



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT CENTRAL COAST FIELD OFFICE DECISION RECORD



Northern Parking Area and Trailhead DOI-BLM-CA-C090-2023-0001-EA

Introduction

The Cotoni-Coast Dairies (C-CD) unit of the California Coastal National Monument is located approximately ten miles north of the City of Santa Cruz along State Highway 1. It surrounds the small, rural, coastal community of Davenport. Prior to European contact, the Cotoni tribelet of the Costanoan People (also called the Ohlone) inhabited the area - making use of the landscape's diverse resources - for thousands of years. The landscape of C-CD is defined by a prominent series of stair-stepped marine terraces that rise from the coastline on the western edge and culminate in the steep terrain of the Santa Cruz Mountains at the eastern edge. The marine terraces are dissected by six perennial streams that flow from the Santa Cruz Mountains to the ocean. The wide, open terraces provide expansive, sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean. The steep gradient of topography and climate at C-CD produce a wide diversity of niches that support riparian zones and wetlands, grasslands, coastal scrub, oak woodlands, and conifer forest. These diverse habitats in turn, support numerous fish and wildlife species including coho salmon, steelhead, California red legged frogs, mule deer, and mountain lions.

On January 12, 2017, President Barack Obama used his authority under the Antiquities Act (34 Stat. 225, 16 U.S.C. 431) to designate Cotoni-Coast Dairies as a unit of the California Coastal National Monument. In doing so, these lands became a component of the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS). As required under the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (OPLMA), the BLM manages components of the NLCS to "conserve, protect, and restore nationally significant landscapes." OPLMA also states that the Secretary, through the BLM, will manage the components of the NLCS "in accordance with any applicable law (including regulations) relating to any component of the system ... and in a manner that protects the values for which the components of the system were designated." The objects and values contributing to the Monument designation include traditional use areas of the indigenous people and archaeological resources, as well as a wide array of habitats and the diversity of wildlife that they support, including forests, shrublands, grasslands, riparian/wetlands, and aquatic systems.

As a unit of the broader California Coastal National Monument (CCNM), the BLM will continue to manage C-CD under relevant goals and objectives that were identified in the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the CCNM that was completed in 2005, before the addition of onshore units.

The BLM signed the Decision Record for the Cotoni-Coast Dairies Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) on June 23, 2021. The Monument Proclamation and CCNM RMP, as amended, require the BLM to ensure public access for recreation and visitor use of the Cotoni-Coast Dairies (C-CD). As such, the purpose for the proposed action is to establish a public parking area for day-use to support public access in Recreation Management Zone 1 (RMZ 1), while ensuring proper care for resources, objects, and values of the C-CD unit of the California Coastal National Monument. Thus, the BLM's decision contributes to implementation of the following management actions from the CCNM RMP, as amended:

Table 1. Overarching Goals for the California Coastal National Monument

Overarching Goals for the California Coastal National Monument
1. Protect the geological formations and the habitat that they provide for biological resources of the CCNM.
2. Protect the scenic and cultural values associated with the CCNM.
3. Provide and promote research opportunities to understand the resources and values of the CCNM.
4. Provide the public with interpretive information and educational initiatives regarding the values and significance of the CCNM and the fragile ecosystems of the California coastline.
5. Coordinate planning and management activities with the numerous jurisdictions on and adjacent to the CCNM and use the CCNM to help enhance cooperative and collaborative initiatives and partnerships with a variety of communities, agencies, organizations, academic institutions, the public, and other stakeholders.

Table 2. C-CD RMPA Goals for Recreation Resources

Goals for Recreation Resources
1. Provide a range of recreational use opportunities while protecting sensitive natural and cultural resources from human impacts.
2. Provide the public with interpretive information and educational initiatives regarding the values and significance of the CCNM.
3. Provide a variety of experiences and settings for a diversity of users and to meet potential changes in demand while minimizing conflicts with adjacent property owners and among user groups.
4. Coordinate planning and management activities with the numerous jurisdictions on and adjacent to the CCNM and use the CCNM to help enhance cooperative and collaborative initiatives and partnerships with a variety of communities, agencies, organizations, academic institutions, the public, and other stakeholders.

