



Sonoma County Planning Commission STAFF REPORT

FILE: Sonoma County Local Coastal Plan Update (PLP13-0014)
DATE: 26 July 2021
TIME: At or after 1:05 PM
STAFF: Gary Helfrich, Project Planner

A Board of Supervisors hearing on the project will be held at a later date and will be noticed at that time.

SUMMARY

Property Owner: Various

Applicant: County of Sonoma, Permit Sonoma

Address: Various

Supervisory District: District Five

APN: Various

Description: In order to retain Local Land use authority the State requires Sonoma County to develop and maintain a Local Coastal Program to regulate land use, and protect coastal resources in compliance with the Coastal Act. The Revised Public Review Draft - June 2021 of the Local Coastal Plan Update was developed in response to public and agency comments on the Public Review Draft of 2019 and in response to changed conditions along the Sonoma County Coast since the certification of the 2001 Local Coastal Plan. The Local Coastal Plan currently being updated is one part of the Sonoma County three part Local Coastal Program which also includes the Administrative Manual and Coastal Zoning Code (Implementation Plan). The Local Coastal Plan Update does not become effective until certified by the California Coastal Commission.

CEQA Review: The project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as per Section 15265, Adoption of Coastal Plans and Programs. CEQA does not apply to activities and approvals pursuant to the California Coastal Act by any local government, necessary for the preparation and adoption of a local coastal program.

General Plan Land Use: Various

Ordinance Reference: Chapter 26C, CC Coastal Zoning Resource Districts

Zoning: Various, CC (Coastal Combining District)



RECOMMENDATION

The Permit Resource and Management Department (Permit Sonoma) recommends that the Planning Commission recommend the Draft Local Coastal Plan update for adoption by the Board of Supervisors, to be effective after certification by the California Coastal Commission.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this Local Coastal Plan Update is to help guide land use planning and development decisions within Sonoma County’s Coastal Zone in a manner reflective of current community priorities, responsive to present-day conditions, and consistent with the latest California Coastal Commission policy and guidance. This update also reflects policies related to coastal development that were adopted by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors in General Plan 2020. In addition, this Local Coastal Plan Update adds new information and policy in the following areas: climate change and adaptation including sea level rise (2100 planning horizon), protecting of water resources; conserving of coastal ecosystems; preserving agriculture; mitigating hazards and wildfire resiliency, and public access. The Local Coastal Plan update will address these areas while modernizing the format of the document making the plan easier to understand and use. The Local Coastal Plan currently being updated is one part of the Sonoma County three part Local Coastal Program which also includes the Administrative Manual and Coastal Zoning Code (“Implementation Plan” collectively). The Local Coastal Plan Update does not become effective until certified by the California Coastal Commission.

PROJECT AREA AND CONTEXT

Background

Sonoma County has a rich history related to the development and implementation of the Coastal Act as a result of Proposition 20, passed in 1972, wherein Sonoma County had a pivotal role. Sonoma County has had a Local Coastal Plan since the first adoption of the Local Coastal Plan by Board of Supervisors in May 1980. The most recent Local Coastal Plan (Current Plan) was originally certified in 2001.

This Local Coastal Plan update process initiated around the time of the adoption of the Sonoma County General Plan 2020 in 2008. Land Use Program 1: Local Coastal Plan Update adopted with the General Plan by Resolution No. 08-0808 formalized the intent of the Board to update the Plan. The County held three public workshops in spring 2013 as part of the initial plan update process. Three drafts have been circulated for public review and comment to date; the Preliminary Review Draft 2015 was released and workshops were held, the Public Review Draft 2019 circulated and a series of workshops was held into 2020, and recently the Revised Public Review Draft June 2021 was developed in response to public and agency comments on the previous drafts and in response to changed conditions along the Sonoma County Coast since the certification of the 2001 Local Coastal Plan.

