

CITY OF SANTA CRUZ
Notice of Exemption

To: Clerk of the Board
County of Santa Cruz
Governmental Center
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: City of Santa Cruz, Public Works Dept., 809 Center Street, Room 201, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Project Title: 1030 West Cliff Drive Emergency Storm Damage Project

Project Address: 1030 West Cliff Drive

Assessor's Parcel No.: project is within the public right-of-way

Project Location: City of Santa Cruz

County of: Santa Cruz

Project Description:

Starting December 28, 2022, through January 2023, high wave events damaged several sections of coastline along West Cliff Drive, including along the public right-of-way across from 1030 West Cliff Drive. This period was subsequently declared a California state disaster [\[DR-4683-CA\]](#) across Santa Cruz County by California Governor Gavin Newsom.

Located on West Cliff Drive between David Way and Woodrow Avenue, the site is directly east of an existing concrete retaining wall and had been protected by a rock slope protection (RCP) buttress like other adjacent sites. This site was planned to be repaired with a pier supported concrete retaining wall at the top of the bluff, founded into the purisima bedrock shelf below. As plans for this site were developed, the extent of the adjacent sea cave was surveyed. The sea cave extends under the site and below the adjacent pathway and roadway. The roof of the cave was found to be very thin, raising concerns of the overall stability of the site and associated pathway and roadway above the cave.

Due to intense rainfall, large wave swells and high tides, significant damage occurred at this site. The site has continued to suffer damage and erosion from the winter 2023/2024 storm season. The large swell and high tides damaged the buttress and exposed the terrace deposit soils to direct wave attack. The damage extended landward sufficiently to damage the existing multipurpose trail and road. Protection barriers were placed to isolate the damage and protect the public. The cave condition is currently jeopardizing the entire project site and could result in major damage to the adjacent infrastructure and safety hazards if not addressed.

To stabilize the cave under the recreational path across from 1030 West Cliff Drive, the proposed project involves installing an approximately 56-foot long secant pile wall with approximately 30 piles in front of the mouth of the cave and parallel to the adjacent path on West Cliff Drive. Once the secant pile wall is installed, the sand in the cave behind the wall will be grouted for stability and any

remaining space in the cave will be backfilled with slurry cement. Infilling the sea cave will reduce the risk of further erosion and destabilization of the bluff and path above. To protect the recreational path and roadway, a new retaining wall will be constructed parallel to the path and roadway and landward of the new secant pile wall.

The project includes best management practices (BMPs) to prevent erosion, sedimentation, and the discharge of pollutants during construction, protecting marine resources. For example, silt fences and catch basin protections will be used for the duration of construction, and straw bales, pumps, curtain enclosures, and other containment/soaking devices will be used in case of spillage. Additionally, construction will take weather into account by scheduling excavation and concrete pours outside of forecasted rain events, high surf, high tide, and storms, and covering soil stockpiles and safely positioning equipment and materials at the end of each shift. The suite of BMPs will ensure that no debris, soil, silts, sand, rubbish, cement or concrete or washing thereof, oil or petroleum products or other earthen material from any construction or associated activity will be allowed onto the beach below or adjacent marine environment. Therefore, the proposed project conforms to the applicable marine resources policies of the Coastal Act.

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: City of Santa Cruz Public Works Department

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: City of Santa Cruz

Exempt Status: (check one)

- Ministerial Project (Section 21080(b)(1); 15268).
- Categorically Exempt (Section 15301, 15303).
- Declared Emergency (Section 21080(b)(3); 15269(a)).
- Emergency Project (Section 21080(b)(4); 15269(a) & (b)).
- Statutory Exemption (Code/Section _____).
- The project clearly will not have a significant effect on the environment (15061(b)(3)).

Reasons why project is exempt: CEQA provides “statutory exemptions” that are applicable to certain projects and activities, as granted by the Legislature. CEQA Statute Section 21080(b)(3) and (4) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15269 (a) and (b) allows exemption from CEQA for emergency projects under certain conditions.

1030 West Cliff Drive failed during the January 2023 storms that were declared a disaster [\(DR-4683-CA\)](#) across Santa Cruz County. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15269(a), this project provides for the reconstruction of 1030 West Cliff Drive, which was damaged as a result of a disaster in a disaster-stricken area in which a state of emergency had been proclaimed by the Governor. Thus, the project results in replacement of public facilities that were damaged beyond repair as a result of the declared state of emergency. Additionally, given that West Cliff Drive has been closed due to safety concerns associated with the failure of 1030 West Cliff Drive, this important coastal public road is in danger of further erosion and storm damage.

Under CEQA Guidelines Section 15269(b), this project provides for emergency repairs to publicly owned facilities necessary to maintain service essential to the public health, safety or welfare. Since January 2023, the project site, which includes West Cliff Drive, has been closed to all vehicle traffic for public safety. This has necessitated a longer detour through the surrounding neighborhoods, including for emergency vehicles. Action is needed to reopen this stretch of West Cliff Drive to all modes of transportation, including emergency vehicles, to provide for facilities necessary to maintain service essential to the public health, safety or welfare of the community.

Therefore, the City is able to document that the project qualifies for the Statutory Exemption found at CEQA Statute Section 21080(b)(3) and (4) and CEQA Guidelines 15269(a) and (b), which allows emergency projects under certain conditions.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Nathan Nguyen

Phone: (831) 420-5188

Department: Public Works

Address: 809 Center Street, Room 201
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Signature: 

Date: 10/15/24

Title: Director of Public Works

- Signed by Lead Agency
- Signed by Applicant

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a notice of exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Date Received for filing at County Clerk: _____

Date Received for filing at OPR: _____