Table 3. C-CD RMPA Objectives for Recreation Resources

Objectives for Recreation Resources	
a)	Visitors will be encouraged to participate in recreational pursuits on the CCNM that are respectful of the biological, cultural, physical, and scenic values of the monument.
b)	Construct and maintain appropriate facilities to support recreational uses.
c)	Design maps and brochures and educational opportunities to improve visitors' appreciation and understanding of natural and cultural resources on BLM public lands.
d)	Create experiences and settings appropriate for the desired outcome within developed and undeveloped recreation areas.
e)	Manage recreational facilities to protect natural resources and to meet user needs.

Table 4. C-CD RMPA Management Actions (MA) for Recreation and Transportation and Travel Management (TTM)

Management Actions	
Implementation Action: MA-REC-23	Establish a Day Use Site (parking) at Warrenella Road Gate. No overnight (sunset to sunrise) parking will be allowed. Provide for at least one public restroom and trash collection at this site.
MA-TTM-4	Work with Santa Cruz County (Public Works) to make improvements necessary to meet public safety standards and support increased vehicle traffic [and parking] on Cement Plant Rd.

Decision

I have reviewed the recommendations on the BLM's preferred alternative (Alternative 1: Double Loop Site Design) described and analyzed in the BLM environmental assessment (#DOI-BLM-CA-C090-2023-0001-EA). I find the Double Loop Site Design (i.e. Alternative 1) to be in conformance with applicable land use plans, that it effectively serves the public, and that it will not cause unnecessary or undue degradation of resources. It is therefore my decision to approve Alternative 1, including the project design features and conservation measures outlined in Attachment 1, for the Northern Parking Area and Trailhead in Santa Cruz County, California.

Alternatives Considered but not Selected

A no action alternative was considered but not selected because it would not meet the purpose and need for public parking to access C-CD unit of CCNM. A single loop site design (Alternative 2) was also considered but not selected because there would be fewer vehicle stalls available to meet the BLM's estimated demand for parking.

Decision Rationale

The BLM decision best meets the purpose and need for the project because it would establish public parking to support public access in Recreation Management Zone 1 (RMZ 1), while ensuring proper care for resources, objects, and values of the C-CD unit of the California Coastal National Monument.

Consultation and Coordination

During the supplemental review for the Northern Parking Area and Trailhead #DOI-BLM-CA-C090-2023-0001-EA, the BLM coordinated closely with several local, State, and Federal agencies related to activities on the property, including Santa Cruz County, the Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission, California Department of Transportation, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the California Coastal Commission, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Similarly, the BLM met with leaders of conservation organizations and other groups representing community interests, including the Trust for Public Land, Sempervirens Fund, Peninsula Open Space Trust, and the Conservation Lands Foundation, as well as the Davenport North Coast Association, Friends of the North Coast, the Rural Bonny Doon Association, and Santa Cruz Mountain Trail Stewardship. The BLM will continue to coordinate efforts with these agencies and organizations to achieve desired recreation experience and identify adaptive management actions that may be needed relating to visitor use at the intersection of Cement Plant Road and Warrenella Road.

The C-CD RMPA reflects the Department of Interior's goal of increasing public access to outdoor recreation opportunities and the BLM's effort to promote awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the National Conservation Lands. Recreational opportunities are compatible with the protection of the diversity of habitats and the traditional cultural resource values present within C-CD. The plan calls for limiting the number of parking areas and trails, while still providing sufficient trail miles to meet public demand.

