



Fort Ord Dunes General Plan



Agency and Public Comment Report 2

INTRODUCTION

The California Department of Parks and Recreation is developing a General Plan for the future Fort Ord Dunes State Park. Working together with agencies and the public, this planning process will create a vision for the future, provide recommendations for facilities improvements, and set guidelines for managing the park so it can be enjoyed for years to come. A California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) required Environmental Impact Report is being prepared along with the General Plan.

In May 2003 a CEQA Notice of Preparation was distributed notifying agencies that a General Plan and Environmental Impact Report would be prepared for Fort Ord Dunes, and inviting those agencies to provide input and comment. Also in May, an informational newsletter and survey, and an invitation to a public workshop, was distributed to interested agencies, organizations, and members of the public. The workshop was held on June 10, 2003 at California State University Monterey Bay in Seaside, California.

The agency and public comments received were considered in the development of general plan issues and concerns, opportunities and constraints, and draft plan possibilities. Following preparation of draft possibilities, another newsletter was distributed to agencies, organizations, and individuals in late September 2003. The newsletter and information regarding the planning process were posted on the California Department of Parks and Recreation Planning Website (www.parks.ca.gov). The newsletter, the planning website, and a press release invited agencies, organizations, and the public to a second held on October 9, 2003 at the Monterey District office.

In addition, a meeting was conducted on October 9, 2003 with the Fort Ord Coordinated Resource Management Plan team to discuss the General Plan planning process and draft plan possibilities.

Information presented in the newsletter and at the October 9 workshop and Coordinated Resource Management Team meeting included draft unit Purpose and Vision, Draft Plan Goals, and Draft Management Zones and potential desired resource conditions, uses, and facilities within the draft zones.

The agency and public comments received during the October 9 meetings, as well as input received over the following weeks were considered in the development of Draft General Plan and were summarized below.

The Draft General Plan and Environmental Impact Report will be submitted to agencies, organizations, and members of the public in Spring 2004 for a formal CEQA required 45 day comment period. Comments submitted on the Draft General Plan and Environmental Impact Report will be responded to and considered in preparation of the Final General Plan. It is noted that public comments may be submitted to the California Department of Parks and Recreation at any time throughout the planning process, but that the various public outreach meetings and comment periods indicate specific points in the planning process where agency and public input is most crucial to development of the General Plan.

AGENCY COMMENTS

As described above, a meeting was conducted on October 9, 2003 with the Fort Ord Coordinated Resource Management Plan team to discuss the General Plan planning process and draft plan possibilities. The Coordinated Resource Management Plan team consists of representatives of the Bureau of Land Management, Department, California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, University of California, Department of Defense, Monterey County Board of Supervisors, California State University Monterey Bay, City of Marina, and California Coastal Commission. The Coordinated Resource Management Plan team functions as an interagency group of local, state, and federal governments that have joined to share resources and staff to help implement the Fort Ord Habitat Management Plan.

Comments and concerns expressed by the Coordinated Resource Management Plan team included:

- Facilities within the Fort Ord Dunes boundaries that are operated by other agencies should be considered a separate management zone and not included in park management zones (in particular, these facilities should not be included within the proposed Natural Resource Zone)
- Percolation ponds within Fort Ord Dunes should be considered a long-term use

- Potential traffic and land use incompatibilities with development in the vicinity of Fort Ord Dunes and consistency with local government plans need to be explicitly addressed in the General Plan
- The General Plan should consider regional trail connections (such as the proposed Monterey Bay National marine Sanctuary Trail)
- The loss of restored habitat due to coastal restoration may require further restoration elsewhere in the park or in the greater Fort Ord area
- Maintenance of ecosystem connectivity may need to be addressed in the General Plan

In addition to oral comments provided at the October 9 meeting with the Coordinated Resource Management Plan team, a comment form was submitted by the Transportation Agency for Monterey County indicating that:

- The Natural Resource Zone should include only vista points as possible facilities
- The 8th Street Zone should include only low density indoor lodging
- The 1st Street Zone should include bicycle parking and lockers, and should allow for regional transportation if needed by the Transportation Agency for Monterey County but that the zone should not include park visitor facilities
- The Storage Bunker Zone should include vista points and separate areas for administrative uses, and allow only day use, with the exception of potential employee housing
- The East of State Route 1 Zone should not include administrative uses or visitor facilities. Placing services and facilities east of State Route 1 creates traffic flow problems and visitor inconveniences; therefore it is recommended that all services be placed west of State Route
- Circulation is crucial; therefore circulation should be pleasing and convenient for park visitors
- Draft zones are compact and have pleasing schematics

WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

A small number of written comments were received between preparation of Public Scoping Report 1 (issued in August 2003) and preparation of the Draft General Plan in December 2003. Comments received were from a wide range of

geographical locations, and expressed a range of issues, concerns, and desired future use for Fort Ord Dunes. The following sections summarize the public comments submitted.

ORIGIN OF RESPONDENTS

Eight comment forms were received from Monterey County residents; five were from residents of other California counties, and one from was received from a resident of Canada.

DESIRED USER ACTIVITIES AND FACILITIES

Similar to comments received prior to August 2003, respondents expressed interest in activities and associated facilities, including beach access (including clothing optional beach use), hiking, nature observation, picnicking, surfing, camping (including recreational vehicle access), as well as other uses such as radio controlled glider use and designated horse trails. One commentor indicated that pedestrian and bicycle use along Beach Range Road should be provided as soon as possible to reduce potential hazards associated with use of the existing State Route 1 recreation trail.