Project Location

The Local Coastal Plan boundary is commonly referred to in the Plan as the Coastal Zone and policies within the Plan are only effective within this area. The Coastal Zone is defined in Coastal Act section 30103, and its boundaries were further established through maps adopted by the State Legislature in 1976, at the time of Coastal Act enactment. Per the Coastal Act, the Coastal Zone includes land and water of the State of California, from the Oregon to the Mexico border. The Coastal Zone extends seaward to the State's outer limit of



jurisdiction, including all offshore islands, and inland generally 1,000 yards. However, in significant coastal estuarine, habitat, and recreational areas it extends inland to the first major ridgeline paralleling the sea or five miles from the mean high tide line of the sea, whichever is less, and in developed urban areas the zone generally extends inland less than 1,000 yards. Along Sonoma County’s 55-mile coast, the Coastal Zone extends inland generally between 3,000 and 12,000 feet from the shoreline, except around Duncans Mills, Willow Creek, and Valley Ford, where it extends up to five miles inland along the Russian River estuary and the Estero Americano.

The Planning Area runs the length of the Pacific Coast margin, from the Gualala River to the Estero Americano. The Planning Area has been divided into the following ten SubAreas for ease of mapping:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. The Sea Ranch North | 6. The High Cliffs/Muniz-Jenner |
| 2. The Sea Ranch South | 7. Duncans Mills |
| 3. Stewarts Point/Horseshoe Cove | 8. Pacific View/Willow Creek |
| 4. Salt Point | 9. State Beach/Bodega Bay |
| 5. Timber Cove/Fort Ross | 10. Valley Ford |

Policy Framework

The California Coastal Act (Public Resources Code Section 30000 et seq.; Coastal Act) was passed by the State Legislature in 1976 and became effective on January 1, 1977. The Coastal Act replaced the original Coastal initiative, Proposition 20, passed in 1972. The Coastal Act transferred the responsibility of preparing a Local Coastal Program (consists of a Local Coastal Plan and an Implementation Plan) from the State and Regional Coastal Commissions to each of the 15 counties and 53 cities along the California Coast. Each jurisdiction is typically develops a Local Coastal Plan or equivalent document that covers a 20-year planning period.

In adopting the California Coastal Act, the legislature declared that its basic goals were to:

- Protect, maintain, and where feasible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the Coastal Zone environment and its natural and man-made resources.
- Assure orderly balanced utilization and conservation of Coastal Zone resources taking into account the social and economic needs of the people of the state.
- Maximize public access to and along the Coast and maximize public recreational opportunities in the Coastal Zone consistent with sound resource conservation principles and constitutionally protected rights of private property owners.
- Assure priority for coastal-dependent and coastal-related development over other development on the Coast.
- Encourage State and local initiatives and cooperation in preparing procedures to implement coordinated planning and development for mutually beneficial uses, including educational uses, in the Coastal Zone.

The Coastal Act established a framework for guiding development and preserving sensitive resources in the Coastal Zone. Through its policies, it sets up a land use priority system which gives the highest priority to the preservation and protection of environmentally sensitive habitats and prime agricultural land and timberland.

Certification of a Local Coastal Plan or Program amendments is required before the Plan or policy changes can take effect and the local jurisdiction can implement its land use authority. The California Coastal Commission will



hold public hearings on the certification of the Local Coastal Plan update after the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors hears and adopts the project.

After a Local Coastal Program has been certified by the Coastal Commission, permitting authority over most new development in the Coastal Zone is transferred to the local government, which reviews proposals for new development for conformance with the Local Coastal Program. The Coastal Commission retains permanent coastal permit jurisdiction over development proposed on tidelands, submerged lands, and public trust lands. The Commission also acts on appeals from certain local government coastal permit decisions.

There are significant differences between the State General Plan law and the Coastal Act with respect to how policies are to be read and interpreted. For example, development projects are typically required to be found consistent on balance with an overall or comprehensive reading of the General Plan’s policies. In contrast, the Coastal Act requires that development projects in the Coastal Zone must be found to be consistent with all of the policies and standards of the Local Coastal Program. In the Coastal Zone, the Local Coastal Program supersedes and takes precedence over other local plans, policies, and regulations.

