

5.0 PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION COMPONENT

of the

LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Of all the issues which the Coastal Act addresses, those concerned with provision of public access to the coast are perhaps the most significant and the most familiar. Provision of coastal access was a primary concern of California voters who approved the Coastal Zone Management Initiative in 1973. The Coastal Act of 1976, which arose from the preliminary work accomplished under the Initiative's mandate, helped to establish protection of public access to the State's 1,072 miles of coastline as a high-priority objective designated for immediate implementation.

The specific public access policies of the Coastal Act implicitly recognize that, while coastal access is guaranteed under the California Constitution (Article XV, Section 2), escalating coastal land values and the increasing demands of the private market for coastal land pose a serious threat to the continuance of public access to the coast. To insure that the public's constitutional right to have access to the coast will be enhanced and protected by local policy, the Coastal Act requires the following:

Each local coastal program prepared pursuant to this chapter shall contain a specific public access component to assure that maximum public access to the coast and public recreation areas is provided. (Coastal Act, Section 30500)

The Regulations prepared by the Coastal Commission in order to implement Coastal Act policies specify the content of the access component in the following terms:

The public access component of a local coastal program pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 30500 may be set forth in a separate plan element or may be comprised of various plan components that are joined together in a text accompanying the submission of the local coastal program. The public access component shall set forth in detail the kinds of public service capacities for recreational purposes where required pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 32054, and specific geographic areas proposed for direct physical access to coastal water areas as required by Public Resources Code, Sections 30210-30224 and 30604.

In the Local Coastal Program Manual, also developed by the Coastal Commission, the requirements of the above regulation are further clarified as follows:

With the exception of the reference to Section 30604(c), this provision will be met by showing how the relevant policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act (more specifically, groups A, B, C, and M) have been met, including specific designations of land uses and access areas. Section 30604(c) requires that a coastal permit for any development between the nearest public road and the shoreline include a finding of conformity with the public access and recreation policies of Chapter 3 ... The LCP (most likely the zoning portion) must provide for this finding to be made as part of the local permitting process. (LCP Manual, pp.1-29 to 1-30)

The primary purpose of the access component of the local coastal program, then, is to describe in detail the ways in which local conditions do or do not conform to Coastal Act policies, and to recommend local policies and actions to correct non-conforming conditions. Because of the extent of overlap between concerns relevant to shoreline access and those involving coastal recreation, policies and plans concerning both are addressed in a single report.

In the following pages, existing and probable future conditions related to the provision of recreation opportunities and shoreline access within the City's portion of the Coastal Zone are described. This description is followed by a comparison of these conditions with the specific applicable policies of the Coastal Act in order to identify existing and potential non-conformities. In the final pages of the report, existing conditions and existing or potential conflicts with relevant Coastal Act policies are summarized.

5.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

5.2.1 PUBLIC RECREATION AREAS

PISMO STATE BEACH

Of the slightly less than one square mile of the Coastal Zone which lies within Grover Beach's limits, approximately 150 acres are contained by the boundaries of Pismo State Beach. This State facility includes not only the shoreline, but the coastal dunes and wetlands along the beach's eastern edge as well.

Because this large area along Grover Beach's coastline is under State rather than local jurisdiction, most of the Coastal Act policies relating to shoreline access and recreation will be only indirectly the responsibility of Grover Beach to implement. Nevertheless, the park does lie within City boundaries and, as an extremely popular recreational resource of the State, it has a significant impact upon the community and its residents.

The Coastal Act requires that any project proposed by a State agency for land lying within the Coastal Zone of a local jurisdiction be found in conformity with that local jurisdiction's coastal plan before development of any type can occur. For this reason it is necessary that Grover Beach's Local Coastal Program establish specific policies regarding access to, and use of, the portion of the State lands which lies within City boundaries. It is also necessary to coordinate development of these policies with local coastal program policies of the City of Pismo Beach and the County of San Luis Obispo as both these jurisdictions contain lands which are within Pismo State Beach and must also establish a basis for decisions concerning access to and use of this regional facility.

BEACH AND SHORELINE

Broad sandy beaches offer visitors the only opportunity available anywhere along the California coastline for drive-on beach camping or beach "touring" in ordinary motor vehicles. This same beach is also the habitat of large populations of the Pismo Clam. Clamming, surf fishing and "touring" are the beach's most popular recreational activities.

COASTAL DUNES

Approximately 100 acres of the 15,900 acres which comprise the coastal dunes system called the Nipomo Dunes complex lie within Grover Beach boundaries. In Grover Beach the dunes are slightly more than 2 miles in length and a maximum of about 1/4 mile in width. The dunes within Grover Beach's boundaries are partially stabilized by vegetation. Popular activities in Grover Beach's portion of the dunes include hiking, horseback riding, and bird-watching.

In order to protect stabilizing vegetation, vehicles are prohibited in the dunes between Grover Beach's northern limit and the Oceano Dunes Vehicular Recreation Area at the beach's southern extremity. However, only those dunes within the 430-acre Pismo Dunes Natural Preserve south of Arroyo Grande Creek are permanently protected from vehicular use. The dunes within Grover Beach boundaries do not have the permanent protection of preserve status, primarily because they do not contain the examples of undisturbed vegetation and native habitats found in the dunes in the Preserve.