As a result, the range of alternatives in the Northern Parking Area and Trailhead #DOI-BLM-CA-C090-2023-0001-EA also reflects careful balance of many competing public interests in managing public lands for public benefit in accordance with the C-CD deed restrictions, Presidential Proclamation 9563, and other obligations under the Omnibus Lands Act and FLPMA. The BLM's resource specialists and other technical experts provided input into the analysis of the environmental effects of the alternatives considered in this EA. Input from members of the public has also contributed to the analysis and consideration of the environmental issues associated with C-CD parking area development and use. Upon issuing a final decision, the BLM will continue coordination and/or reinstate consultation with Tribes and local, State, and Federal agencies, as appropriate, to ensure compliance with environmental policies.

Public Involvement

Public notification for the Northern Parking Area and Trailhead EA was posted on the BLM's National NEPA Register on October 28, 2022. The BLM also issued a News Release on October 28, 2022. The News Release initiated the 30-day public scoping period (October 28, 2022, to November 28, 2022), described how the public could submit scoping comments, and identified dates for two virtual public meetings. The BLM also sent emails to interested parties announcing the 30-day scoping period and two public meetings.

The BLM received approximately 70 submissions during the official scoping period. Most scoping comments raised one or more of the issues addressed in the EA, while many other scoping comments fell outside the scope of the EA. Approximately half of the submissions were versions of form letters submitted by interested parties. The remainder of the scoping comments were unique comment letters, including from the following organizations: Conservation Lands Foundation, Davenport North Coast Association, Friends of the North Coast, Rural Bonny Doon Association, Big Creek Lumber Co., Santa Cruz Mountain Trail Stewardship, Sempervirens Fund, and Peninsula Open Space Trust.

On March 19, 2024, the BLM published an announcement inviting interested parties to provide feedback on #DOI-BLM-CA-C090-2023-0001-EA during a 30-day public comment period ending on April 18, 2024. Written public comments were accepted on-line through the BLM's ePlanning project website, by email, facsimile, or delivered to the Central Coast Field Office.

The BLM received approximately 257 submissions during the official 30-day comment period. Nearly 200 of the submissions were versions of a form letter submitted by County residents and/or members of interested parties. The remainder of the submissions were unique comment letters, including attachments from the following organizations: Conservation Lands Foundation, Davenport North Coast Association, Friends of the North Coast, Rural Bonny Doon Association, Sempervirens Fund, and Peninsula Open Space Trust. The BLM also received comment letters from the California State Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the County of Santa Cruz Parks Department, a representative of the County's Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission, and the entire BLM Central California District Resource Advisory Council (RAC).

Public comments on the EA were assessed both individually and collectively by the BLM. All the comments received during the public comment period for the EA are available for review at the BLM's Central Coast Field Office and on the ePlanning project website (ref. BLM's Cotoni-Coast Dairies Northern Parking Area and Trailhead Public Comment Report, dated May 2024). The BLM responded to substantive comments by modifying the proposed action, improving the impact analyses, making factual corrections, or indicating those circumstances which would need additional NEPA review.

Plan Consistency

Based on information in the Northern Parking Area and Trailhead #DOI-BLM-CA-C090-2023-0001-EA, the project record, and recommendations from BLM specialists, I conclude that this decision is consistent with the Cotoni-Coast Dairies Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA), approved June 23, 2021; the Endangered Species Act; the Native American Religious Freedom Act; other cultural resource management laws and regulations; Executive Order 12898 regarding Environmental Justice.

Administrative Remedies


Administrative remedies may be available to those who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. Appeals may be made to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior, Board of Land Appeals (Board) in strict compliance with the regulations in 43 CFR Part 4. Notices of appeal must be filed in this office within 30 days after publication of this decision. If a notice of appeal does not include a statement of reasons, such statement must be filed with this office and the Board within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed. The notice of appeal and any statement of reasons, written arguments, or briefs must also be served upon the Regional Solicitor:

U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of the Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region
2800 Cottage Way, Room E-1712
Sacramento, CA 95825-1890

The effective date of this decision (and the date initiating the appeal period) will be the date of approval by the authorized officer.

Approved By:

**ZACHARY
ORMSBY**

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ORMSBY
Date: 2024.11.12 15:20:23 -08'00'

Zachary Ormsby
Central Coast Field Manager