public use. Figure 3-8a identifies Panther Beach, Davenport Beach, and Davenport Bluff (or Davenport Pier) as major access areas. The proposed restrictions are the only currently available measure to protect and maintain these major access areas from continued degradation to ensure safe and enjoyable long-term public use, and as mentioned previously, will not impact all coastal access points in the area.

AM-4.1.7 (LCP)(EJ) Enhancing Public Access.

Policy AM-4.1.7 expands and enhances public access to and along the shoreline and to beaches, coastal waters, tidelands, coastal parks, and trails where feasible and where all environmental impacts and use conflicts can be satisfactorily mitigated. Focus is first on areas where disadvantaged communities have limited or no coastal access.

While this project proposes a restriction on public parking on some of the North Coast beaches, it is coupled with various projects aimed at increasing and preserving coastal access throughout in the area, such as improvements to parking and additions of bathrooms, interpretive signage, and trail access as part of the North Coast Rail Trail project. There are currently 14 on-going projects and plans aimed at improving access and upgrading visitor facilities along the North Coast.

The impetus for the proposed overnight parking restrictions is a result of dangerous, destructive, and illicit behavior, and therefore are measures to mitigate resulting

environmental impacts and health and safety issues. The restriction to parking is narrowly targeted to the beaches that have historically had the most instances of destructive behavior and limited to hours when there are the least number of visitors. Additionally, the proposed project introduces safety measures that will enhance public access and will not restrict access to the surrounding alternative parking areas.

AM-6.3.5 (LCP) Coastal Access Parking.

Policy AM-6.3.5 prohibits the implementation of restrictions on public parking along public streets that impede or restrict public access to beaches, trails or parklands, (including, but not limited to, the posting of “no parking” signs, red curbing, physical barriers, and preferential parking programs), except where such restrictions are needed to protect public safety; where such restriction is narrowly tailored to abate and/or address an identified need or problem; where no other feasible alternative exists; and where any impacts to public access and recreation have been mitigated so as to maximize public access and recreational opportunities.

Considering limited enforcement resources to patrol the area, the restriction of overnight parking at the beaches that experience the highest levels of degradation during hours with the lowest visitor demand provides for a targeted and feasible approach to address the issue. The proposed restriction has been identified as the only solution currently available to protect public safety and is specifically tailored to target pervasive and documented illegal activities along North Coast beaches that have resulted in significant degradation of coastal resources and health and safety issues.

The limitation on public access and recreation is offset by the availability of 10 alternative parking areas along the North Coast. Additionally, the County and partner entities currently have 14 on-going projects and plans aimed at improving access and upgrading visitor facilities along the North Coast.

ARC-5.1.11 (LCP) Designation of Coastal Special Scenic Areas and Special Communities.

Policy ARC-5.1.11 designates the Davenport Community as a Coastal Special Community, and any development therein is required to comply with the design criteria set forth in SCCC Chapters 13.10 and 13.20.

The project area is located within the Coastal Zone, and under SCCC 13.20.050 and the Coastal Act, installation of signage is considered a development activity, therefore a Coastal Development Permit is required. Installation of signage is consistent and shall be in conformance with SCCC 13.20.130 and 13.20.143.

ARC-5.2.9 (LCP) Highway 1 Signage in Rural Areas.

Policy ARC-5.2.9 states that in the Highway 1 corridor, only Caltrans standard directional signs are allowed. Signs at Shark Fin Cove Beach and most at Davenport Pier will be erected in the Caltrans right-of-Way, whereas signs at Panther Beach and Davenport Beach will be erected within parcels owned by the RTC. As some of the project areas are located within the Caltrans right-of-way, all signage shall conform to Caltrans’ standard signage.

BE-5.1.5 (LCP) Coastal Special Communities.

Policy BE-5.1.5 designates and maintains the Davenport community as a Coastal Special Community. The proposed project aims to protect and maintain the unique scenic, natural resources, and visitor tourism focus of the community.

PPF-2.1.3 (LCP) Park Maintenance and Accessibility.

Policy PPF-2.1.3 requires parks as well as coastal access to be safe, clean, and accessible facilities using consistent standards to encourage users of all abilities, ages, backgrounds and financial resources to use park facilities and programs. The project proposes implementation of parking restrictions to ensure that North Coast beaches remain safe, clean and accessible to the public. Additionally, the County and partnering agencies currently have projects in construction or under development to improve the Panther Beach and Davenport Beach parking lots, therefore improving and creating more accessibility for all visitors.

PPF-2.6.1 (LCP) Shoreline Access.

Policy PPF-2.6.1 requires that a system of shoreline access to the coast with adequate improvements to serve the general public and the coastal neighborhoods, which is consistent with the California Coastal Act, meets public safety needs, protects natural resource areas from overuse, protects public rights and the rights of private property owners, minimizes conflicts with adjacent land uses, and does not adversely affect agriculture. Maintain or provide access, including visual access, to every beach to which a granted access exists or to which the public has acquired a right of access through use, as established through judicial determination of prescriptive rights, and acquisition through appropriate legal proceedings, in order to ensure one access to every pocket beach and convenient, well distributed access to long sandy beaches is provided.

Section 30210 of the Coastal Act states:

In carrying out the requirements of Section 4 of Article X of the California Constitution, maximum access, which shall be conspicuously posted, and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people consistent with the public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse.

Section 30212 of the Coastal Act states:

- (a) *Public access from the nearest public roadway to the shoreline and along the coast shall be provided in new development projects except where:*
 - (1) *it is inconsistent with public safety, military security needs, or the protection of fragile coastal resources,*
 - (2) *adequate access exists nearby, ...*
- (c) *Nothing in this division shall restrict public access nor shall it excuse the performance of duties and responsibilities of public agencies which are required by Sections 66478.1 to 66478.14, inclusive, of the Government Code and by Section 4 of Article X of the California Constitution.*

Section 30214 of the Coastal Act states:

- (a) *The public access policies of this article shall be implemented in a manner that*

takes into account the need to regulate the time, place, and manner of public access depending on the facts and circumstances in each case including, but not limited to, the following:

- (1) Topographic and geologic site characteristics.*
 - (2) The capacity of the site to sustain use and at what level of intensity.*
 - (3) The appropriateness of limiting public access to the right to pass and repass depending on such factors as the fragility of the natural resources in the area and the proximity of the access area to adjacent residential uses.*
 - (4) The need to provide for the management of access areas so as to protect the privacy of adjacent property owners and to protect the aesthetic values of the area by providing for the collection of litter.*
- (b) It is the intent of the Legislature that the public access policies of this article be carried out in a reasonable manner that considers the equities and that balances the rights of the individual property owner with the public's constitutional right of access pursuant to Section 4 of Article X of the California Constitution. Nothing in this section or any amendment thereto shall be construed as a limitation on the rights guaranteed to the public under Section 4 of Article X of the California Constitution...*

The project is consistent with the Coastal Act because it proposes a specific, targeted solution to documented and persistent human activities leading to the degradation of coastal resources and health and safety issues along the North Coast.

In CD-0001-21, the Coastal Commission considered proposed nighttime closures of the Davenport Beach and Panther Beach parking lots. In their determination, Coastal staff state that⁴, while there is a documented history of negative impacts on those beaches, there is no evidence that the presence of the improved trail or parking lots would exacerbate the present situation. And further, the new facilities may effectively address some of the identified problems.

As such, Coastal staff, in their assessment, acknowledge that there are, in fact, persistent problematic behaviors related to public safety and the degradation of coastal resources in the area. Staff stated that there is no evidence that the new facilities will exacerbate the problem. However, it is also true that there is no evidence that the new facilities *will not* exacerbate the present situation.