COASTAL WETLANDS

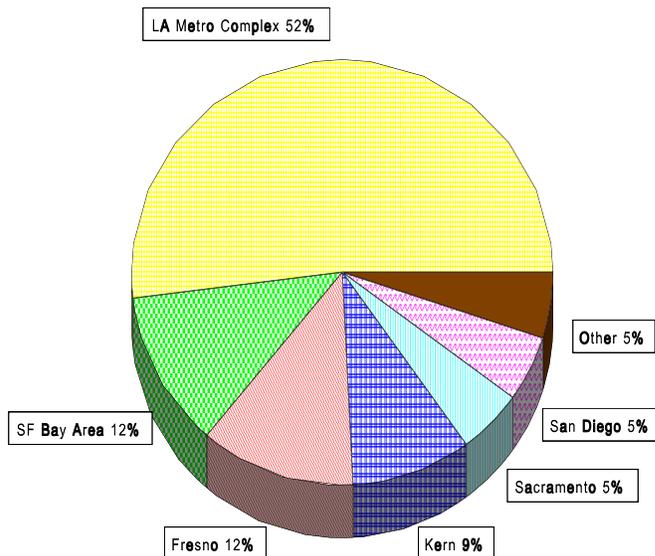
Immediately to the east of the sand dunes, yet still within State Beach boundaries, lies a portion of the coastal wetlands system which borders Grover Beach on three sides. North of Grand Avenue native riparian and marsh habitats along Meadow Creek have been replaced by a mobilehome park and a nine-hole public golf course. South of Grand Avenue, however, both Meadow Creek and a part of the Oceano Lagoon provide marsh and riparian habitats for wildlife. This area, which is little used and largely undisturbed, is an excellent place for activities such as photography, nature study, and bird-watching.

VISITOR USE

Pismo State Beach is one of the most popular of California's State parks. In the 1996-97 fiscal year, the State Beach and Vehicular Recreation Area attracted over one and one-half million visitors. Peak use periods presently occur primarily during the months of July, August and September and particularly during holidays and three-day weekends such as those accompanying Labor Day and Memorial Day.

Figure 2 shows the origin of visitors to Pismo State Beach campgrounds. Because local beach visitors do not use overnight camping facilities to the extent that non-local visitors do, the campground survey from which this figure was derived does not indicate the actual level of use of the entire park by local visitors. No study of local versus non-local beach use has been undertaken for Pismo State Beach.

FIGURE 2
Origin of Visitors to Pismo Beach Campgrounds



SOURCE:
and Recreation, 1977

California Dept of Parks

VISITOR-SERVING AND RECREATIONAL SUPPORT FACILITIES

Support facilities for the Park are extremely limited. Two restroom facilities, one at the foot of Grand Avenue in Grover Beach and one at the foot of Pier Avenue in Oceano, are maintained by the State's Department of Parks and Recreation. At the Grand Avenue entrance to the beach, the public parking area can safely accommodate 106 vehicles with an additional 57 spaces located near the golf course. A picnic area with twenty tables is located off the parking lot.

While overnight camping is not permitted within Grover Beach's boundaries, campgrounds are maintained by the Department of Parks and Recreation at two locations on the eastern border of the beach. North Beach Campground, located just beyond Grover Beach's northern limit, contains 103 campsites. The campground lies 1/4 mile inland from the beach off Highway 1.

Approximately one mile south of Grover Beach, the Department of Parks and Recreation maintains the Oceano Campgrounds. This facility has 82 developed campsites, 42 of which provide water and electric hook-ups for trailers. The present entrance to the campground is located immediately off Pier Avenue in Oceano.

During peak use periods and holidays, both the Oceano and North Beach campgrounds are filled to capacity. Pismo Beach Park rangers have noted an increase in the number of off-season visitors to the campgrounds, a trend which may help to mitigate the impacts of overcrowding at the beach during peak recreation periods.

Drive-on beach camping, one of the beach's most unique visitor attractions, is restricted to the beach and open dune areas about 2 miles south of the Grand Avenue ramp. These beach camping areas are designed for "primitive camping" and are provided with sanitation facilities but no water. Reservations are recommended since there is a limit on the number of camping units allowed.

Beach camping fees are collected by State employees only at the entrance stations or reservations can be made and paid for through DESTINET.

5.2.2 BEACH ACCESS

Vehicular access to all parts of the sandy beach between the City of Pismo Beach and the southern boundary of the State's Vehicular Recreation Area, a distance of about seven miles, was historically permitted. However, in late 1979 the portion of the sandy beach within the City limits of the City of Pismo Beach and in 1980 the portion north of Grand Avenue in Grover Beach was closed to vehicular access. Pedestrian use of the beach north of Grand Avenue is longstanding.

All vehicle operators anywhere on the beach or in the Vehicular Recreation Area must observe a 15-mile per hour speed limit. Drivers are also subject to prohibitions against driving in restricted dunes, driving without a valid license, operating a vehicle which does not meet State equipment standards, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or driving while carrying an opened container of alcohol. However, it should be noted that there are no prohibitions related to consuming alcoholic beverages on the beach by persons over 21 years of age.

There are two permanent entrance stations to the beach.

There are five accessways to the shoreline available for use by either vehicle operators or pedestrian or "walk-in" visitors. These accessways are described below.

North Beach Campground: This campground, owned and operated by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, is located on the west side of Highway 1 and 1/4 mile inland from the beach within the City of Pismo Beach. Access to the beach from the campground is used primarily by campground visitors, and is available only to pedestrians because vehicular use of the dunes between the campground and the beach is prohibited.

Grand Avenue: The only ramp entrance to the beach within Grover Beach lies at the foot of its main commercial street, Grand Avenue. The ramp itself is owned and maintained by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. The Grand Avenue ramp provides beach access for approximately 51 percent of the beach's visitors. Because this ramp is the most conveniently located access point for the most densely developed portion of the City, it is used by more "walk-in" visitors than is any other accessway. During many high tides the ramp is underwater and unusable. City maintenance of Grand Avenue ends at the driveway to the day use parking area.

Oceano Campground: Like the North Beach Campground this facility is owned and maintained by the State's Department of Parks and Recreation. Campground beach access, which is used primarily by campground visitors, is restricted to pedestrian use because vehicles are not permitted in the dunes which lie between the campground and the beach.

Pier Avenue: The ramp located at the foot of Pier Avenue in Oceano is owned and maintained by the Department of Parks and Recreation. This State agency also owns a portion of Pier Avenue itself near the ramp entrance. The Pier Avenue ramp is the southernmost of the two public ramp entrances to the beach. It lies approximately one mile south of Grand Avenue and provides convenient access to the State's Vehicular Recreation Area.

The Pier Avenue ramp provides access for approximately 32 percent of the beach's visitors. The State Department of Parks and Recreation has made significant improvements to the Pier Avenue approach including widening the street and bridge and installing sidewalks and traffic signals. With these improvements, traffic management has improved and there is seldom a back up of traffic.