Priority of Land Uses

Consistent with the Coastal Act, the Local Coastal Plan establishes a prioritization of land uses, where lower priority development may not interfere with higher priority uses of land and resources. These land use priorities are unique to the Coastal Zone and are considered in addition to the goals and priorities of the local community.

Priority of Coastal Land Uses

	Undeveloped areas	Developed areas
High ↑	Agriculture (Prime coastal dependent), forestry (productive timberland), coastal dependent public recreation [30213, 30241, 30242, 30243, 30250(a), 30250(b)].	Coastal dependent industry and commerce, commercial fishing, coastal dependent public recreation and special communities [30213, 30234, 30250(a), 30250(b), 302.53-5(e), 30255]
	Water dependent ¹ public recreation [30220, 30221, 30223]	
	Non-coastal ¹ or non-water dependent public recreation [30220, 30221]	
	Visitor-serving ¹ commercial recreation, lower cost [30222, 30213, 30250 (c)]	
↓ Priority of Use	Visitor-serving ¹ commercial recreation, higher cost [30222, 30250 (c)]	



	<i>Undeveloped areas</i>	<i>Developed areas</i>
Low	Low priority development not allowed in most undeveloped areas	Affordable, low, and moderate income residential, general industrial, or commercial development ² [30222, 30250, 30255]
<p>Notes:</p> <p>¹ Recreational uses of the coast that do not require extensive alteration of the natural environment have priority in intertidal and waterfront areas over recreational uses that would result in substantial alteration of the natural environment [30233, 30235, 30255]</p> <p>² Concentration of development policies [30250(a)] limit development in rural areas, except public recreation and visitor-serving uses.</p>		

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The California Coastal Act requires each local government lying, in whole or in part, within the Coastal Zone to prepare a “Local Coastal Program” for that portion of the Coastal Zone within its jurisdiction or else land use authority for local decision making is retained by the Coastal Commission. Local Coastal Programs are basic planning tools used by local governments to guide development in the Coastal Zone, in partnership with the Coastal Commission. Prepared by local government, these collectively govern decisions that determine the short-term and long-term conservation and use of coastal resources. They contain the ground rules for future development and protection of coastal resources. Each Local Coastal Program includes at minimum a “Land Use Plan” and an “Implementation Plan” setting forth measures to implement the plan (such as zoning or ordinances). In Sonoma County the Local Coastal program has three parts, the Local Coastal Plan which is equivalent to the “Land Use Plan” and is currently being updated, and the Coastal Zoning Code and Administrative Manual together serve as the “Implementation Plan” as they are referred to in the Coastal Act. While each Local Coastal Program reflects unique characteristics of individual coastal communities, regional and statewide interests and concerns must also be addressed in conformity with Coastal Act goals and policies.

The Revised Public Review Draft 2021 incorporates recommendations of the 2001 Local Coastal Plan (Current Plan), General Plan 2020, and adds new information and policy in the following areas: climate change and adaptation including sea level rise (2100 planning horizon), protection of water resources; conservation of coastal ecosystems; preservation of agriculture; hazard mitigation and wildfire resiliency, and public access. These are major issue categories which capture local priorities and a change in available information or circumstances impacting Sonoma County since the 2001 Local Coastal Plan was certified.

The Revised Public Review Draft-2021 establishes the goals, objectives, and policies for preservation and future development along our coast. Where additional specificity and outreach are needed to identify future standards, studies, or ordinances the Plan calls for future implementation measures through the established Programs within each element. The implementation of the plan will include modification of the Coastal Zoning Code and Administrative Manual. The anticipated time for completion of the implementation measures vary based on several factors including their complexity, the amount of public input collected through the Plan update process, and the needs for environmental review and outside agency support.



Outreach History

Active participation by stakeholders, including citizens, interest groups, government agencies, and research organizations is essential to creating a Local Coastal Program that will protect coastal resources and guide sustainable land use along the Sonoma Coast. The table below identifies key outreach activities that have occurred since the initiation of this planning effort. Where participant numbers are available they have been included for reference. A complete public outreach history is shown below and summaries of public comments received since publication of the 2019 Local Coastal Plan Public Review Draft can be found in Attachment 5.