The existing issues, without an increase in visitors, provide, on their own, sufficient evidence that there are persistent and documented patterns of behaviors that pose health and safety concerns and negatively impact coastal resources. Additionally, it is expected that the new facilities (i.e. the North Coast Rail Trail and Cotoni Coast Dairies) will bring more visitors to the area. Considering that the concerns raised are a result of human activity, it is reasonable to deduce that an increase in visitors will result in an increase in problematic behaviors.

CD-0001-21 also stated that overnight closure of the Davenport Beach parking lot “would make it very difficult, if not impossible for the general public to access that beach during nighttime hours.” (pg. 55). However, in that same report, when discussing the decrease

⁴ North Coast Rail Trail Coastal Commission Consistency Determination (CD), CD-0001-21 – Revised Findings, pg. 58. <https://documents.coastal.ca.gov/reports/2022/9/Th10a/Th10a-9-2022-revised%20findings.pdf>.

in available parking spaces at Davenport Beach as a result of the parking lot improvements, Coastal staff reasoned that it does not conflict with the Coastal Act's maxim to provide maximum coastal access as "overflow parking remains available on Highway 1 to accommodate additional vehicle parking" (pg. 47) and that "the public [will be able to] park elsewhere, such as the north end of the City of Santa Cruz, and access these coastal areas via their bicycles or walking [via the North Coast Rail Trail], and thus arguably provide a more sustainable means of access to the area" (pg. 45).

Alternative parking areas and modes of transportation will be available to visitors overnight that can accommodate the demand for parking between 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m., which as demonstrated previously, constitutes the hours with the lowest number of visitors. Therefore, the proposed night-time closures of the Panther Beach, Shark Fin Cove Beach, Davenport Beach, and Davenport Pier parking areas will not result in very difficult, or impossible, public access during those hours. Additionally, as a result of the North Coast Rail Trail, there will be significant improvements to public safety, trash collection, bathroom facilities, and safe access to the trail system and coastal resources that mitigate potential impact to visitor access during the lowest volume of visitations.

The proposed nighttime restriction on the four identified parking lots is narrowly tailored to address a well-documented and persistent problem in the North Coast as it targets the sites that have experienced the greatest frequency of illegal and destructive activities and will not create a significant barrier to coastal access as nearby parking and alternative modes of access will remain available to visitors.

As such, the proposed project is consistent with the LCP as the proposed signage shall not adversely impact coastal visual resources and is narrowly tailored to address the identified problems related to resource preservation and public safety in accordance with LCP policy AM-6.3.5.

Other Zoning/General Plan Sections

PPF-2.4.3 Safe and Clean Parks.

The proposed project is aimed at ensuring safety and cleanliness of recreational facilities along the coast.

SCCC 8.18 Evening use Restrictions for Beaches

The proposed project supports the objectives of this Chapter in that its intent is to regulate the evening use of certain beaches in the unincorporated area to prevent public disturbances, trespassing, destruction of private property and other public health and safety problems.

SCCC 9.36.050 Restricted Parking Areas

Per SCCC 9.36.050(C), parking is not allowed between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. on any day within North Coast beach areas for which signs indicate this specific parking restriction applies. The proposed project aims to restrict overnight parking along certain North Coast beaches between a smaller time frame than what is currently in the

County Code, between 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. To ensure full compliance with the Code, an amendment to this section of the Code will be included in the 2026 Annual Code Update as shown in track changes below:

SCCC 9.36.050 (C) North Coast Beach Parking Areas. No parking shall be allowed between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. or 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. on any day within North Coast Beach parking areas for which signs indicate ~~this~~ these specific parking restriction applies.

SCCC 9.37 Parking in Beach Areas.

Under SCCC 9.37, authority is given to the Director of the Department of Parks, Open Space, and Cultural Services and their designated subordinates to enforce the provisions of the Vehicle Code for illegal parking in the beach areas and issue citations (SCCC 9.37.010) and that those beach areas are to be described by resolution of the Board of Supervisors (SCCC 9.37.020).

Ordinance 4555 (1999) amended SCCC 9.36.050 (C) “Restricted Parking Areas” to adopt specific nighttime parking restrictions for North Coast beach as discussed above.

SCCC 13.10.582 Signs in the PR District.

SCCC 13.10.582 allows for direction signs for off-street parking or other facilities not exceeding four square feet and that signs shall follow standards laid out in SCCC 13.10.581 (D) through (F).

Pursuant to General Plan policy ARC-5.2.9, only Caltrans standard directional signage is allowed along the Highway 1 corridor. As two of the four parking areas are entirely within the Caltrans right-of-way, and Caltrans’ standard specifications for signage will be used. Additionally, to ensure consistency with the LCP and the Coastal Act, signs will be sited to avoid and limit viewshed impacts to the maximum extent possible. Additionally, Caltrans standard directional signage conforms to the requirements for signs in the PR zone district in that it does not exceed four square feet, it will be unilluminated, shall not exceed seven feet in height.

SCCC 13.10.584 Directional signs

The proposed signage will be consistent with SCCC 13.10.584, in that with the signs will meet the size requirements and will not be illuminated. Additionally, the proposed signs will be placed along Highway 1 discriminately to ensure visibility to visitors while limiting viewshed impacts.

Davenport Special Community

The Davenport Beach and Davenport Pier parking lots are located within the Davenport Special Community, which is designated as a Coastal Specific Scenic Area. The proposed signage shall comply with the design criteria set forth in SCCC Chapters 13.20 and Chapter 13.10 and is therefore consistent with the special community designation.

Design Review

The proposed signage complies with the requirements of the SCCC Chapter 13.11, in that the proposed signs shall be minimized by the use of appropriate material, size, location, and orientation to reduce the visual impact on the surrounding natural landscape.

The sign shall not exceed four square feet or be illuminated. The signage shall be set back a minimum of five feet from the edge of the right-of-way or roadway, whichever is greater, and shall not obstruct vehicular sight distance or pedestrian/bicycle circulation. The border and legend are red, and the background is white and retroreflective.

Conclusion

As proposed and conditioned (see Exhibit "C" - Conditions of Approval), the project is consistent with all applicable codes and policies of the Zoning Ordinance and General Plan/LCP. Please see Exhibit "B" ("Findings") for a complete listing of findings and evidence related to the above discussion.

In recognition of the Coastal Act mandate to maximize public access, while consistent with public safety and protection of natural resources areas from overuse, the proposed restrictions maintain public parking access to legitimate and appropriate users while providing a mechanism to address continuous inappropriate behaviors by some users.

Shark Fin Cove, Panther, Davenport, and Davenport Pier beaches experience the highest amount of degradation among the North Coast beaches. Considering the visitor demand, alternative existing parking lots in the surrounding area, challenging access to the beach, distance from other local attractions, the proposed parking restrictions provide a targeted approach to addressing significant issues while preserving coastal access throughout the North Coast.

As shown in Figure A, there is significantly reduced visitor demand to the North Coast between 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. Shark Fin Cove Beach, Panther Beach, Davenport Beach, and Davenport Pier parking areas represent four out of 14 parking locations in the area. Furthermore, out of the 15 coastal access points identified in the General Plan, only three beaches are under consideration for parking restrictions.

In 2007, the Coastal Commission conditionally approved installation of "No Parking – 12:00 a.m. to 5 a.m." signs and enforcement of the restriction in the parking bays and lots along the ocean side of West Cliff Drive between Santa Cruz Street and Chico Avenue in the City of Santa Cruz (Coastal Appeal Number: A-3-STC-07-057, CDP 07-140). The approval was conditioned by requiring that the City revise the parking restriction from the hours between 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. Coastal staff argued that a prohibition between 12:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. impacted the least number of legitimate users while abating as many inappropriate users as possible, and that the closure is acceptable because parking is available in the adjacent areas.