Oso Flaco Lake Road: There is at present no direct inland access to the 430-acre Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area which lies south of Oceano. Primary access to the dunes at present is via the beach from Grand Avenue or Pier Avenue. Some visitors also use the Oso Flaco Lake Road which is maintained by the County. This road is narrow and in poor condition, and terminates at the Oso Flaco Lake Natural Area entrance station and parking lot. This accessway is used primarily by hikers, nature watchers, and fishermen.

5.2.3 PRIVATE VISITOR-SERVING FACILITIES

Grover Beach's portion of the Coastal Zone contains a limited number of visitor-serving facilities. Most of these facilities lie within areas designated as "Coastal Highway-Commercial", which permitted uses ranging from motels and restaurants to veterinary hospitals and professional offices.

The C-H-C District encompassed both sides of Grand Avenue from Highway 1 eastward and is developed primarily in commercial uses although few of these are visitor-serving or recreation-oriented. However, this area must offer commercial services to both local residents as well as visitor needs.

The Coastal Planned Commercial designation has been applied to thirty acres of land located on the west side of Highway 1 between Grand Avenue and the City's northern boundary. Approximately five acres within this district are presently undeveloped. The remaining developed land is occupied by a sixty-unit mobilehome park and adjoining recreational vehicle park.

The recreational vehicle park is a visitor-serving use, however, the mobilehome park serves only residents. Although the park is immediately adjacent to the beach and to a nine-hole golf course, its residents must use public access to these facilities from LeSage Drive and Grand Avenue.

Also adjacent to Highway 1, but at the City's southern boundary, lies a 100-foot wide strip of land which is owned by the County of San Luis Obispo. It is presently leased by a private party for use as a recreational vehicle park. Five acres at the northernmost end of this facility are within Grover Beach boundaries. This land, designated on the City's Zoning Map for Planned Commercial uses, is presently used for open-air vehicle storage.

5.2.4 MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION FACILITY

In November 1996 the Grover Beach Multimodal Transportation Facility was opened. Located at the southeast corner of Grand Avenue and Highway 1, the facility includes an unmanned Amtrak station for train and bus service. Parking is provided on the east and west sides of the tracks. The City owns these properties, however, a 0.32 acre parcel along Grand Avenue was retained in private ownership to allow for future visitor-serving commercial activities.

5.2.5 ECOLOGICAL PRESERVE

A 5.12 acre Ecological Preserve was acquired by the City through dedication by a private developer and is the only City-owned recreational area within the City's portion of the Coastal Zone. The preserve area originally was comprised of a narrow, sloping strip of land along the southern border of Pismo Lake west of North Fourth Street. Additional land was included in the preserve east of 4th Street as a condition of approval of the Mar Brisa and Meadow Creek planned developments. The preserve status of this land requires that it be maintained permanently in an undisturbed natural condition. None of its many coastal live oaks or other marsh and riparian vegetation are to be removed. Vehicles are prohibited in the area and only limited passive activities such as nature walks and birdwatching are permitted. No parking, access or other visitor-serving facilities are provided.

5.2.6 NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

There are no neighborhood parks within the Coastal Zone boundary, however, Grover Heights Park's service area includes areas within the Coastal Zone. Grover Heights Park is a barrier free, full service park facility. As land and money become available, new parks will be added within the Coastal Zone.

5.3 EXISTING POLICY

5.3.1 STATE POLICY

The California Department of Parks and Recreation produced, in 1975, a General Development and Management Plan for Pismo State Beach and Dunes. The principal objectives of this plan are the following:

1. Control of vehicular beach access.
2. Reduction in vehicle traffic on the beach, primarily through
 - a. Development of new access to the dunes
 - b. Development of off-beach parking
 - c. Reduction in beach-camping densities
 - d. Conversion of one mile of beach to pedestrian only beach use north of the Grand Avenue ramp.
3. Continuity in administration of recreational lands.

Implementation of several of the above objectives could have a significant impact upon Grover Beach. The relationship between the objectives of the State's Development Plan and the policies of the Coastal Act will be discussed in later pages.

5.3.2 LOCAL POLICY

The Open Space/Conservation Element of Grover Beach's General Plan contains several policies relevant to the recreation and access concerns of the Coastal Act. Among these are included the following:

1. Recreation development should be provided as a part of any future residential subdivision (p. 71)
2. Encourage and provide recreational facilities, whether active or passive, in locations near all living and working areas (p. 71)
3. Proper commercial recreational uses should be encouraged (p. 71)
4. Proposed sites for recreation should be evaluated to assure that they have maximum flexibility and adaptability (p.72)
5. Encourage the State Parks Department to proceed with acquisition of additional land to enlarge the present state park and increase state beach frontage.

The City's Park and Recreation Element includes a map that identifies the need for a park/mini-park in the Northwest Grover Beach neighborhood and a mini-park in the West Grover Beach neighborhood south of Long Branch Avenue.

5.4 STATE GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Pismo State Beach and Pismo Dunes State Vehicle Recreation Area General Development and Resource Management Plan, referred to in preceding pages, was produced by the California Department of Parks and Recreation in 1975. It was approved by the South Central Regional Coastal Commission, with several conditions. Those having the most significant impact upon Grover Beach include the following:

Access

1. Provide controlled vehicle access to the State Beach using temporary control stations in the initial phase with conversion to permanent facilities in the future. The main entrance station to be operated by the State will be located at the Grand Avenue ramp. Status: The entrance station has been constructed.
2. Reduce the number of vehicle access points to the State Beach and provide an inner road circulation system connecting overnight use areas, day use areas, and the beach. Status: Access points reduced to two; inner road not provided.

Day Use

1. Provide off-beach parking at Pismo Creek and Pier Avenue with a major facility near the foot of Grand Avenue (520 paved parking spaces plus 400 turfed spaces total for the three locations). Status: Grand Avenue parking facility has been constructed.