Respondents continue to express a strong desire for habitat protection and restoration, and retention of undeveloped nature of the beach and dunes areas. Some respondents coupled this request with a request for some level of public use opportunities. Alternatively, some respondents recommended that no facilities should be included in the park, and that vehicles should not be allowed to access (including park support vehicular use). Other recommendations for resource protection included park staffing to provide on-site supervision and closure of access points should staffing become unavailable in the future. Additionally, respondents expressed interest in interpretive opportunities.

DRAFT MANAGEMENT ZONE COMMENTS

Five respondents provided input specifically regarding the Draft Management Zones and possibilities presented in the October 2003. Most commentors approved of reuse of previously disturbed areas and concentration of potential park development; with large areas of parkland reserved as natural resource areas. Commentors urged resource protection for areas of higher visitor use, exclusion of park visitors from sensitive resource areas, and management strategies to prevent use of restricted areas and creation of informal trails. Other general comments requested that visitor vehicles be restricted to east of State Route 1 areas, overnight use be restricted to family, group, or environmental

camping, and interpretive exhibits be provided. Comments regarding the management zones are as follows.

NATURAL RESOURCE ZONE RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES

Comments received regarding this zone were generally similar and included themes such as:

- Creation of a natural preserve area in the northern Fort Ord Dunes area, supporting potential Western snowy plover breeding areas
- Emphasis on special-status species in interpretation opportunities
- Limited or no public use trails within the dune ridges and northern beach areas; limited development in entire zone
- Increase of the Natural Resource Zone area

8TH STREET ZONE RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES

Comments regarding this zone varied, with some commentors indicating the zone was an appropriate location to concentrate visitor access near the 8th Street overpass, allowing for parking and beach access while other commentors felt the 1st Street location was better served for visitor entrance.

Commentors generally felt that overnight lodging should not occur within this zone (or elsewhere in the park); some commentors felt that camping and a hotel could be appropriate, with provision of resource protection, while one commentor indicated that no overnight use should be occur.

1ST STREET ZONE RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES

Comments indicated that the 1st Street underpass tunnels should be maintained as wildlife corridors and urged avoidance of development and use in areas adjacent to special-status species locations.

One commentor indicated an objection to military era interpretation and reuse of military era structures.

The disturbed nature of this zone lead commentors to indicate that this zone may be appropriate for concentrated visitor use and facilities, with caution regarding potential lead contamination in the former firing range area. Some commentors indicated that larger facilities such as a visitor center or railroad platform/depot should be located east of State Route 1.

STORAGE BUNKER ZONE RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES

Commentors generally approved of use of this zone for public uses and facilities, with provision of resource protection. However, some commentors indicated that overnight uses should not be provided. One commentor indicated an objection to military era interpretation and reuse of military era structures.

EAST OF STATE ROUTE 1 RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES

Commentors generally approved of use of this zone for park operations and support facilities; however one commentor indicated that this zone did not provide appropriate connection to the dunes and beach areas to support use of this zone as a park entrance and orientation area.

CIRCULATION AND ENTRANCE LOCATION POSSIBILITIES

Commentors indicated a desire for centralized and limited roadways within the park, and emphasis on non-vehicular park use, concentration of parking close to entrance locations.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP 1 COMMENTS

As noted above, the second public workshop for the future Fort Ord Dunes State Park planning process was held on October 9, 2003 at the Monterey District Office. The purpose of the workshop was to provide members of the community the opportunity to voice opinions regarding the goals and ultimate design of the future Fort Ord Dunes State Park. Approximately 20 people attended the workshop. After a brief introduction of the State Parks General Plan process and the existing conditions of Fort Ord Dunes, the draft Management Zones and Ranges of Possibilities were described in detail. The attendees were divided into three discussion groups—each with either California Department of Parks and Recreation staff or their general plan consultant guiding discussions. Each group was guided through topics related to the draft Management Zones and Ranges of Possibilities, as well as other issues of concerns and potential uses. As the discussions progressed, the public input provided was recorded on easel pads.

The comments raised were varied and diverse. Most of the sentiment recorded during the workshop supported the limitation of built facilities in the park, with more emphasis placed on natural, native landscape features being preserved and protected. Although accessibility was supported, most agreed that it should be small-scale and the method of access should be pedestrian or bicycle, rather than any form of vehicular access. Concern was raised regarding the potential for hazardous materials to affect future park users.

Some examples of input received are as follows:

- Provide further information regarding potential hazardous materials currently present at Fort Ord Dunes; and how those areas relate to draft Management Zones
- Ensure that park visitors are not exposed to hazardous materials and that ongoing hazardous materials monitoring occurs
- Do not allow overnight use. Alternately, limit camping opportunities to group/family, hike/bike, or environmental camping; consider provision of platform camping structures.
- Locate campground areas to prevent traffic noise intrusions; utilize existing topography and vegetation to create small campground areas
- Provide on-site park staff to monitor overnight park use and provide 24-hour response.
- Continue to consider Transportation Agency for Monterey County development plans
- Include docent led and self guided tour opportunities
- Utilize raised boardwalks for dune trails.
- Provide connections to regional trails
- Include appropriate architectural/design standards in facility development
- Limit development of facilities and vehicle use in areas west of State Route 1 (some comments advocate no facilities or vehicle use west of State Route 1)
- Include resource protection and restrict beach access; do not allow pets
- Increase Natural Resource Zone areas

CONCLUSION

The input provided by agencies and the public, as summarized above, will be informative in the process of developing a General Plan for the future Fort Ord Dunes State Park. The planning team will utilize the public and agency comments to develop the Draft General Plan and Environmental Impact Report. Generally, the comments submitted focused on a desire for a balance of

resource protection and public uses, and an appropriate range of public use types, facilities, and visitor protection.

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