West Cliff Drive is home to internationally famous surf breaks and has been featured in

movies and various publications. It is one of the main landmarks/vistas in the county. North Coast beaches, on the other hand, are much less well known, and are rugged and difficult to access, especially in the dark. Additionally, they are not in close proximity to the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, or the Municipal Wharf. Most visitors opt to go to mid- or South County beaches. Therefore, it is reasonable to deduce that parking restrictions at the proposed locations are likely to have a lesser impact to coastal access than those along West Cliff Drive, especially considering that adjacent parking areas will also remain open.

The County and partnering agencies are committed to increasing, improving, and preserving coastal access throughout the county. There are currently 14 on-going projects and plans on the North Coast aimed at improving access and upgrading visitor facilities. These improvements will only make North Coast beaches more accessible to a greater number of visitors, far surpassing visitors impacted by the proposed closure between 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. These improvements will also offset the nominal restrictions required for public safety.

Therefore, the project is consistent with applicable provisions of the General Plan and the Local Coastal Program. The proposed overnight parking restrictions are narrowly tailored to address documented public safety concerns and degradation of coastal resources while maintaining compliance with the Coastal Act mandate to maximize public access. The project represents a balanced approach that protects public safety and natural resources while preserving coastal access opportunities. Staff recommends the approval of the application based on the attached findings.

Staff Recommendation

- Determine that the proposal is exempt from further Environmental Review under the California Environmental Quality Act.
- **APPROVAL** of Application Number **261029**, based on the attached findings and conditions.

Supplementary reports and information referred to in this report are on file and available for viewing at the Santa Cruz County Planning Division and are hereby made a part of the administrative record for the proposed project.

The County Code and General Plan, as well as hearing agendas and additional information are available online at: www.sccoplanning.com

Report Prepared By: Fernanda Dias Pini
Santa Cruz County Planning
701 Ocean Street, 4th Floor
Santa Cruz CA 95060
Phone Number: (831) 454-3119
E-mail: Fernanda.DiasPini@santacruzcountyca.gov

Exhibits

- A. Categorical Exemption (CEQA determination)
- B. Findings
- C. Conditions of Approval
- D. Project plans
- E. Parcel information
- F. Current Conditions

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

The Santa Cruz County Planning Division has reviewed the project described below and has determined that it is exempt from the provisions of CEQA as specified in Sections 15061 - 15332 of CEQA for the reason(s) which have been specified in this document.

Application Number: 261029

Assessor Parcel Number: No situs address

Project Location: North Coast – See Project Description for site locations

Project Description: Proposal to install signage prohibiting parking between 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. in the existing Panther Beach, Shark Fin Cove Beach, Davenport Beach, and Davenport Pier public parking areas. Requires a Coastal Development Permit and Minor Site Development Permit

Person or Agency Proposing Project: County of Santa Cruz

Contact Phone Number: Fernanda Dias Pini, (831) 454-3901

- A. The proposed activity is not a project under CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.
- B. The proposed activity is not subject to CEQA as specified under CEQA Guidelines Section 15060 (c).
- C. **Ministerial Project** involving only the use of fixed standards or objective measurements without personal judgment.
- D. **Statutory Exemption** other than a Ministerial Project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15260 to 15285).
- E. **Categorical Exemption**

Specify type: Section 15061(b)(3) – common sense
Section 15301(c) – existing facilities
Section 15308 – actions by regulatory agencies for protection of the environment

F. Reasons why the project is exempt:

The project qualifies for an exemption pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (California Code of Regulations Title 14), Section 15061(b)(3), the “common sense” exemption, as it can be seen with certainty that no significant impact to the environment would occur. The project consists of the implementation of parking restrictions at existing paved and non-paved parking lots at four beaches along the North Coast between the hours of 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m., which would not result in physical changes to the environment, though installation of signs within existing paved and

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unpaved parking areas where other signage already exists would occur.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Class 1 categorical exemption consists of operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration to existing public or private structures that involve negligible or no expansion of existing uses. The project consists of the implementation of parking restrictions at existing paved and non-paved parking lots at four beaches along the North Coast between the hours of 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m., which require installation of new signage. New signage could be considered minor alterations to existing facilities. However, the project would result in a decrease in facility usage during specified hours and would not result in additional of new automobile lanes, parking spaces, or expansion of existing facilities.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15308, Class 8 categorical exemption consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for the protection of the environment. Past observations have revealed that Shark Fin Cove, Panther, Davenport, and Davenport Pier beaches experience the highest amount of degradation of all the beaches along the North Coast resulting in significant damage to natural resources, such as those associated with vandalism, trash accumulation, disposal of untreated human waste, and other illicit activities. The proposed parking restrictions would reduce deleterious impacts by implementing an enforcement mechanism in the target areas and constitute as regulatory action taken by the County to protect natural resources.

In addition, none of the conditions described in Section 15300.2 apply to this project.

Mark Connolly, Environmental Coordinator

Date: _____

Coastal Development Permit Findings

- (A) That the project is a use allowed in one of the basic zone districts that are listed in LCP Section 13.10.170 as consistent with the LCP Land Use Plan designation of the site.**

The existing Panther Beach parking area is located in the Public & Community Facilities (PF) zone district, a designation which allows parking lots. Proposed signage is an associated and permitted use subject to a site development permit pursuant to SCCC 13.11. Although the zoning is inconsistent with the site's Agriculture (AG) and Resource Conservation (O-C) General Plan designations, these are allowed uses. Pursuant to SB 821 (2023), the jurisdiction can approve a development application based on the General Plan, and not the inconsistent zoning district. In this case, the project site is located in the AG and O-C General Plan designations, and the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PR) zone district would be the consistent implementing zone district for the AG or O-C designations (see SCCC 13.10.170-1).

The existing Shark Fin Cove parking area is located in the PF, Parks, Recreation, & Open Space (PR), and Special Use (SU) zone districts, designations which allow parking lots and proposed signage, subject to a site development permit pursuant to SCCC 13.11. The existing parking lot and proposed signs a permitted use within those zone districts subject to 13.11, and the zonings are consistent with the site's AG, Neighborhood Commercial (C-N), and Parks, Recreation, & Open Space (O-R) General Plan designations.

The existing Davenport Beach parking area is located in the PR zone district, a designation which allows for the existing parking lot and installation of proposed signage. The proposed signs are a principal permitted use within the zone district subject to SCCC 13.11, and the zoning is consistent with the site's O-R General Plan designation.

The existing Davenport Pier parking area is located within the Caltrans right-of-way. The zone district for the adjacent parcel on the west side of Highway 1 is zoned PR. The placement of the proposed signs is considered a permitted public facility use which is allowable in the PR zone district subject to a site development permit pursuant to SCCC 13.11 design review. The PR zone district is consistent with the O-R General Plan designation.

Therefore, this finding can be made.

- (B) That the project does not conflict with any existing easement or development restrictions such as public access, utility, or open space easements.**

This finding can be made, in that no such easements or restrictions are known to encumber the project site. In particular, proposed signage locations will not block existing public access.

- (C) That the project is consistent with the design criteria and special use standards and conditions of this chapter pursuant to SCCC 13.20.130 and**

13.20.140 et seq.

This finding can be made as the proposed signage is consistent with the design criteria and special use standards and conditions pursuant to SCCC 13.10.130 and 13.20.140 et seq., in that the project does not involve grading, is not located on a prominent ridge, and is visually compatible with the character of the surrounding recreational area.

Pursuant to General Plan policy ARC-5.2.9, only Caltrans standard directional signage is allowed along the Highway 1 corridor. All parking areas are either entirely or partially within the Caltrans right-of-way and Caltrans' standard specifications for signage will be used. Additionally, to ensure consistency with the LCP and the Coastal Act, signs will be sited to avoid and limit viewshed impacts to the maximum extent possible. Additionally, Caltrans standard directional signage conforms to the requirements for signs in the PR zone district in that it does not exceed four square feet, it will be unilluminated, shall not exceed seven feet in height.