2. The State should enhance Meadow Creek below Pismo Lake for fishing and other recreational uses through dredging, landscaping, and wildlife enhancement measures. Status: No action.
3. Provide two off-beach picnic areas, one adjacent to Grand Avenue parking and another adjacent to Meadow Creek (40 picnic sites at each location). Status: Twenty picnic sites provided at Grand Avenue with City installing and maintaining landscaping.
4. Provide a system of trails for bicycle riding, hiking, and equestrian use, with bicycle and hiking trails paralleling access roads and connecting use areas. Status: Not provided.
5. Continue existing day-use concession facilities including golf course, restaurant and beach-related facilities. Status: Concessions have continued.
6. Provide a dune arboretum with educational and interpretive facilities. Status: Not provided.
7. Provide additional compatible beach-related concession facilities, such as beach equipment rental and beach tram, when warranted by public need. Status: Not provided.

Because any of these proposals may have a significant effect upon coastal recreation and access conditions in or near Grover Beach, the City must determine the extent to which impacts of the proposals will conflict or conform with Coastal Act policies.

5.5 CONFORMANCE WITH COASTAL ACT POLICIES

In order to determine the extent to which local conditions and policies conform with the policies of the Coastal Act, a comparison will be made between the former and the latter. Each of those Coastal Act policies relevant to recreation or to shoreline access will be cited and will be applied to local conditions and policies.

5.5.1 MAXIMUM ACCESS AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Section 30210 of the Coastal Act is the most comprehensive of the Act's policies concerning shoreline access and recreation. For this reason, in order to determine the extent to which the City and the California Department of Parks and Recreation are or are not in compliance with this policy, several points will need to be addressed.

A. MAXIMUM ACCESS

Provision of "maximum access" to the shoreline is, of course, one of the cornerstones of the Coastal Act. There are points of access to various interconnected parts of Pismo State Beach and the adjoining Vehicular Recreation Area. One of these accessways, the ramp entrance which lies at the foot of Grand Avenue, is located within Grover Beach limits. This entrance to the State Beach is the most intensively used of the access points, serving over 50 percent of the beach's visitors each year. The Grand Avenue ramp, which provides access for both

pedestrians and vehicles, is located approximately one mile from the nearest ramp accessway to the south.

At peak use periods the ramp sometimes becomes congested and contributes to traffic congestion farther inland on Grand Avenue and Highway 1. Beach access for pedestrians near the Grand Avenue Ramp entrance but separate from the accessway used by vehicles is available from the parking lot.

B. PUBLIC SAFETY

The decision to prohibit vehicles on the beach north of Grand Avenue has reduced access opportunities for vehicle operators who have had access to the entire beach. According to Section 30210 of the Coastal Act, "maximum access opportunities" are to be provided only where consistent with several other needs, including public safety. The unique conditions which enable vehicle operators and pedestrians to use many of the same recreation areas of Pismo State Beach in the past were also potential sources of a public safety hazard due to the absence of any separation between the areas used by vehicles and by walk-in visitors. The closure of the beach north of Grand Avenue to vehicular use has enhanced public safety within that area for walk-in visitors.

The beach area within Grover Beach's boundaries is also patrolled by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. This Agency patrols the area at regular intervals daily and increases enforcement activities during peak use periods.

C. PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES FROM OVERUSE

A third concern of Section 30210 is the protection of natural resources from overuse where public shoreline access is provided. Existing conditions may represent sources of conflict with this requirement in several ways.

The Pismo Clam (*Tivela stultorum*) populations inhabiting Pismo State Beach are a significant economic and recreational as well as a natural resource. Despite heavy clamming activity, the region still supports one of the largest remaining populations of Pismo Clams in the State. Measures designated to mitigate impacts of over-fishing have been established by the California Department of Fish and Game. These measures include a preserve area which is rotated from one portion of the beach to another at ten-year intervals and size and take limitations. It is possible, however, that the clam's continuance as a significant source may be jeopardized by recreational overuse of another type. The clam's intertidal habitat is a popular site for beach "touring" in vehicles. Although no studies have been made which deal with the impact of vehicular beach use on clam populations, in a biological study of Pismo State Beach marine life the following observation was made:

Extensive vehicle traffic on the easily compacted sand prevents many organisms from burrowing in this area. (Source: Benthic Study, Pomeroy, Johnston & Bailey; 1972)

In addition to reducing the clam's available habitat in this manner, extensive vehicular use of the beach's intertidal zone results in destruction of the mollusks themselves, as is evidenced by the large numbers of crushed shells found on the beach at low tides during peak use periods.

The impacts of vehicles on clam habitat areas may be extensive enough to seriously reduce the clam population's ability to resist other, more critical threats to its survival. Chief among these threats is that of the sea otter which has recently migrated into south county beaches. In its migration southward from northern California, the sea otter has depleted clam populations along its path.

The sand dunes which lie along the eastern edge of the State Beach are also potentially subject to recreational overuse. Most of the dunes within Grover Beach boundaries are partially or fully stabilized with chaparral vegetation and with dune grasses planted by the State's Department of Parks and Recreation. Only the dunes immediately adjacent to the beach are still active, although these also are planted with dune grass. The chaparral of the most eastward dunes within City limits is largely indigenous and provides habitat for a variety of wildlife. The most seaward dunes have been planted sparsely with dune grass by the State in order to increase dune stability and control wind erosion. Neither the active nor the stabilized dunes in this area contain any rare or unusual plant species. Vehicular access to these dunes is prohibited in order to preserve the habitat and wind erosion control values of dune vegetation.

Despite the prohibition against vehicular access to these dunes, many four-wheel drive and off-highway vehicles do use them. It is believed that this situation is, in part, due to the difficulty of apprehending vehicle operators who enter the dunes. In addition, officials believe that because the dunes of the Vehicular Recreation Area are not easily accessible, many vehicle operators prefer the convenience of restricted dunes nearer to the main accessways and public campgrounds, even though in using these dunes they run the risk of a citation.

Although many of those who operate vehicles in the restricted dunes are never apprehended, evidence of overuse of these dunes by vehicles is very much apparent in the wide swaths of bare sand and crushed vegetation left by vehicles which enter them from the beach or from Grand Avenue. The destruction of stabilizing vegetation not only reduces wildlife habitat, but contributes to problems of wind eroded sand on Grand Avenue and in Meadow Creek adjacent to the dunes.

