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JUL 29 2005

THE SEA RANCH ASSOCIATION

July 29, 2005

Mr. Mark Cleveland, Park Planner
2300 County Center Drive, Suite 120A
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

RE: Bluff Erosion at The Sea Ranch

BACKGROUND

The following comments are regarding the public meeting, held July 16, 2005 at Del Mar Center, and the Geotechnical Investigation reports which were discussed at that meeting. I am submitting the comments as a full time resident of The Sea Ranch, and as a California Registered Geologist. The comments pertaining to the geotechnical investigations have been discussed informally with Erik Olsborg, of BACE Geotechnical, in a July 25 telephone conversation. Mr. Olsborg was very generous with his time, and the background information which he supplied was very useful.

COMMENTS

Public Comment.

If a meeting is truly designed to obtain public input, then it should be stated at the beginning if written comments will be accepted, and if so, within what time period. "As soon as possible" is not a useful answer. Also, if written comments are to be accepted, then contact information for the recipients should be provided at the meeting.

Timeline

Submission of relevant comments is much easier if the audience knows what the next steps are, and approximately when they might occur. This information should be written, it is not possible to remember a series of dates and project tasks.

Stage in Process

It was stated that we are "...in the early stages..." of the process. I disagree. Bluff erosion concerns and various reports go back at least 6 or 7 years. The current Geotechnical Reports provide engineering background and thoughtful, if preliminary, cost estimates for remedial options. At this point we are on a well defined track towards decisions to implement, or not, reasonably well-defined projects in the five areas of concern. A public meeting similar to the July 16 event, but held before the geotechnical investigation scope of work was finalized (a scoping session) would have provided a better chance to influence this project.

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Cost Uncertainties

The bedrock, both position and composition, was minimally characterized in the current reports. Most borings stopped at or near the top of bedrock. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, the work done is a logical first step. However, as piers and trenches are constructed into, or to the top of, the fractured and compositionally heterogeneous rock formations, some surprises will most likely occur. A common result of field surprises is higher project cost. I discussed this comment specifically with Mr. Olsborg. I believe I am correct in saying that he agrees that more detailed bedrock information would be very useful.

Wave Action

One of the comments at the public meeting dealt with waves over the bluff-top trail. Mr. Reilly's response seemed to suggest that this was a matter for the future, as sea levels rise. On the contrary, exceptional storm waves do wash over the bluff top trail in the vicinity of site 60A, and perhaps in other places as well.

Redirecting Runoff into Surface Streams

At the public meeting, there was some discussion of redirecting surface water runoff into existing surface streams. Currently, some Sea Ranch storm drains already discharge into surface streams. I know of one area near Del Mar Point where, in my opinion, the current storm water discharge is increasing the erosion rate in the natural drainage, (and near the bluff-top trail!) The potential adverse effects of drainage redirection would need to be carefully studied before any decisions are made.

Coordinates for Field Projects

For future projects, it would be helpful to furnish coordinates including, but not limited to, boreholes, potential bridge piers, and walkways, to The Sea Ranch Association (TSRA). The TSRA is beginning to use GIS for some agency reporting, and for membership communication. With the spatial data for existing and contemplated bluff-top trail projects, TSRA can quickly and effectively communicate this information to the members.

Additional Map Resources – Color Digital Orthophotography

The most recent, and striking, photo base for The Sea Ranch is the August 2004 digital orthophotography currently utilized by Sonoma County (ISD, GIS Group). The Sea Ranch Association holds a key license to this photography which covers the entire bluff-top trail. Since the base is orthorectified, spatial data such as roads, parcels, etc. can be readily added. I have already forwarded photo information and an example to Mr. Olsborg.

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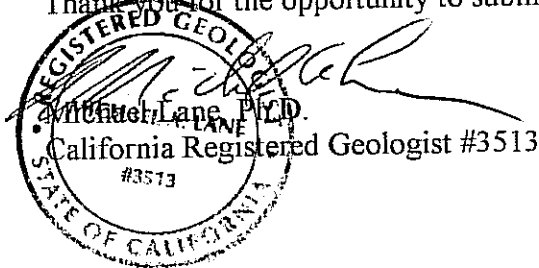
Additional Map Resources – LIDAR

LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) provides a very detailed (vertical resolution 15cm.) “bare earth” image). The USGS is currently using LIDAR data to map the San Andreas Fault Zone in this area. The data has recently become publicly available, and covers the entire Sea Ranch. It is accessible via GIS. My preliminary study shows that the bluff top trail is clearly visible in some of the images. This might be some very useful for planning purposes. http://core2.gsfc.nasa.gov/lidar/terrapoint/san_andreas/

And Finally – Some Philosophy

At the July 16 meeting, several people commented on the need to look at possible trail realignment. Supervisor Reilly mentioned the need to separate Walk-On Beach access from trail access. I totally agree. There are some areas (site 60A is a good example), where a relatively minor trail realignment could at least postpone an expensive engineering project. On the other hand, there are many other areas along the bluff-top trail which will in all probability require mitigation within the 75 year time frame being discussed for the current “improvements.” So what is the long term plan? Access forever at any cost? What about public safety? Some sections of the trail are probably not safe right now for the public, and this includes Sea Ranchers. I think the burden here falls on the Sea Ranch Board of Directors, working with the County, to develop a long range plan BEFORE we start applying temporary fixes...and most fixes along this exposed coast are temporary.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments.



Cc:

Mike Reilly, Supervisor Fifth District

Randy Burke – Acting Community Manager, Sea Ranch

Board of Directors, Sea Ranch