(D) That the project conforms with the public access, recreation, and visitor-serving policies, standards and maps of the LCP Land Use Plan, including Chapter 2: Section 2.5 and Chapter 7.

This finding can be made, in that the project site is not identified as a priority acquisition site in the County Local Coastal Program and public beach access is available at the existing Shark Fin Cove, Panther Beach, Davenport Beach, and Davenport Pier.

BE-5.1.5 (LCP) Coastal Special Communities.

Policy BE-5.1.5 designates and maintains the Davenport community as a Coastal Special Community. As such, the proposed project aims to protect and maintain the unique scenic, natural resources, and visitor tourism focus of the community.

PPF-2.1.3 (LCP) Park Maintenance and Accessibility.

Policy PPF-2.1.3 maintains and updates parks as well as coastal access to be safe, clean, and accessible facilities using consistent standards to encourage users of all abilities, ages, backgrounds and financial resources to use park facilities and programs. The project proposes implementation of parking restrictions to ensure that North Coast beaches remain safe, clean and accessible to the public. Additionally, the County and partnering agencies currently have projects in construction or under development to improve the Panther Beach and Davenport Beach parking lots, therefore improving and creating more accessibility for all visitors, offsetting the proposed public safety restrictions during late night hours when visitor access is nominal.

Policy PPF-2.6.1 requires that a system of shoreline access to the coast with adequate improvements to serve the general public and the coastal neighborhoods, which is consistent with the California Coastal Act, meets public safety needs, protects natural resource areas from overuse, protects public rights and the rights of private property owners, minimizes conflicts with adjacent land uses, and does not adversely affect agriculture. Maintain or provide access, including visual access, to every beach to which

a granted access exists or to which the public has acquired a right of access through use, as established through judicial determination of prescriptive rights, and acquisition through appropriate legal proceedings, in order to ensure one access to every pocket beach and convenient, well distributed access to long sandy beaches is provided.

Section 30210 of the Coastal Act states:

In carrying out the requirements of Section 4 of Article X of the California Constitution, maximum access, which shall be conspicuously posted, and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people consistent with the public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse.

Section 30212 of the Coastal Act states:

- (b) Public access from the nearest public roadway to the shoreline and along the coast shall be provided in new development projects except where:*
- (1) it is inconsistent with public safety, military security needs, or the protection of fragile coastal resources,*
 - (2) adequate access exists nearby, ...*
- (d) Nothing in this division shall restrict public access nor shall it excuse the performance of duties and responsibilities of public agencies which are required by Sections 66478.1 to 66478.14, inclusive, of the Government Code and by Section 4 of Article X of the California Constitution.*

Section 30214 of the Coastal Act states:

- (c) The public access policies of this article shall be implemented in a manner that takes into account the need to regulate the time, place, and manner of public access depending on the facts and circumstances in each case including, but not limited to, the following:*
- (1) Topographic and geologic site characteristics.*
 - (2) The capacity of the site to sustain use and at what level of intensity.*
 - (3) The appropriateness of limiting public access to the right to pass and repass depending on such factors as the fragility of the natural resources in the area and the proximity of the access area to adjacent residential uses.*
 - (4) The need to provide for the management of access areas so as to protect the privacy of adjacent property owners and to protect the aesthetic values of the area by providing for the collection of litter.*
- (d) It is the intent of the Legislature that the public access policies of this article be carried out in a reasonable manner that considers the equities and that balances the rights of the individual property owner with the public's constitutional right of access pursuant to Section 4 of Article X of the California Constitution. Nothing in this section or any amendment thereto shall be construed as a limitation on the rights guaranteed to the public under Section 4 of Article X of the California Constitution...*

The project is consistent with the California Coastal Act because it proposes a specific, targeted solution to documented and persistent human activities leading to the degradation of coastal resources and health and safety issues along the North Coast.

In CD-0001-21, the Coastal Commission considered proposed nighttime closures of the Davenport Beach and Panther Beach parking lots. Staff state that, while there is a documented history of negative impacts on those beaches, there is no evidence that the presence of the improved trail or parking lots would exacerbate the present situation. And that perhaps the new facilities may effectively address some of the identified problems.

As such, Coastal staff, in their determination, acknowledge that there are, in fact, persistent problematic behaviors related to safety and the degradation of coastal resources in the area. Additionally, staff states that there is no evidence that the new facilities will exacerbate the problem. However, it is also true that there is no evidence that the new facilities *will not* exacerbate the present situation.

The existing issues, without an increase in visitors, provide, on their own, sufficient evidence that there are persistent and documented patterns of behaviors that pose health and safety concerns and negatively impact coastal resources. Additionally, it is expected that the new facilities (i.e. the North Coast Rail Trail and Cotoni Coast Daries) will bring more visitors to the area. Considering that the concerns raised are a result of human activity, it is reasonable to deduce that an increase in visitors will result in an increase of problematic behaviors.

CD-0001-21 also states that overnight closure of the Davenport Beach parking lot “would make it very difficult, if not impossible for the general public to access that beach during nighttime hours.” (pg. 55). However, in that same report, when discussing the decrease in available parking spots at Davenport Beach as a result of the parking lot improvements, Coastal staff reason that it does not conflict with the Coastal Act’s maxim to provide maximum coastal access as “overflow parking remains available on Highway 1 to accommodate additional vehicle parking” (pg. 47) and that “the public [will be able to] park elsewhere, such as the north end of the City of Santa Cruz, and access these coastal areas via their bicycles or walking [via the North Coast Rail Trail], and thus arguably provide a more sustainable means of access to the area” (pg. 45).

Alternative parking areas and modes of transportation will be available to visitors overnight that can accommodate the demand for parking between 12:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., which as demonstrated previously, constitutes the hours with the lowest number of visitors. Therefore, the proposed nighttime closures of the Panther Beach, Shark Fin Cove Beach, Davenport Beach, and Davenport Pier parking areas will not result in very difficult, or impossible, public access during those hours. Additionally, as a result of the North Coast Rail Trail, there will be significant improvements to public safety, trash collection, bathroom facilities, and safe access to the trail system and coastal resources that mitigate potential impact to visitor access during the lowest volume of visitations.

The proposed nighttime restriction on the 4 identified parking lots is narrowly tailored to address a well-documented and persistent problem in the North Coast as it targets the sites that have experienced the greatest frequency of illegal and destructive activities and nearby parking and alternative modes of access will remain available to visitors.

PPF-2.4.3 Safe and Clean Parks.

The proposed project is aimed at ensuring safety and cleanliness of recreational facilities along the coast.

(E) That the project conforms to all other applicable standards of the certified LCP.

This finding can be made, in that the signage is sited and designed to be visually compatible and integrated with the character of the area. Additionally, signage is allowed in the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PR) and Special Use (SU) zone districts, and well as in the General Plan and Local Coastal Program land use designation. The design submitted is consistent with the surrounding area.

ARC-5.1.11 (LCP) Designation of Coastal Special Scenic Areas and Special Communities.

Policy ARC-5.1.11 designates the Davenport Community as a Coastal Special Community, and any development therein is required to comply with the design criteria set forth in SCCC Chapters 13.20 and 13.10.

The project area is located within the Coastal Zone, and SCCC 13.20.050, installation of signage is considered a development activity, therefore a Coastal Development Permit is required. Installation of signage is consistent and shall be in conformance with SCCC 13.20.130 and 13.20.143.

ARC-5.2.9 (LCP) Highway 1 Signage in Rural Areas.

Policy ARC-5.2.9 states that in the Highway 1 corridor, only Caltrans standard directional signs are allowed. As portions of the project areas are located within the Caltrans right-of-way, signage shall conform to Caltrans' standard signage. Notwithstanding, signage is limited to parking areas alongside the roadway only and not located within the Highway itself.