While illegal vehicular access to the dunes represents the most critical immediate source of their overuse, it is also possible that pedestrian visitors to this area may, in time, adversely affect it. Frequent use by horseback riders or large groups of walk-in visitors, if present conditions of uncontrolled pedestrian access continue, could result in overuse of this area and the destruction of its vegetation. The California Department of Parks and Recreation, in its 1975 Development and Management Plan for Pismo State Beach, has proposed that the dunes between Grand Avenue in Grover Beach and the Oceano Campground about 3/4 mile to the south be developed as a Dunes Arboretum. Access to such a facility would be controlled and designated trails would be provided. In the State's plan it is also proposed that an interior access road and bicycle trail be constructed along Meadow Creek which lies adjacent to the inland dunes. While the above actions would improve regulation of access to the sensitive dunes, they would attract greater numbers of visitors, increasing the level of use of this area and reducing its value as a wildlife habitat. Current Department policy precludes the development of facilities in sensitive coastal areas.

5.5.2 RECREATIONAL SUPPORT FACILITIES

Public restrooms, picnic area, and a large off-beach parking lot are located at the end of Grand Avenue near the entrance station to the beach. These support facilities were previously

identified as serious needs. Currently, lack of landscaping, however, makes this area not very inviting to visitors.

5.5.3 PUBLIC VISITOR-SERVING AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Pismo State Beach is the only publicly operated recreation area in Grover Beach's portion of the Coastal Zone. The nature of the most popular beach activities in the Grover Beach area - surf-fishing, clamming, and beach touring - is such that many visitors can, at a relatively low cost, provide their own equipment with little difficulty. However, some of the trends projected for recreational beach use, such as an increase in the number of pedestrian beach users and greater emphasis on local recreational beach users and greater emphasis on local recreation opportunities, suggest that a greater demand for inexpensive facilities on and near the beach will arise in the future. The State's Department of Parks and Recreation and the City of Grover Beach will need to cooperate in planning for and providing facilities accessible to all types of beach visitors. In 1997, the City prepared a feasibility study for the development of an accessible pedestrian path over the dunes and is pursuing grant funding for its construction.

A portion of the City's moderate-cost housing stock in the form of an attractively landscaped 60-unit mobilehome park occupies land adjacent to Pismo State Beach and LeSage Golf Course. This privately-owned park, because of its proximity to the beach and public golf course, is suitable for visitor-serving commercial facilities to which the Coastal Act gives priority over residential uses as is indicated in Section 30222 of the Coastal Act. The potential conflict between the need for moderate-cost housing in the Coastal Zone and the Coastal Act's emphasis on visitor-serving facilities nearest the shoreline is discussed under the heading which follows.

5.5.4 PRIVATE VISITOR-SERVING AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Although Pismo State Beach is Grover Beach's most outstanding attraction for both residents and visitors the City does not, like many other beach communities, draw its own character from the nearby shoreline. Recreational and visitor-oriented land uses have received low priority in the community's development even on land nearest to the beach.

The presence of the Southern Pacific Railroad's tracks along the east side of Highway 1 is partially responsible for the lack of emphasis upon local coastal resources in Grover Beach's development. These railroad tracks separate the community from the shoreline, both physically and visually, and in doing so reduce the recreational and visitor-serving potential of most of the privately-owned land nearest the ocean. A positive use of the railroad easement land is the multi-modal transportation facility.

Land adjacent to railroad tracks was traditionally designated as industrial and service-commercial uses and this pattern was followed in Grover Beach. Most of the land nearest the east side of the railroad tracks is designated for industrial uses. While this land particularly north of Grand Avenue is well-sited for visitor-oriented commercial uses, industrial and general commercial developments are already established in the area. Most of these developments are relatively new and have long economic lives ahead of them.

In addition to the industrial land discussed above, the City's portion of the Coastal Zone contains other lands suitable for visitor-serving uses. Most of these lands are located along Grand Avenue east of Highway 1 and along the west side of Highway 1 north of Grand Avenue.

A six-acre site owned by the State Department of Parks and Recreation is most suitable for visitor-serving commercial use.

The west end of Grand Avenue was zoned Coastal Highway Commercial (C-H-C) in 1981, a designation that permits uses which are visitor-oriented and several which are not. The majority of existing uses in this area, while in conformance with the ordinance, are not visitor-serving or recreation-related. This situation indicates a conflict between the City's present zoning designations for these areas and the priority given by the Coastal Act to visitor-serving and recreation-related uses on "suitable" lands.

A conflict of this type is particularly apparent in the Coastal Planned Commercial (C-P-C) District which lies on the west side of Highway 1 north of Grand Avenue. A large portion of this district is occupied by a well-designed, 60-unit mobilehome park which overlooks the adjacent golf course and Pismo State Beach. This type of development is not among the uses permitted by the City's zoning ordinance, nor can it be considered the type of visitor-serving or recreation-related use which is given priority by the Coastal Act. However, it presently provides much-needed, comfortable moderate-cost housing for many of the City's elderly residents.

However, the precedent which the development of the mobilehome park in this area potentially establishes is not acceptable in terms of Coastal Act recreation policies nor in relation to the City's own zoning ordinance designation. Any new use which replaces the mobilehome park or is established in the C-P-C District must be visitor-serving or recreation-related in order to conform to Coastal Act requirements.

5.5.5 RECREATIONAL DEMANDS FOR PUBLIC SERVICES

The Coastal Commission's Local Coastal Program Regulations specify that the Access Component, in compliance with the portions of Section 30254, include "the reservation of public service capacities for the present and projected demands for recreation-oriented uses." The variables which determine this demand and which must be considered in the reservation of sewer, water, circulation capacities for recreation, and total public service capacities of the City is examined in depth in the Public Works Component.

5.6 SUMMARY

A. PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

The Grand Avenue ramp entrance is one of the major access points to Pismo State Beach. At peak use periods the vehicle ramp becomes congested and contributes to traffic congestion farther inland on Grand Avenue and Highway 1. Pedestrians have a separate accessway from the parking lot.