Date	Workshop/Event/Milestone
April 25, 2013	Press Release: Local Coastal Plan update kickoff announcement.
May 28, 2013	Workshop: The Sea Ranch Del Mar Center
June 5, 2013	Workshop: Bodega Bay Fire Station Meeting Room
June 8, 2013	Workshop: Jenner Community Club
June 1, 2015	Publication and Press Release: Preliminary Draft Local Coastal Plan
June 7, 2015	Workshop: The Sea Ranch Del Mar Center (36 participants)
July 14, 2015	Workshop: Santa Rosa, Permit Sonoma Hearing Room (45 participants)
July 15, 2015	Workshop: Monte Rio Community Center (10 participants)
July 22, 2015	Workshop: Bodega Bay Fire Station Meeting Room (34 participants)
Sept 14, 2015	Workshop: Timber Cove Fire Station (31 participants)
March 31, 2016	Workshop: Santa Rosa Planning Agency Workshop (No participant list)
Sept 2019	Publication and Press Release: 2019 Public Review Draft
Nov 17, 2019	Workshop: The Sea Ranch, Del Mar Center (50 participants)
Dec 14, 2019	Workshop: Bodega Bay, Fire Station Meeting Room (100 participants)
Jan 7, 2020	Workshop: Monte Rio, Community Center (60 participants)
Jan 15, 2020	Workshop: Timber Cove Inn / Coastal MAC meeting (60 participants)
Jan 30, 2020	Workshop: Santa Rosa, Permit Sonoma Hearing Room
Feb 19, 2020	Presentation: Bodega Bay, Fire Station NOAA Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Association
Nov 10, 2020	Virtual Workshop: Board of Supervisors on 2019 Public Review Draft
Feb 25, 2021:	Virtual Workshop: Climate Change Adaptation presented in partnership with NOAA’s Greater Farallones Coastal Resilience Working Group. (35 participants)
Mar 1, 2021	Virtual Workshop: Housing and Accessory Dwelling Units. (40 participants)
Mar 3, 2021	Virtual Workshop: Wildfire Hazard Mitigation and Resiliency presented in partnership with Fire Safe Sonoma (40 participants)
Mar 5, 2021	Virtual Workshop: Mapping and Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas presented in partnership with Permit Sonoma Natural Resources section (30 participants)
May 25, 2021	Virtual Workshop: Board of Supervisors on topic workshop series



Plan Organization

This Local Coastal Plan is divided into elements, each of which corresponds to a planning theme or resource topic. A summary of each plan element is provided below. The elements are presented in the order of appearance within the Local Coastal Plan.

Land Use Element

The Land Use Element establishes allowed land uses and densities, and presents policies specific to the Coast or particular sub-areas. Policies address outer continental shelf development, new residential and commercial development, affordable housing, and visitor-serving commercial uses. Each Land Use designation corresponds to specific zoning districts in Chapter 26C the Coastal Zoning Code. From the 2001 Local Coastal Plan some Land use designations were renamed to better reflect the intent of the district and correspondence to the appropriate zoning district name.

Land Use Designations	Corresponding Zoning Districts
Open Space (OS)	Planned Community (PC) Rural Residential (RR)
Commercial Fishing (CF)	Commercial Fishing (CF)
Commercial Tourist (CT)	Commercial Tourist (CT)
Commercial Services (CS)	Commercial Services (CS) Community Commercial (C2)
Public Facilities (PF)	Public Facilities (PF)
Rural Residential (RR)	Rural Residential (RR) Agriculture and Residential (AR) Planned Community (PC)
Urban Residential (UR)	Low Density Residential (R1) Medium Density Residential (R2) Planned Community (PC)

Agricultural Resources Element

The Agricultural Resources Element presents guidelines and policies that apply to lands with an Agriculture land use designation. Policies address marketing of agricultural products, stabilization of agricultural use at the edge of urban areas, limitations on intrusion of residential uses, location of agricultural-serving and visitor-serving uses, provision of farmworker housing, streamlining of permit procedures for agricultural uses, and recognition of the aquaculture and horse industries as agricultural uses.