(F) If the project is located between the nearest through public road and the sea or the shoreline of any body of water located within the Coastal Zone, that the project conforms to the public access and public recreation policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act.

The project site is located between the shoreline and the first public road. The project proposes parking restrictions between the hours of 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. at the existing Shark Fin Cove, Panther Beach, Davenport Beach, and Davenport Pier lots. As such, the project could be considered in conflict with the Coastal Act as it limits public parking along specific coastal access points. However:

AM-4.1.4 (LCP) Maintaining and Enhancing Public Right-of-Way Access.

Policy AM-4.1.4 states that oceanfront public rights-of-way are to be maintained and improved for beach access purposes and that existing major access areas as shown in Figure 3-8 shall be permanently protected for long-term public use. Figure 3-8a identifies

Panther Beach, Davenport Beach, and Davenport Bluff (or Davenport Pier) as major access areas. The proposed restrictions are the only currently available measure to protect these major access areas from continued degradation to ensure safe and enjoyable long-term public use.

AM-4.1.7 (LCP)(EJ) Enhancing Public Access.

Policy AM-4.1.7 expands and enhances public access to and along the shoreline and to beaches, coastal waters, tidelands, coastal parks, and trails where feasible and where all environmental impacts and use conflicts can be satisfactorily mitigated. Focus is first on areas where disadvantaged communities have limited or no coastal access.

While this project proposes a restriction on public parking on some of the North Coast beaches, it is coupled with various projects aimed at increasing and preserving coastal access throughout the county, such as improvements to parking and additions of bathrooms, interpretive signage, and trail access as part of the North Coast Rail Trail project. There are currently 14 on-going projects and plans aimed at improving access and upgrading visitor facilities along the North Coast.

The impetus for the proposed overnight parking restrictions is a result of dangerous, destructive, and illicit behavior, and therefore are measures to mitigate these environmental impacts and uses and to ensure the health and safety of visitors. The restrictions to parking are narrowly targeted to the beaches that have historically had the most instances of destructive behavior, and it is limited to hours when there are the least number of visitors.

AM-6.3.5 (LCP) Coastal Access Parking.

Policy AM-6.3.5 prohibits the implementation of restrictions on public parking along public streets that impede or restrict public access to beaches, trails or parklands, (including, but not limited to, the posting of “no parking” signs, red curbing, physical barriers, and preferential parking programs), except where such restrictions are needed to protect public safety; where such restriction is narrowly tailored to abate and/or address an identified need or problem; where no other feasible alternative exists; and where any impacts to public access and recreation have been mitigated so as to maximize public access and recreational opportunities.

Notwithstanding, considering limited enforcement resources to patrol the area, the restriction of overnight parking at the beaches that experience the highest amount of degradation during hours with the lowest visitor demand provides for the only targeted and feasible approach local jurisdictions have available to them at the moment. The proposed restriction has been identified as the only solution currently available to protect public safety. The proposed parking restrictions are specifically tailored to target pervasive and documented illegal activities along North Coast beaches that have resulted in degradation of coastal resources and significant health and safety issues.

The impact on public access and recreation is mitigated by the availability of ten alternative parking areas along the North Coast. Additionally, the County and partner

entities currently have 14 on-going projects and plans aimed at improving access and upgrading visitor facilities along the North Coast.

(G) In the event of any conflicts between or among the required findings, required findings in subsections (E) and (F) of this section shall prevail.

This finding can be made, in that there are no conflicts among the required Coastal Development Permit findings. Although the project proposes restrictions on visitation at four specific coastal access points, it balances the required mandate to maximize public access with the complementary requirement to take into account the need to regulate the time, place, and manner of public access to protect public safety needs and natural areas from overuse. The proposed restrictions maintain public parking access to legitimate and appropriate users while providing a mechanism to address continuous inappropriate behaviors by some users.

The existing Shark Fin Cove, Panther, Davenport, and Davenport Pier beaches experience the highest amount of degradation. Considering the visitor demand, alternative existing parking lots in the surrounding area, challenging access to the beach, distance from other local attractions, the proposed parking restrictions along the specified beaches provide a targeted approach to addressing significant issues while preserving coastal access throughout the North Coast.

Approximately only 2% of visitor demand along the North Coast occurs between 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. The proposed parking lots represent four out of 14 parking locations in the area. Furthermore, only three out of the 15 coastal access points identified in the General Plan are under consideration for the parking restriction.

In 2007, the Coastal Commission conditionally approved installation of “No Parking – 12:00 a.m. to 5 a.m.” signs and enforcement of the restriction in the parking bays and lots along the ocean side of West Cliff Drive between Santa Cruz Street and Chico Avenue in the City of Santa Cruz (Coastal Appeal Number: A-3-STC-07-057, CDP 07-140). The approval was conditioned by requiring that the City revise the parking restriction from the hours between 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. Staff argued that a prohibition between 12:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. impacted the least amount of legitimate users while abating as many inappropriate users as possible. Additionally, that the closure is acceptable because parking is available in the adjacent areas.

West Cliff Drive is home to internationally famous surf breaks and has been featured in movies and various publications. It is one of the main landmarks/vistas in the county. North Coast beaches, on the other hand, are much less well known, and are rugged and difficult to access, especially in the dark. Most visitors opt to go to mid or south county beaches. Additionally, they are not in close proximity to the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, or the Municipal Wharf. Therefore, it is reasonable to deduce that parking restrictions at the proposed locations are likely to have a lesser impact to coastal access than those along West Cliff Drive, especially considering that adjacent parking areas will also remain open.

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Additionally, pursuant to SCCC 13.20.020 (C), when there is a conflict in regulating development in the Coastal Zone, the regulations of SCCC 13.20 or those that are most protective of coastal resources and most consistent with the Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan and the California Coastal Act shall take precedence.

Discretionary Permit Findings

- (a) **Health and Safety.** The proposed location of the project and the conditions under which it would be developed, operated, or maintained will not be detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of persons residing or working in the neighborhood or the general public and will not be materially injurious to properties or improvements in the vicinity.

This finding can be made, in that the location of the proposed parking restrictions and associated directional signage and the conditions under which it would be operated or maintained will not be detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of persons residing or working the neighborhood or the general public, and will not be materially injurious to properties or improvements in the vicinity in that the project is located in area for agricultural, recreational, open space, and neighborhood commercial uses and is not encumbered by physical constraints to development. Construction will comply with prevailing building technology, the California Building Code, and the County Building ordinance to ensure optimum safety and to prevent materially injury to properties or improvements in the vicinity.

- (b) **Zoning Conformance.** The proposed location of the project and the conditions under which it would be developed, operated, or maintained will be in substantial conformance with the intent and requirements of all pertinent County ordinances and the purpose of the zone district in which the site is located.

This finding can be made, in that the proposed location of the directional signs and the conditions under which it would be maintained will be in substantial conformance with all pertinent County ordinances and the purpose of the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PR) and the Special Use zone (SU) zone districts.

The Panther Beach parking lot is located in the Public & Community Facilities (PF) zone district, a designation which allows for existing parking and the installation of associated signage. The proposed signs are a principal permitted use within the zone district and although the zoning is inconsistent with the site's Agriculture (AG) and Resource Conservation (O-C) General plan designations. Pursuant to SB 821 (2023), the jurisdiction can approve a development application based on the General Plan and not the inconsistent zoning district. In this case, the project site is located in the AG and O-C General Plan designations, and the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PR) zone district would be the consistent, implementing zone district for the AG or O-C designations (see SCCC 13.10.170).

- (c) **General Plan Conformance.** The proposed project is in substantial conformance with the intent, goals, objectives, and policies of all elements of the County General Plan and any specific plan which has been adopted for the area.