Coastal Act: Section 30210 requires that maximum beach access be provided.

B. SEGREGATION OF VEHICLES AND PEDESTRIANS

Unrestricted integration of vehicles and pedestrian beach users on all parts of the beach represents a potential safety hazard which is acknowledged by both local police and by the

California Department of Parks and Recreation. The closure of the beach north of Grand Avenue to vehicles has enhanced public safety for walk-in visitors.

Coastal Act: Section 30210 requires that access and recreation opportunities be consistent with protection of public safety.

C. OVERUSE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The dunes at the inland edge of the beach are partially stabilized by fragile vegetation which serves both as wildlife habitat and as a means of controlling the movement of sand into adjacent wetlands and nearby City streets. This vegetation has been severely damaged in some areas by increasing numbers of off-highway vehicles which enter and traverse the dunes despite prohibitions posted by the State's Department of Parks and Recreation. An additional potential source of damage may lie in pedestrian use of the dunes. This type of use, while permitted, may in the future do great damage to dune habitats if it is allowed in excess of the dunes' ability to withstand disturbance.

Coastal Act: Section 30210 requires that access and recreation opportunities be consistent with the protection of natural resources from overuse.

D. RECREATIONAL SUPPORT FACILITIES

Public restrooms, picnic area, and parking lot have been constructed at the end of Grand Avenue. Increased landscaping is needed to make the area more inviting to visitors.

Coastal Act: Section 30212.5 requires provision of parking areas or facilities sufficient to mitigate against adverse impacts of crowding or overuse of a single area.

E. PUBLIC RECREATIONAL AND VISITOR-SERVING FACILITIES

There are presently few public, lower-cost visitor-serving and recreational facilities within the City's portion of the Coastal Zone. However, at this time most uses of the beach within Grover Beach limits attract visitors who do not require facilities or who provide their own (e.g. equipment such as clamming forks and fishing rods). The demand for low-cost, visitor-serving and recreational facilities will, however, increase in the near future as the number of visitors using the Grover Beach access increases.

Coastal Act: Section 30213 requires, in part, that lower-cost visitor and recreational facilities be provided where feasible.

F. PRIVATE COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Much of the privately-owned land nearest to the beach and shoreline within Grover Beach is zoned for commercial development. The proximity of this land to the ocean makes it an area well-suited for visitor-serving and recreational uses. Many industrial and service-commercial uses, however, are well-established both north and south of Grand Avenue so that amortization of such uses in favor of visitor-serving developments would necessarily be a long-term process. In addition, the railroad tracks which separate this land from Highway 1 and the beach present problems of aesthetics and of access which would impede recreation-related development.

None of the land zoned for commercial purposes within the City's portion of the Coastal Zone was designated solely for visitor and recreation-oriented uses. Development in the last fifteen years along Grand Avenue near the ocean has been primarily in the form of small general retail business oriented toward residents rather than toward visitors. Only a small amount of developable land remains in this area. However, a six acre site owned by the State Department of Parks and Recreation is well suited for visitor-serving uses.

Coastal Act: Section 30222 requires that the development of visitor-serving commercial recreational facilities be given priority, in "suitable" coastal areas, over all other types of potential development (with the exception of agriculture and coastal-dependent industry).

G. PRIVATE COMMERCIAL VISITOR-SERVING VERSUS RESIDENTIAL USES

A large privately-owned piece of land along the west side of Highway 1 and north of Grand Avenue is designated for Coastal Planned Commercial uses. This beach front property is presently occupied by an attractively landscaped mobilehome park which provides inexpensive housing for a number of residents, many of whom are retired. Although this park lies immediately adjacent to the beach and to a developed public golf course, its residents do not have private access to either of these facilities. It should be noted that 42 of the 60 units are vacation homes.

Coastal Act: Section 30222 requires that on "suitable" lands within the Coastal Zone commercial visitor-serving and recreational uses have priority over "private residential uses".

H. ECOLOGICAL PRESERVE

Within the City's portion of the Coastal Zone, a 5.12 acre Ecological Preserve is located adjacent to the Pismo Lake Ecological Preserve owned by the State's Department of Fish and Game. Within the Preserve only limited passive use for activities such as nature walks and birdwatching are permitted. No parking, access or other visitor-serving facilities are provided. The primary purpose of the Preserve is to provide a natural buffer between development and Pismo Lake and for this reason it has little potential for a true recreation area.

I. RECREATIONAL DEMANDS FOR PUBLIC SERVICES

Several factors affecting trends in recreation and visitor-serving uses will have an impact upon the demands generated by these uses for public services (sewer service, water, circulation facilities). Proposals by the State's Department of Parks and Recreation to provide additional visitor-serving facilities near the ramp will increase the recreation-related annual demand upon the City's total public service capacities in the near future.

An anticipated increase in the number of "off-season" visitors, however, may mitigate the impacts of increasing annual recreational activity. When visitor use of the State Beach and related facilities is more evenly distributed throughout the year, peak use period service demands will be reduced. Average daily demands will increase. These conditions will reduce the level of the peak flow capacities required to serve recreational needs. There is potential for conflict between recreational and residential public service demands if present near-capacity peak demands are not stabilized or reduced in the immediate future.