Open Space and Resource Conservation Element

The Open Space and Resource Conservation Element addresses scenic resources/design, biotic resources, soils, timber resources, mineral resources, energy resources, air quality, and commercial fishing and support facilities. This element also contains a Scenic Resources / Design section, which identifies designated Scenic Landscape Units, Vista Points, and Scenic Corridors. Along with Coastal Design Guidelines, this section establishes siting and design guidelines to protect coastal views and to minimize other visual impacts of development.

This element also identifies designated Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHAs), which include Riparian Corridors, and Biotic Habitat Areas, which include Sensitive Natural Communities and Special Status Animal and Plant Occurrences and Habitats. Policies address the protection and preservation of natural resources (including soils, timber resources, mineral resources, energy resources, and air quality) and the protection and improvement of facilities natural resources associated with the commercial fishing industry.

Public Access Element

The California Constitution provides that the public has the right-of-way to navigable waters and right to maximum access of the shoreline, and that development shall not interfere with that right. Recreation and visitor-serving uses over have priority over all other uses except coastal-dependent industry and agriculture.

This element describes in general the public and private parks, trails, and other recreational facilities on the Sonoma County Coast and includes maps showing the locations of these facilities.

The element describes the types of facilities in the Coastal Zone, the methods and priorities for acquisition of facilities, the Public Access Plan, and the allowable uses of public access facilities. This element also contains policies relevant to recreational boating facilities.

Water Resources Element

Water Resources is a new element developed in recognition of the importance of water to the environment, economic stability, agricultural protection, and overall quality of life of Sonoma County Coast residents. Policies address subjects such as surface water, groundwater, water conservation and re-use, public water systems, and water quality. This section reflects the goals of the California Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

Public Safety Element

The Public Safety Element establishes special limitations and procedures for review of development projects located in areas subject to natural hazards, including seismic and other geologic hazards, landslide and erosion on unstable slopes, beach erosion and cliff/bluff stability, flooding, sea level rise, tsunami, and wildland fire. Hazardous materials are also addressed.

Circulation and Transit Element

This element presents plans for the Sonoma County Coast's future highway and transit systems are presented, with emphasis on State Route 1. This element emphasizes an increased role for public transit and other alternative transportation modes and the importance of measures which will allocate existing highway capacity more efficiently during peak travel periods.



Public Facilities and Services Element

The various public facilities and services which may affect the future development of land on the Sonoma County Coast are described in this element, including water, wastewater treatment and disposal, parks and recreation, fire protection, law enforcement, and solid waste management. Policies address the lack of basic services on the Coast, which limits development potential in most areas. Policies also address limitations to emergency medical and other health care services for the Coast’s small population spread over large distances. Policies related to youth, family, and senior services are also included.

Cultural and Historic Resources Element

Cultural and Historic Resources is a new element developed in recognition of the rich cultural history and significant archaeological and paleontological resources, as well as historic structures and sites, contained in the Sonoma County Coastal Zone. This new element introduced with the Revised Public Review Draft 2021 is also intended to implement California Coastal Commission guidance on protection of Tribal cultural resources, and the importance of an effective Tribal consultation process in protecting these resources. This element provides policies for protection and enhancement of Sonoma County cultural and historic resources within the Coastal Zone.

The table below identifies changes in format from the Current Local coastal plan 2001 and the proposed update. The vast majority of the 2001 recommendations were retained and can be found within the newly designated elements.

Correspondence of Previous Local Coastal Plan Organization with Local Coastal Plan Update Elements

Previous Local Coastal Plan Chapter - Section	Local Coastal Plan Update Element(s) (primary Element - bold)
Development - Land Use	Land Use Public Facilities and Services Open Space and Resource Conservation Public Access
Development - Public Services	Public Facilities and Services Water Resources
Development - Transportation	Circulation and Transit
Development - Visual Resources	Open Space and Resource Conservation
Environment - Environmental Hazards	Public Safety Water Resources
Environment - Environmental Resources	Open Space and Resource Conservation
Harbor	Open Space and Resource Conservation Public Access
Historic Resources	Cultural and Historic Resources Element
Recreation	Public Access