This finding can be made, in that the proposed project is in substantial conformance with the intent, goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan and the Local Coastal

Program. The project implements narrowly tailored overnight parking restrictions at four North Coast beach parking areas to address documented public safety concerns and degradation of coastal resources, consistent with policies that prioritize resource protection and safe recreational access (Policies AM-4.1.4, AM-4.1.7, AM-6.3.5, and PPF-2.4.3). The restrictions occur during hours of lowest visitor demand, thereby minimizing impacts on coastal access while mitigating environmental and safety risks. Alternative parking areas remain available, and ongoing projects such as the North Coast Rail Trail and Cotoni-Coast Dairies improvements further enhance public access and visitor facilities. The proposed signage complies with design standards to minimize visual impacts and is allowable within the Park, Recreation, and Open Space (PR) zone district, consistent with the Agriculture (AG) and Resource Conservation (O-C) General Plan designations pursuant to SB 821. Therefore, the project supports the General Plan's overarching objectives to maximize coastal access, protect natural resources, and ensure public health and safety.

- (d) CEQA Conformance. The proposed project complies with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and any significant adverse impacts on the natural environment will be mitigated pursuant to CEQA.**

This finding can be made as the project has been determined to be exempt from further review under the California Environmental Quality Act, as indicated in the Notice of Exemption for this project.

- (e) Utilities and Traffic Impacts. The proposed use will not overload utilities, result in inefficient or wasteful use of energy, or generate more than the acceptable level of traffic on the streets in the vicinity.**

This finding can be made, in that the proposed directional signage will not result in an increase in traffic that would adversely impact existing roads or intersections in the surrounding area. In addition, all construction will comply with prevailing building technology, the California Building Code, and the County Building Ordinance.

- (f) Neighborhood Compatibility. The proposed use will be compatible with the existing and proposed land uses, land use intensities, and dwelling unit densities of the neighborhood, as designated by the General Plan and Local Coastal Program and implementing ordinances.**

This finding can be made, in that the proposed directional signage is consistent with the land use intensity and density of the neighborhood as designated by the General Plan and implementing ordinances.

- (g) Local Coastal Program Consistency. For proposed projects located within the coastal zone, the proposed project is consistent with the provisions of the certified Local Coastal Program.**

This finding can be made, in that the proposed signage is conformance with the County's certified Local Coastal Program. While the signage is sited and designed to be visually

compatible, in scale with, and integrated with the character of the surrounding landscape to the maximum extent possible. While the project sites are located between the shoreline and the first public road, the project will only erect signage which shall be designed to reduce the visual impacts to the greatest extent possible. However, the signage will implement a restriction to public parking areas used to access coastal resources between the hours of 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m.

Pursuant to SCCC 13.20.020 (C), when there is a conflict in regulating development in the Coastal Zone, the regulations of SCCC 13.20 or those that are most protective of coastal resources and most consistent with the Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan and the California Coastal Act shall take precedence.

Panther Beach, Shark Fin Cove Beach, Davenport Beach, and Davenport Pier have historically experienced the highest amount of degradation. The proposed parking restrictions are specifically tailored to target pervasive and documented illegal activities along North Coast beaches that have resulted in degradation of coastal resources and significant health and safety issues.

According to the NC-TDM, approximately only 2% of visits to North Coast beaches between the hours of 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. Additionally, there are 10 alternative parking locations that are not subject to the overnight parking restrictions.

As such, the proposed project is consistent with the Local Coastal Program as the proposed signage shall not adversely impact coastal visual resources and is narrowly tailored to address the identified problems related to resource preservation and public safety in accordance with LCP policy AM-6.3.5.

Site Development Permit Findings

- (a) Siting and Neighborhood Context. The proposed development is designed and located on the site so that it will complement and harmonize with the physical design aspects of existing and proposed development in the neighborhood, as designated by the General Plan and Local Coastal Program and implementing ordinances.**

This finding can be made, in that the proposed directional signage is designed and located on the site in a manner that will harmonize with the existing landscape and natural resources to the furthest extent possible while adhering to design standards.

- (b) Design. The proposed development is in substantial conformance with applicable principles in the adopted Countywide Design Guidelines, except as prohibited by site constraints, and any other applicable requirements of SCCC 13.11 (Site Development and Design Review). If located in the Coastal Zone, the site plan and building design are also in substantial conformance with the policies of the Local Coastal Program and coastal regulations of SCCC 13.20.**

This finding can be made, in that the proposed signage is in substantial conformance with

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the requirements of the County Design Review Ordinance. The proposed project will be of an appropriate scale and the design shall not adversely impact coastal visual resources.

Conditions of Approval

Exhibit D: Project plans, prepared by County of Santa Cruz, dated January 2026.

- I. This permit authorizes the installation of new signage prohibiting parking between 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. in the existing Panther Beach, Shark Fin Cove, Davenport Beach, and Davenport Pier public parking areas as indicated on the approved Exhibit "D" for this permit. This approval does not confer legal status on any existing structure(s) or existing use(s) on the subject property that are not specifically authorized by this permit. Prior to exercising any rights granted by this permit including, without limitation, any construction or site disturbance, the applicant/owner shall:
 - A. Sign, date, and return to Santa Cruz County Planning one copy of the approval to indicate acceptance and agreement with the conditions thereof.
 - B. Obtain an Encroachment Permit from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for all off-site work performed in the Highway 1 right-of-way.
- II. All construction shall be performed according to the approved encroachment permit, and the applicant/owner must meet the following conditions:
 - A. Pursuant to Sections 16.40.040 and 16.42.080 of the County Code, if at any time during site preparation, excavation, or other ground disturbance associated with this development, any artifact or other evidence of an historic archaeological resource or a Native American cultural site is discovered, the responsible persons shall immediately cease and desist from all further site excavation and notify the Sheriff-Coroner if the discovery contains human remains, or the Planning Director if the discovery contains no human remains. The procedures established in Sections 16.40.040 and 16.42.080, shall be observed.
- III. Operational Conditions
 - A. All parking permit program directional signage installation/construction shall be maintained in conformance with the encroachment permit according to the approved plans and placement of signs shall be per the requirements of the Community Development and Infrastructure Department. The applicant/owner shall meet the following conditions:
 - B. Pursuant to SCCC Sections 16.40.040 and 16.42.080, if at any time during site preparation, excavation, or other ground disturbance associated with this development, any artifact or other evidence of an historic archeological resource or a Native American cultural site is discovered, the responsible persons shall immediately cease and desist from all further site excavation and notify the Sheriff-Coroner if the discovery contains human remains, or the Community Development and Infrastructure Department Director if the

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discovery contains no human remains.

Minor variations to this permit which do not affect the overall concept or density may be approved by the Planning Director at the request of the applicant or staff in accordance with Chapter 18.10 of the County Code.

Please note: This permit expires three years from the effective date listed below unless the conditions of approval are complied with and the use commences before the expiration date.