Coastal Act: Section 30254 of the Coastal Act requires that public services to public and commercial recreation and visitor-serving land uses not be precluded by other development.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

A. MAXIMUM ACCESS

Ensure that maximum public coastal access be provided through:

1. Policies
 - a. No future development shall be permitted which obstructs access to the dunes, beach and shoreline from Highway 1 within the City limits. New development west of Highway 1 shall provide access to the dunes, beach and shoreline if adequate access does not already exist nearby.
 - b. The City, in cooperation with the California Department of Parks and Recreation and other public agencies and private interests, shall utilize all opportunities to provide additional public access except if it is inconsistent with public safety or the protection of fragile coastal resources or if adequate access exists nearby.
 - c. The provision of vehicular and pedestrian access to the beach from Grand Avenue shall be maintained.
2. *Actions*
 - a. *The California Department of Parks and Recreation shall provide off-beach, off-road public parking in the general vicinity of the existing restaurant and the existing golf course. This area should have about 160 public parking spaces.*
 - b. *The boardwalk across the dunes to the hard beach from the parking lot shall be maintained for pedestrians. The boardwalk shall be located in an area away from vegetated dunes and shall be of a raised wood decking and piling type of construction to allow sand movement under the decking.*
 - c. *A special pedestrian ramp in the vicinity north of the existing ramp entrance to the beach at Grand Avenue should be provided with the cooperation of the California Department of Parks and Recreation. This ramp should provide access for the disabled.*

- d. *With the cooperation of the State Department of Parks and Recreation at a future date a pedestrian pier should be constructed perpendicular to the coastline and as an extension of Grand Avenue. Said pedestrian pier should be approximately 25-30 feet wide and of sufficient length to allow fishing beyond the area where the waves break. Said pier shall be so constructed as to allow emergency and maintenance vehicles to pass under to gain access to the pedestrian beach. The proposed pier shall also be properly lighted for public safety. Any such pier shall not detract from coastal views to and along the shoreline from the beach. Structural elements of such a pier shall be open to the greatest degree feasible to minimally obstruct views. Lighting shall be directed to the pier deck and shall be contained within the footprint of the pier to the greatest degree feasible.*
- e. *A boardwalk across the dunes that links the picnic area at the beach to a proposed beach front promenade in Pismo Beach should be provided for pedestrians, only if it minimizes disruption to and does not interfere with the dunes ecosystem and lagoon. The boardwalk shall conform with Americans with Disabilities Act standards for accessibility, maintain a high degree of user visual contact with the beach and ocean, and maintain safety and security on public and private properties.*

B. PROTECTION OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Ensure that public access to the beach and shoreline is consistent with the protection of public safety.

1. Policies

- a. The City, in cooperation with the California Department of Parks and Recreation and other public agencies, shall adopt and enforce public safety regulations and vehicle regulations on the beach.
- b. The City, in cooperation with the California Department of Parks and Recreation and other public agencies, shall take any actions necessary to minimize conflict between vehicular and non-vehicular beach uses and to reduce public safety hazards created by such conflicts.

2. Actions

- a. *The area between Grand Avenue and the City's northerly City limits shall remain designated for pedestrian uses only, except for emergency, law enforcement, and maintenance vehicles. Also excepting the area between Grand Avenue and 400' to the north to provide an area for emergency turnaround if the beach ramp is blocked by disabled vehicles. And furthermore, this 400' may be used by handicapped persons for on-beach parking and subsequent access to the pedestrian beach area. Enforcement of these provisions shall be made through appropriate signage and routine police patrol.*
- b. *Through the cooperation of the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the cities of Pismo Beach and Grover Beach, and the County of San Luis Obispo, a control station should be provided at existing and future public entrances to Pismo State Beach and the Oceano Dunes Recreational Vehicle Area to facilitate control of vehicular beach use and apprehension of violators of State and local laws.*

C. PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Ensure that public access to the beach and shoreline is consistent with the protection of natural resources.

1. Policies
 - a. Public access, vehicular or pedestrian, to the beach and dunes shall be prohibited wherever such access may diminish the ability of a natural resource to provide habitat, control erosion, and serve other important purposes.
 - b. The public shall be adequately informed of regulations and prohibitions designed to protect natural resources from abuse and overuse.
2. *Action: In cooperation with the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the prohibition against vehicular beach access to the dunes shall be more clearly and conspicuously posted at more frequent intervals along the beach and along Grand Avenue at the edges of the dunes.*

D. RECREATIONAL SUPPORT FACILITIES

Ensure that adequate parking and other recreational support facilities are available to the public.

1. Policies
 - a. Public amenities, such as public parking, additional public restrooms, day-use picnic units (20 minimum), and beach fire rings (20 minimum) shall be provided by the State Department of Parks and Recreation prior to or concurrent with the development proposed for the Coastal Planned Commercial area between LeSage Drive and Grand Avenue. The proposed 20 fire rings shall be placed on the pedestrian beach at the eastern edge of the intertidal zone out of the dune area.
 - b. Development in the Coastal Planned Commercial zone adjacent to the environmentally sensitive habitat area which will be sited and designed to prevent impacts which would significantly degrade such areas shall provide additional public parking for beach users. Exact number of spaces designated for public use shall be determined at the time of project review and depend upon project size and feasibility.
2. *Actions*
 - a. *In cooperation with the California Department of Parks and Recreation additional trash receptacles shall be provided and maintained near the cul-de-sac of LeSage Drive and on both sides of Grand Avenue near the ramp entrance. Trash receptacles should also be provided at intervals of 300 feet along the beach itself, particularly north of Grand Avenue. Trash should be collected at least weekly and daily during peak beach use periods.*

- b. *Existing and future sanitation stations shall be well signed in the vicinity of the beach and on all coastal access routes. The provision of the existing public dumping station with sewer services by the San Luis Obispo County Sanitation District should be facilitated to make more hours of station service economically feasible.*
- c. *The State Department of Parks and Recreation shall maintain an entrance facility to the Pismo Beach State Park. Said facility to be located on Grand Avenue right of way. The City shall make this R.O.W. available to the State Parks and Recreation either through easement or abandonment.*
- d. *In cooperation with the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the parking lot and picnic area shall be landscaped with species that are drought tolerant and if feasible, with native species, and a water-conserving irrigation system installed. Landscaping shall be maintained in a healthy, growing condition, shall receive regular pruning, fertilizing, mowing, and trimming, and shall be kept free of weeds and debris. Any damaged, dead, or decaying plant material shall be replaced within thirty days from the date of damage.*

E. PUBLIC VISITOR-SERVING AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Ensure the protection of lower cost visitor and recreational facilities.

1. Policies

- a. Any fees charged in the future in connection with Pismo State Beach facilities within Grover Beach boundaries should be minimal and shall be related directly to the cost of providing specific services to beach users. Fees should not at any time be applied for access to or use of any part of the beach by either pedestrian visitors or vehicles.
- b. Existing public recreational facilities should be preserved. The City in cooperation with the California Department of Parks and Recreation should pursue every opportunity to provide additional lower-cost recreational facilities.