Previous Local Coastal Plan Chapter - Section	Local Coastal Plan Update Element(s) (primary Element - bold)
Resources	Open Space and Resource Conservation Agricultural Resources Water Resources Land Use Public Safety

Other Changes since 2019 Pubic Review Draft

Changes from the Public Review Draft 2019 to the Revised Public Review Draft 2021 are described briefly below and in detail through the attached Policy Comparison Tables. A significant theme from early public comment on the 2015 and 2019 Drafts was that the documents were too long and poorly organized which would not allow for ease of use. The Revised Public Review Draft 2021 was restructured to improve readability, minimize its length, and so each Element would be written in consistent voice.

Water Resources Element: Recommended policies that protect groundwater resources have been updated for consistency with the California Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

Circulation Element: Goals, Objectives, and Policies have been revised for compliance with SB 743, which replaces congestion (Level of Service) with vehicle miles of travel as the metric for evaluating traffic impacts. The change also aligns evaluation of transportation-related impacts with state and local goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, policies intended to improve safety of all road users, consistent with the Sonoma County Transportation Authorities “Vision Zero” program.

Noise Element: While General Plans are legally mandated to include a Noise Element, Local Coastal Plans are only required to include policies that regulate development consistent with the provisions of the Coastal Act and for the protection of coastal Resources. Standards found in the General Plan Noise Element are intended to avoid nuisance and protect public health by reducing exposure to noise, but do not provide policy to avoid noise impacts to wildlife. The General Plan Noise standards are applicable in the coastal zone without inclusion in the Local Coastal Plan, and replacing the Noise Element with coastal zone specific policies will improve protection of coastal resources. The General Plan noise standards will remain a baseline standard, but policy recommendation would require new development within or adjacent to Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area to evaluate noise impacts to wildlife or other noise-sensitive coastal resources and identify measures to mitigate these impact. Additional information on this change is located within the corresponding attached Discussion Paper.

Map Changes: The Public Access Map including Marin (partial) and Estero Lane has been revised.

Appendices: The Right to Farm Ordinance and Bike and Ped Plan have been removed as appendices, technical correction to renumber the appendices are proposed prior to adoption.

Relationship to General Plan

The Local Coastal Plan is functionally similar to the General Plan, however it specifically focuses on the protection of coastal resources and sets policy for future coastal Development. The Plan organization reflects the inland General Plan and relevant policies are incorporated into the Local Coastal Plan update where appropriate in the context of the coastal zone and consistency with the Coastal Act.



Plan Terminology

The following are essential terms to navigating the language of the Draft Plan. The 2001 Plan generally relies on “Recommendations” as policy reference however the common planning terminology from the General Plan 2020 has been incorporated into the Draft in order to improve implementation.

Goals: General guidelines that explain what the County seeks to achieve through Local Coastal Plan implementation.

Objectives: Statements that set forth strategies or implementation measures to help attain the stated goals.

Policies: Statements that bind or directly guide the County’s actions and establish the standards of review for determining whether land use and development decisions, zoning changes, or other County actions are consistent with the Local Coastal Plan.

Programs: Ongoing or future actions necessary or potential steps for implementation of the Local Coastal Program; for example, further study and development of plans of ordinances.

Other Initiatives: Non-binding and/or advisory statements of intent, encouragement, or pledges of support for specific endeavors, programs, partnership or outcomes; and which may set guidelines and priorities for County actions.

Focused Discussion Areas

Attached Policy Discussion Papers on the following topics and associated recommendations are provided in detail:

Vacation Rentals: This Policy Discussion Paper addresses the options around the development of a program that will create performance standards for vacation rentals and identify areas where vacation rentals may have an adverse impact on coastal resources. Currently, vacation rentals are unregulated in the coastal zone. The Coastal Commission considers vacation rentals to be a component of public access and requires that land use regulation of vacation rentals occur within the context of the Local Coastal Plan.