Approval Date: _____

Effective Date: _____

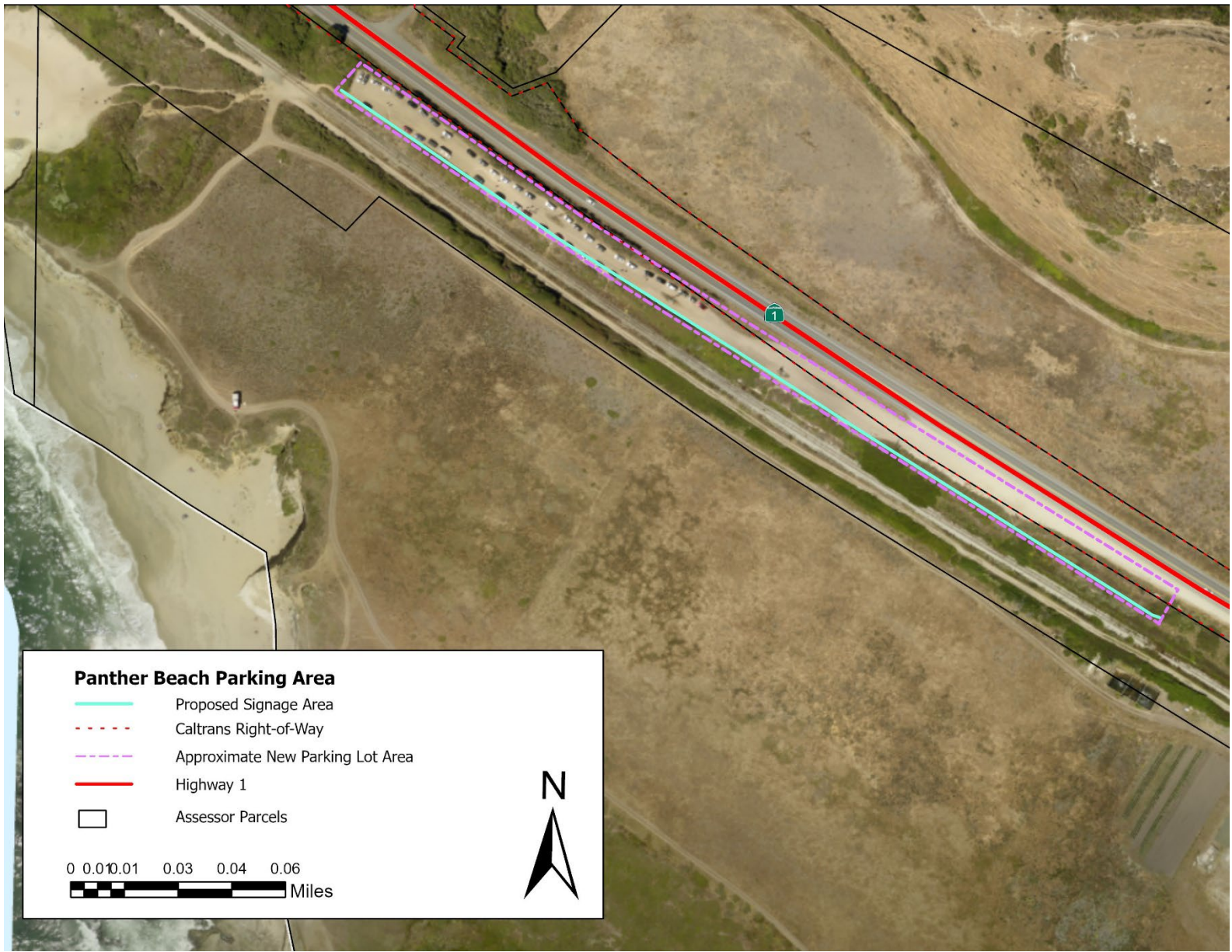
Expiration Date: _____

Deputy Zoning Administrator

Appeals: Any property owner, or other person aggrieved, or any other person whose interests are adversely affected by any act or determination of the Zoning Administrator, may appeal the act or determination to the Coastal Commission in accordance with chapter 13.20 of the Santa Cruz County Code.

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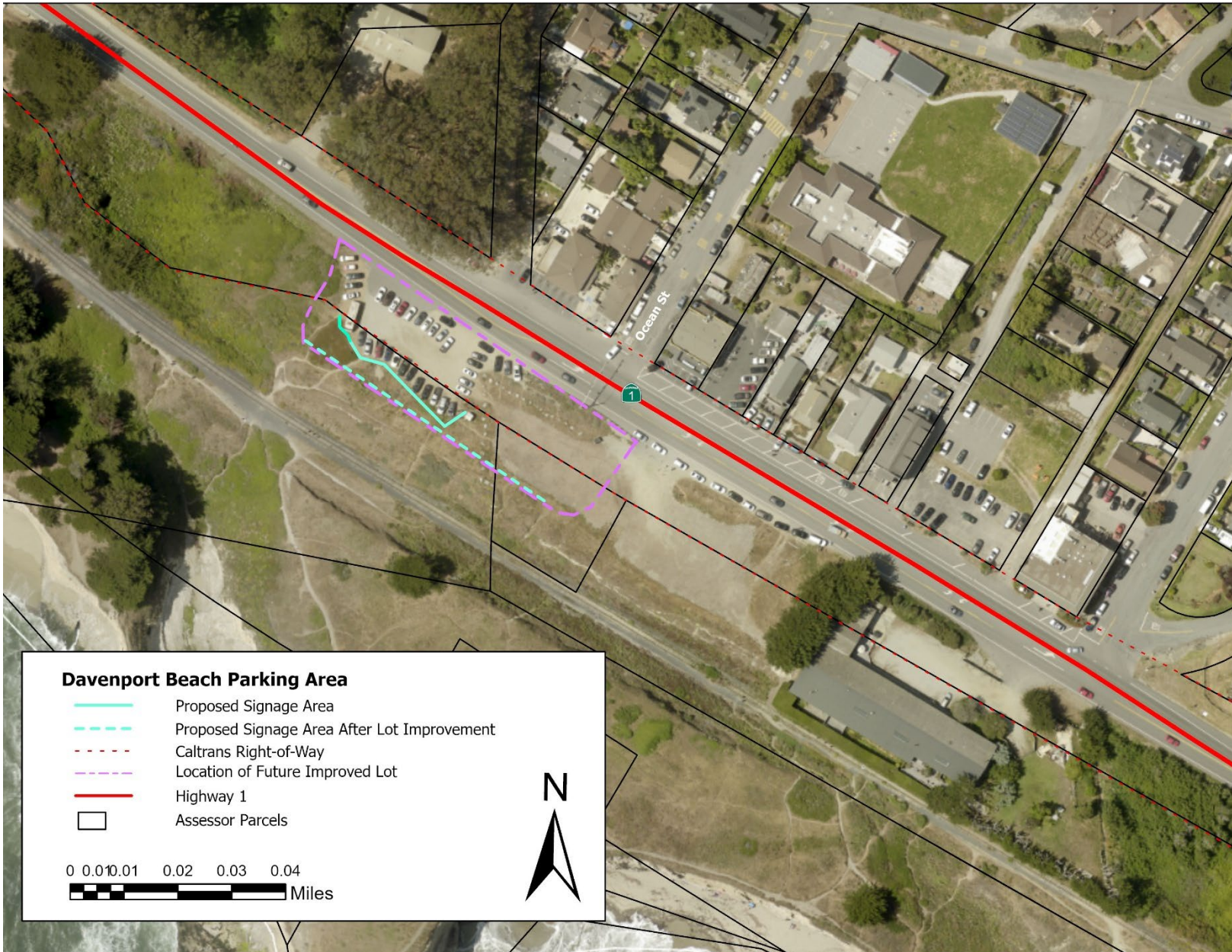
SITE MAPS