2. Actions

- a. *The area presently occupied by the LeSage Riviera Golf Course shall remain designated for open-space, low intensity public visitor-serving and recreation facilities only.*
- b. *With the cooperation of the California Department of Parks and Recreation, fire rings should be provided at intervals along the beach north of Grand Avenue near the foot of the dunes.*

F. PRIVATE VISITOR-SERVING AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Ensure that private commercial visitor-serving and recreational uses are given priority over private residential, general industrial and general commercial development on lands suitable for visitor-serving, beach-related commercial uses.

1. Policies

- a. The City should ensure that visitors to the Pismo State Beach are provided with easily accessible, private commercial services, particularly those relating to provision of food and lodging in any new development in the Coastal Planned Commercial area west of Highway 1 and in the Coastal Visitor Services area along Grand Avenue east of the railroad tracks. The area west of Highway 1 shall be developed with visitor serving uses including a lodge and conference center~~A resort motel/conference center within Pismo State Beach on the combined 7-1/2 acre state-owned as shown in Figure 3 and the 15 acres of privately-owned land fronting on Highway 1 is strongly suggested by the City.~~ Room per acre density south of Le Sage Drive shall be at a maximum of 20 rooms/acre while the room per acre density north of Le Sage Drive shall be at a maximum of 10 rooms/acre. ~~The area south of Le Sage Drive shall be Phase I while the area north of Le Sage Drive shall be Phase II. Development nodes are encouraged to be located at the north and south ends of the site, with parking and auxiliary buildings between.~~

The visitor serving area west of Highway 1~~proposed facility~~ shall have the following general design requirements:

- (1) A room/acre density of 15 rooms/acre.
- (2) ~~60% 20%~~ of the project will be at a maximum height of 40 feet, and 40% of the project at a maximum height of ~~2830 feet, while the remaining 40%~~ of the project shall be at a maximum height of 20 feet; however, through staggering and siting the project shall be designed to protect the existing view corridors along Grand Avenue and Le Sage Drive and further will create one to three additional view corridors to the golf course and shoreline from Highway 1.
- (3) Access to the proposal shall be from Highway 1, ~~and~~ Le Sage Drive and ~~not from~~ Grand Avenue.
- (4) The entire facility shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts to the environmentally sensitive areas of the intertidal, dunes and Meadow Creek.
- (5) The project shall maintain and where feasible shall enhance the filtration function of Meadow Creek and shall restore habitat values of the creek.
- (6) Conference meeting rooms shall be provided for groups from 20 to 200 persons.
- (7) The project shall have a maximum site coverage of 60%, the remaining 40% shall be in landscaped open areas.
- (8) The project shall have within it both normal restaurant facilities as well as lower-cost eating establishments such as coffee shops and snack bars.
- (9) The project's colors, materials, landscape treatment, and general architectural design shall be compatible and complimentary to the existing natural vegetation and landforms.
- (10) Public parking for day use of the pedestrian beach shall be provided on the project if identified as a significant impact in the Environmental Impact Report prepared for the project.
- (11) All facilities shall be open to the general public; no individual ownership or long term uses of units shall be allowed. Rooms may not be rented to any individual, family, or group for more than 29 days per year nor for more than 14 days between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

- b. The City should ensure that the appearance of private commercial structures within the Coastal Zone contribute to an attractive, beach-oriented, visual theme which enhances the quality of the recreational experience within the Coastal Zone.
- c. As Public Resource Code Section 30213 does require the protection of lower cost visitor serving uses the City designates the undeveloped portion of the Sand and Surf Recreational Vehicle Park located on Highway 1 as the area within the Coastal Zone to provide a replacement facility for the existing Le Sage recreational vehicles park that would be redeveloped as part of the resort motel/conference center.

2. Actions

a. *The City shall establish a new land use designation which specifically provides for those uses which are visitor-serving and recreation-related. Uses which shall be permitted under this designation include the following:*

- (1) *Hotels, motels, restaurants, and cocktail lounges or dancing facilities in connection with restaurants.*
- (2) *Refreshment stands.*
- (3) *Souvenir shops.*
- (4) *Convenience services.*

b. *Land designated for coastal commercial uses shall be subject to special landscaping and design requirements which will provide and protect an attractive visual theme. Height limitations shall be more restrictive than in general commercial areas in order to avoid obstruction of or conflict with ocean views. Landscaping in coastal commercial areas shall occupy a larger portion of building sites than is required in other commercial districts. The use of building materials and architectural designs which are appropriate to highly visible tourist areas shall also be required here. Acceptable modes and materials for developments in coastal commercial areas shall be specified in the City's coastal zoning ordinance.*

c. *The City should designate the following areas for coastal commercial uses:*

- (1) *The land which lies between the west side of Highway 1 and the Meadow Creek drainage channel, and between Grand Avenue and Le Sage Drive.*
- (2) *The strip of land south of Grand Avenue between the railroad easement and Highway 1.*
- (3) *That land presently occupied by the Le Sage Riviera Mobile Home and Recreational Vehicle Park.*
- (4) *That land west of Highway 1 and north of Grand Avenue.*

G. RECREATIONAL DEMAND FOR PUBLIC SERVICES

Ensure that adequate public services are available for recreational and visitor serving, beach-related uses, now and in the future.

Policy: The City shall reserve a percentage of its water, sewer and street capacities for use by beach-related recreation and visitor-oriented developments and land uses.

H. GENERAL

1. Policy: All proposed land use plans or proposals and any subsequent development within the Coastal Zone of Grover Beach must receive approval by the City prior to the implementation. Said land use plans or proposals and any subsequent development shall be consistent with Grover Beach's Local Coastal Program.
2. *Action: The City shall adopt the specific plan (Figure 3) provided herein for the area designated as Coastal Planned Commercial.*

**FIGURE 3
CONCEPTUAL COASTAL COMMERCIAL PLAN**

[Refer to Figure 2.4 in the Draft EIR.](#)

