



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Marine Region
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May 6, 2025

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**SAND COMPATIBILITY AND OPPORTUNISTIC USE PROGRAM
MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
SCH #2025040385**

Dear Ms. Innes:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) received a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) from the Los Angeles County Department of Beaches and Harbors (LACDBH) for the Sand Compatibility and Opportunistic Use Program (Project), pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.¹

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish and wildlife. Likewise, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments regarding those aspects of the Project that the Department, by law, may be required to carry out or approve through the exercise of its own regulatory authority under the Fish and Game Code.

DEPARTMENT ROLE

The Department is California's Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the state. (Fish & G. Code, section 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, section 21070; CEQA Guidelines section 15386, subd. (a).) The Department, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species. (*Id.*, section 1802.) Similarly for purposes of CEQA, the Department is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources. The Department is also responsible for

¹ CEQA is codified in the California Public Resources Code in section 21000 et seq. The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

marine biodiversity protection under the Marine Life Protection Act in coastal marine waters of California, and ensuring fisheries are sustainably managed under the Marine Life Management Act.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Proponent: LACDBH

Objective: The objective of the Project is to reduce coastal erosion and prepare for future challenges associated with climate change in Los Angeles County through the beneficial reuse of opportunistically available beach quality sediment as beach nourishment. The Project includes five sites (Zuma Beach, Will Rogers State Beach, Dockweiler State Beach, Manhattan Beach, and Redondo Beach) for beach nourishment that were selected by LACDBH based on a variety of criteria that include present and future coastal erosion and flooding vulnerabilities, presence of existing resources, presence of critical public infrastructure and amenities, recreational and economic benefits, and avoidance of adverse effects on coastal resources. The details of each beach nourishment project will be formulated at the time of the project based on the quantity and quality of the source material available and the condition of the shoreline.

The Project's primary construction activities include transporting the sediment placement material to each beach and placing no more than 150,000 cubic yards of material with a fines content less than or equal to 15% and 50,000 cubic yards of material with a fines content between 16% and 25% at each site annually using the following earthmoving equipment: dozers, loaders, scrapers, and a sweeper. The method used to deliver source material to each beach will vary depending on when or what material becomes available, but potential delivery methods may include trucking and marine vessels, spreading material using earthmoving equipment, using slurry lines from the beach to the nearshore, or using a bottom-dump barge or scow to dump material into the nearshore. Potential sand sources include reservoirs and debris basins managed by Los Angeles County, dams, local watercourses (rivers, creeks, streams, and lagoons), harbor maintenance dredging, transportation projects, upland development and redevelopment projects, and landslides. Beach nourishment is expected to occur in the fall and winter months to avoid disturbing beach users, California grunion (*Leuresthes tenuis*) runs, and nesting of relevant avian species.

Location: The Project site is located at five County-operated beaches in the Cities of Malibu, Los Angeles, Manhattan Beach, and Redondo Beach. The five receiver sites for sediment placement are Zuma Beach, Will Rogers State Beach, Dockweiler State Beach, Manhattan Beach, and Redondo Beach.

BIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Discussion and Comment: Los Angeles County waters support many resident and migratory fish and special status wildlife such as seabirds, marine mammals, and sea turtles. Los Angeles County waters also support commercially and recreationally important fish and invertebrate species such as California grunion (*Leuresthes tenuis*), California halibut (*Paralichthys californicus*), California spiny lobster (*Panulirus interruptus*), and the Northern anchovy (*Engraulis mordax*), which is an important forage fish.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department offers the comments and recommendations below to assist LACDBH in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, direct, and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife resources.

Beach Nourishment

Comments: Beach nourishment, or beach and/or nearshore sediment placement, may cause increased turbidity, decreased light availability, and/or potential burial of sensitive marine species and their habitats via direct sediment placement or subsequent littoral drift causing substantial adverse effects. Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC), a subset of Essential Fish Habitat, are habitats of special importance to fish populations due to their rarity, vulnerability to development and anthropogenic degradation, and/or ability to provide key ecological functions. Rocky reefs, canopy kelp, and seagrass beds are several habitats that have been designated as groundfish HAPC by the Pacific Fisheries Management Council under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. These habitats may occur at the potential sediment placement sites. Additionally, commercially and recreationally important fish and invertebrate species may be impacted by nearshore sediment placement activities via direct burial/smothering, increased turbidity, and/or decreased light availability.

The Department understands that the MND is intended to guide the implementation of individual sand compatibility and opportunistic use program projects and that the details of each project will be based on the quantity and quality of the source material available and the condition of the shoreline. LACDBH anticipates that source material will be placed as an extension of the existing berm on each beach. However, the MND notes that source material may be placed in a mound near the mean high tide line or in the nearshore waters when the fines content of the source material is between 15% and 25%. While the Department appreciates that the MND has mitigation measures for grunion surveys (Mitigation Measure BIO-3), nesting and special-status bird monitoring (Mitigation Measure BIO-04), and marine mammal and sea turtle avoidance (Mitigation Measure BIO-5), the Department is concerned that the MND does not address any impacts or propose mitigation measures for the potential placement of materials nearshore.

Recommendations: If nearshore sediment placement is proposed, the Department recommends that the MND quantify the amount of HAPC that could be lost due to the Project and potential alternatives for nearshore sediment placement. Potential HAPCs for this Project area may include rocky reef, canopy kelp, and seagrass bed habitats. Project plans should be developed to avoid and minimize potential impacts to the nearshore marine environment, including HAPCs, to the maximum extent feasible. This includes avoiding and minimizing direct burial/smothering, vessel anchoring, turbidity, and/or decreased light availability within the nearshore environment. The Department also recommends that post-construction monitoring of any nearshore sediment placement should occur to ensure HAPCs and the commercially and recreationally important species that inhabit the HAPCs are not impacted. The Department recommends consulting with the Department and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), on the Project's impact analysis and all proposed mitigation measures for HAPC and other sensitive marine habitats.

Additionally, the Department recommends that all proposals for sediment placement be reviewed by the Southern California Dredged Material Management Team (DMMT) prior to placement. The DMMT is comprised of regulatory and trustee agencies (i.e., United States Army Corps of Engineers, United States Environmental Protection Agency, Regional Water Quality Control Boards, California Coastal Commission, NMFS, and the Department), and responsible for managing dredging activities and reviewing technical issues associated with proposed dredging and dredged material disposal projects.

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations. (Pub. Resources Code, section 21003, subd. (e).) Accordingly, please report any special status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB). The CNDDDB field survey form can be filled out and submitted online at the following link: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Submitting-Data>. The types of information reported to CNDDDB can be found at the following link: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Plants-and-Animals>.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FILING FEES

The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of environmental document filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by the Department. Payment of the environmental document filing fee is required for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, section 753.5; Fish & G. Code, section 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, section 21089.)

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CONCLUSION

The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on the MND to assist the LACDBH in identifying and mitigating Project impacts on biological resources. Questions regarding this letter or further coordination should be directed to Leslie Hart, Environmental Scientist at R7CEQA@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



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Marine Regional Manager

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