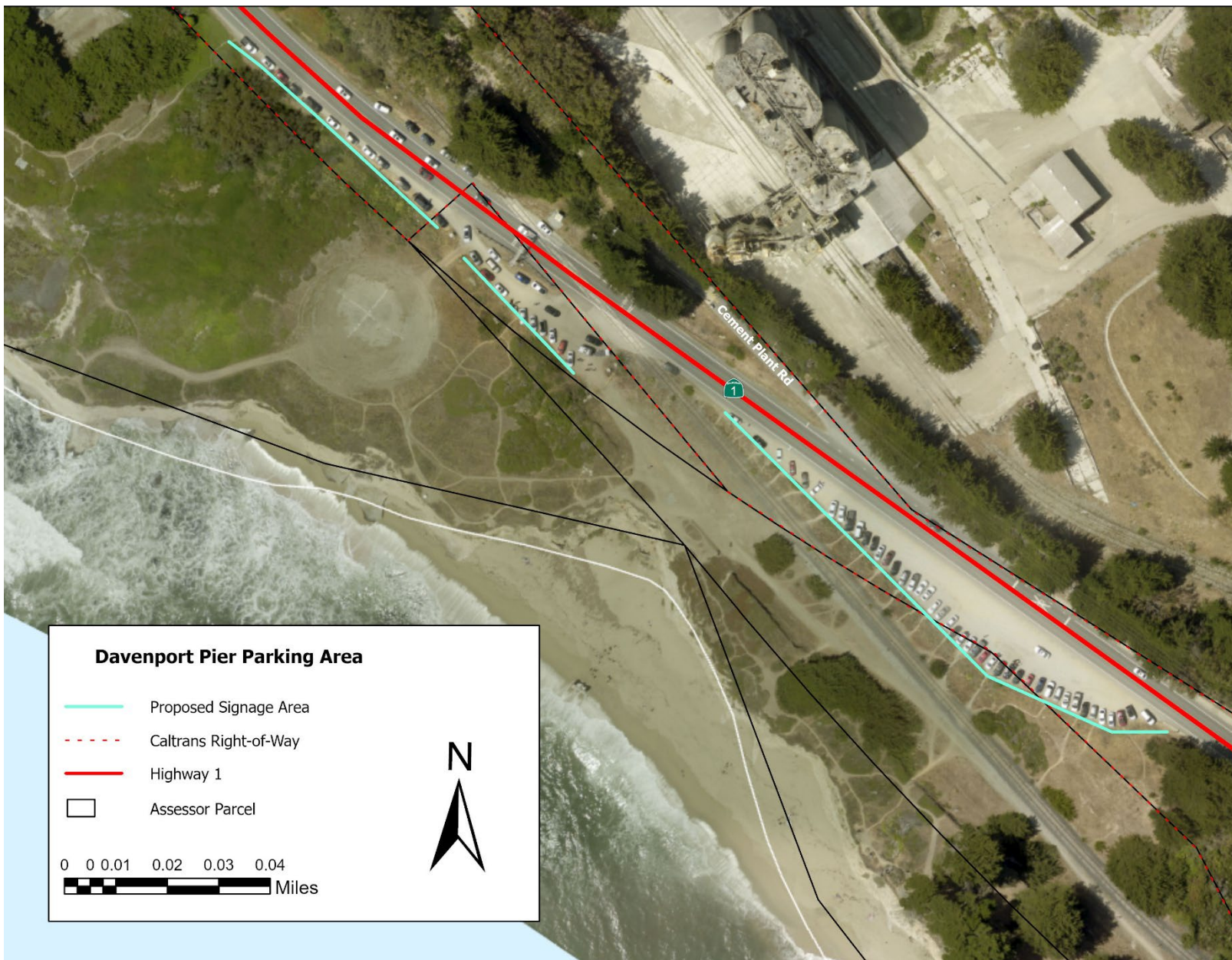
Application #: «Application_Number»
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Application #: «Application_Number»
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Parcel Information – Panther Beach

Services Information

Urban/Rural Services Line: Inside Outside
Water Supply: n/a
Sewage Disposal: n/a
Fire District: CSA 48 Santa Cruz County Fire
Drainage District: n/a

Parcel Information

Parcel Size: Parking area is approximately 2 Acres
Existing Land Use - Parcel: Public recreational facility
Existing Land Use - Surrounding: Public recreational facility/ vacant county land
Project Access: Highway 1
Planning Area: Bonny Doon
Land Use Designation: AG (Agriculture); O-C (Resource Conservation)
Zone District: PF (Public & Community Facilities)
Coastal Zone: Inside Outside
Appealable to Calif. Coastal Comm.: Yes No

Technical Reviews: N/A

Environmental Information

Geologic Hazards: Not mapped/no physical evidence on site
Fire Hazard: Not a mapped constraint
Slopes: N/A
Env. Sen. Habitat: Not mapped/no physical evidence on site
Grading: No grading proposed
Tree Removal: No trees proposed to be removed
Scenic: Scenic Resource
Archeology: Mapped Archaeological Area

Parcel Information – Shark Fin Cove

Services Information

Urban/Rural Services Line: ___ Inside X Outside
Water Supply: n/a
Sewage Disposal: n/a
Fire District: CSA 48 Santa Cruz County Fire
Drainage District: n/a

Parcel Information

Parcel Size: Parking area is approximately 0.63 miles
Existing Land Use - Parcel: Public recreational facility
Existing Land Use - Surrounding: Public recreational facility/ vacant county land
Project Access: Highway 1
Planning Area: Bonny Doon/ North Coast
Land Use Designation: AG; C-N; O-R (Agriculture; Neighborhood Commercial; Parks, Recreation & Open Space)
Zone District: PF; PR; SU (Public & Community Facilities; Parks, Recreation, & Open Space; Special Use)
Coastal Zone: X Inside ___ Outside
Appealable to Calif. Coastal Comm. X Yes ___ No

Technical Reviews: N/A

Environmental Information

Geologic Hazards: Not mapped/no physical evidence on site
Fire Hazard: Not a mapped constraint
Slopes: N/A
Env. Sen. Habitat: Not mapped/no physical evidence on site
Grading: No grading proposed
Tree Removal: No trees proposed to be removed
Scenic: Scenic Resource
Archeology: Mapped Archeological Resource

Parcel Information – Davenport Beach

Services Information

Urban/Rural Services Line: Inside Outside
Water Supply: n/a
Sewage Disposal: n/a
Fire District: CSA 48 Santa Cruz County Fire
Drainage District: n/a

Parcel Information

Parcel Size: Parking area is approximately 0.79 acres
Existing Land Use - Parcel: Public recreational facility
Existing Land Use - Surrounding: Public recreational facility/ vacant county land
Project Access: Highway 1
Planning Area: North Coast
Land Use Designation: O-R (Parks, Recreation, & Open Space)
Zone District: PR (Parks, Recreation, & Open Space)
Coastal Zone: Inside Outside
Appealable to Calif. Coastal Comm.: Yes No

Technical Reviews: N/A

Environmental Information

Geologic Hazards: Not mapped/no physical evidence on site
Fire Hazard: Not a mapped constraint
Slopes: N/A
Env. Sen. Habitat: Not mapped/no physical evidence on site
Grading: No grading proposed
Tree Removal: No trees proposed to be removed
Scenic: Scenic Resource
Archeology: Mapped Archaeological Area

Parcel Information – Davenport Pier

Services Information

Urban/Rural Services Line: Inside Outside
Water Supply: n/a
Sewage Disposal: n/a
Fire District: CSA 48 Santa Cruz County Fire
Drainage District: n/a

Parcel Information

Parcel Size: Parking area is approximately 0.79 acres
Existing Land Use - Parcel: Public recreational facility
Existing Land Use - Surrounding: Public recreational facility
Project Access: Highway 1
Planning Area: North Coast
Land Use Designation: O-R (Parks, Recreation, & Open Space)
Zone District: PR (Parks, Recreation, & Open Space)
Coastal Zone: Inside Outside
Appealable to Calif. Coastal Comm.: Yes No

Technical Reviews: N/A

Environmental Information

Geologic Hazards: Not mapped/no physical evidence on site
Fire Hazard: Not a mapped constraint
Slopes: N/A
Env. Sen. Habitat: Not mapped/no physical evidence on site
Grading: No grading proposed
Tree Removal: No trees proposed to be removed
Scenic: Scenic Resource
Archeology: Mapped Archaeological Resource



EXHIBIT F



EXHIBIT F



EXHIBIT F