

REVISION OF MAPPED ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE HABITAT AREAS

If there is no obvious mapping error which can be determined from review of aerial photos, the burden of proof is on the applicant to re-define the boundaries of a mapped environmentally sensitive habitat.

To define wetlands, the applicant shall use the State Coastal Commission Criteria for identifying and mapping wetlands and other wet environmentally sensitive habitat areas. (See Attachment L) The Coastal Act defines wetlands as "lands within the coastal zone which may be covered periodically or permanently with shallow water and include saltwater marshes, freshwater marshes, open or closed brackish water marshes, swamps, mudflats and fens.

Riparian areas refer only to riparian vegetation. The geographical extent of a riparian habitat would be where riparian vegetation comprises at least 50% of the ground (shade) cover. Other habitats may be defined from Coastal Plan definitions.

Small drainage ways, usually less than five feet wide, with no evidence of riparian vegetation, are not to be considered riparian corridors. Unless there is a pooled or marshy area, they are probably also not wetlands as defined by the guidelines.

Where, during the course of review of a project, Coastal staff discovers an unmapped environmentally sensitive habitat area, staff shall utilize Coastal Plan habitat definitions and coastal Commission guidelines (for wet environmentally sensitive habitat areas), to define such area. Applicable Coastal Program restrictions would then apply.

Official changes in Open Space Maps may occur when Local Coastal Plan amendments are considered.