Pesticides: This Policy Discussion Paper addresses the recommended option regarding the development of a program that will reduce use of pesticides in the coastal zone, consistent with existing California law and regulations. The introduction of pesticides to the coastal environment has potential short-term as well as cumulative impacts to environmentally sensitive wildlife species, Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas, and water quality. Regulation of pesticides in California is legally complex and this policy option would create an implementation program to explore the possibility of developing policy and standards that limit use of pesticides in locations where the application of such substances would have the potential to significantly degrade coastal resourced.

Fire Fuel Management: This Policy Discussion Paper addresses the much needed options and considerations regarding the development of a program that will expedite permitting for maintaining defensible space around structures and reduce fire fuels consistent with protection of coastal resources. Climate change and a long term policy of fire suppression in forested lands that has led to an accumulation of fuel loads, threatening Sonoma County’s coastal resources and putting coastal communities at high risk of being destroyed by wildfire. Current policy requires each property owner to obtain individual coastal development permit to manage vegetation and



maintain defensible space. This policy option would develop a programmatic response to these risks and streamline the permitting process for fire fuel reduction and management of forest lands in the coastal zone.

Noise Element: This Policy Discussion Paper addresses the need to will reduce duplication of polices and expand policy to include regulation of noise impacts that may have an adverse effect on coastal wildlife. The Local Coastal Plan Noise Element proposed in the previous drafts is essentially identical to the Sonoma County General Plan 2020 Noise Element. The General Plan Noise Element is intended to avoid nuisance and protect public health by reducing exposure to noise. These standard are applicable countywide and would apply in the coastal zone regardless of inclusion in the Local Coastal Plan. The Noise Element policies do not protect wildlife and other natural resources from noise impacts, and this policy option would remove the Noise Element and add policies that will protect wildlife and other natural resources from noise impacts.

ANALYSIS

Coastal Act Consistency

Determining that the Local Coastal Plan is consistent with the Coastal Act is the responsibility of the Coastal Commission and additional changes may occur after adoption to ensure its consistency. Permit Sonoma staff has worked closely with Coastal Commission staff for the last several years when developing the Draft Local Coastal Plan to assure that goals, objectives, policies, programs, and initiatives contained in the 2021 Revised Public Review Draft of the Local Coastal Plan are consistent with provisions of the Coastal Act. The Local Coastal Plan will be improved and revised as it moves through the public hearing process, and staff will continue its collaboration with the Coastal Commission through certification and implementation.

General Plan Consistency

General Plan consistency is not required by the Coastal Act, but priority in development of the Local Coastal Plan is to harmonize Local Coastal Plan policy with the General Plan while providing maximum protection of coastal resources and preserving public access to the ocean. The proposed Project implements General Plan Land Use Element and programs to protect and enhance coastal resources while guiding future development. The Local Coastal Plan is intended to be a standalone policy document that integrates the appropriate General Plan goals, objectives, and policies with those necessary to comply with the California Coastal Act. The Update Project will not create an internal inconsistency in the General Plan, or inhibit the implementation of any other General Plan policies or program.

Zoning (Implementation)

Revision of the Coastal Zoning Ordinance to implement the Local Coastal Plan update will be the next step after the Plan is certified by the Coastal Commission. The future update of the Zoning Code and additional implementation measures will be subject to public outreach and review, planned to begin shortly after certification.

Environmental Analysis

The project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as per Section 15265, Adoption of Coastal Plans and Programs. CEQA does not apply to activities and approvals pursuant to the California Coastal Act by any local government, necessary for the preparation and adoption of a local coastal



program. It should be noted that only development of the local coastal program is statutorily exempt; development projects in the coastal zone and implementation of programs and initiatives identified by the Local Coastal Plan are not exempt and subject to the provisions of CEQA.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

See Attachment 5 for public, agency, and interest group comments

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt a resolution recommending the Board of Supervisors adopt the Local Coastal Plan update consistent with Exhibits A (Draft Plan) and B (Recommended Changes) pending certification by the California Coastal Commission and finding the project exempt from CEQA.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution recommending Local Coastal Plan to the Board of Supervisors
2. Local Coastal Plan Revised Public Review Draft (also Exhibit A to the Resolution)
3. Policy Discussion Papers
4. Policy Comparison Tables
5. Public Comment received