



**MINUTES OF THE SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREA
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEATAC)
MEETING OF 6 December 2010**

(Minutes approved electronically as amended on 4 January 2011.
Motion for approval was made by Robb Hamilton and seconded by Dan Cooper.)

PERSONS IN ATTENDANCE:

SEATAC MEMBERS

Dr. Jonathan Baskin
Dan Cooper
Ty Garrison
Robb Hamilton
Michael Long (absent)
Dr. Thomas Scott (absent)
Dr. Cheryl Swift (absent)

REGIONAL PLANNING STAFF

Mark Herwick, (Planner)
Dr. Shirley Imsand (Biologist,
SEATAC coordinator)
Dr. Wesley Colvin (Biologist)
Julie Lowry (Planner)
Andrew Svitek (Planner)

Camp Emerald Bay Boy Scouts of America, R201000774, RCUP 301000068, RENV 201000027

Lee Harrison, BSA	lharrison@bsa-la.org	818-785-8700
Steven Nelson	s.nelson@pcrnet.com	949-753-7001
Aaron Clark	aaron@agd-landuse.com	310-209-8800

SEA Program Revision

Marc Blain	marchblain@bonterraconsulting.com	626-372-7424
Carlene Matchniff	cmatchniff@centennial.com	661-705-4462

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NOTE: SEATAC MEETINGS ARE INFORMAL WORKING SESSIONS. MEMBERS ARE APPOINTED VOLUNTEERS IN AN ADVISORY CAPACITY. MINUTES ARE PREPARED BY PLANNING STAFF FROM NOTES AND TAPE. VISITORS ARE ADVISED TO TAKE PROPER NOTES AND/OR RECORD THE SESSION. ISSUES NOT DISCUSSED BY SEATAC DO NOT IMPLY TACIT APPROVAL. NEW OR CLARIFIED INFORMATION PRESENTED IN SUBSEQUENT SUBMITTALS MAY RAISE NEW ISSUES AND MAY REQUIRE FURTHER ANALYSIS. MINUTES ARE GENERALLY APPROVED AT THE NEXT SEATAC MEETING. DRAFT MINUTES MAY BE REQUESTED BUT ARE SUBJECT TO REVISION.

MINUTES 6 December 2010

AGENDA ITEMS

1. **Minutes** of previous meeting **4 October 2010** were approved as amended by electronic mail. Robb Hamilton moved for approval and Dan Cooper seconded the motion.
2. **Discussion of revision of SEATAC Procedures and Guidelines;** the last revision was 2004.
 - **The current procedures and guidelines version, is posted on the web, but is out of date on many points and needs revision. There was insufficient time to go through the entire document, and the process will be continued at future meetings.**
Web version: http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/case/sea_proc-guide.pdf
 - **Meetings are open for public observation and public comments with respect to the biology of the projects.**
 - **SEATAC suggested that having adjunct members, at-large members, or alternates would be the best solution to the quorum problem.**
 - **Members are no longer appointed for a 3-year term, but as long as they can serve.**
 - **Materials are needed at Regional Planning for mailing 1 month before the meeting of review. This enables the volunteer SEATAC members to have time to review the documents before the meetings.**
 - **A map of vegetation habitats present on the project parcels is essential. Sensitive habitats and any habitat for which the SEA was designated in either criteria or description must be shown. Maps of observation points for sensitive species will be required. Text should reference where in vegetative habitats on the site the sensitive species are possible. Georeferenced GIS data for the vegetation map and locations of observation for sensitive species will be required.**
 - **Topographic map showing project location is still needed. Soils map is needed. Geomorphology with identification of all place names and drainage names used in text is needed. Ridges that divide watersheds should be indicated.**
 - **BCAs and Biota reports will be required to have a preliminary table listing all species of 9-quad CNDDDB analysis and CNPS analysis, including supplements from the Los Angeles County Sensitive Birds lists and the knowledge of experts consulted. The table will have habitat and observational data. eBird will be used to supplement observational data on the avifauna and plan for survey with respect to seasonality. This table will then be extracted to listed and sensitive species that are possible on the project parcels and discussion paragraphs about individual species. This table may be in an appendix.**
 - **Abundance will need to be described for special taxa observed in a manner relative to the particular organism and its populations.**

3. **Project: Emerald Bay, Boy Scouts of America,
Project No. R2010-00774, RCUP 201000068, RENV 201000027, CDP 201000001
APN: 7480-039-010, 7480-039-011
SEA: Santa Catalina Island SEA, Area 17 Johnsons Landing
Applicant: Boy Scouts of America
Biologist: Steve Nelson, PCR**

The proposed project is a revision of the master plan for an existing organized camp of the Boy Scouts of America, located on an embayment on the northeast coast of Santa Catalina Island in an SEA area and close to 6 other SEA areas. Johnsons Landing was the site of a Tongva encampment, became a cattle ranch in the last part of the 1800s, and has been a Camp for the Boy Scouts of America since 1925 with an interlude during WWII for underwater demolition training. The basic objective is to increase PAOT (persons at one time) occupancy from the 375 persons permitted at present, to 950 persons, which is desperately needed to accommodate both existing and future, year-round overnight usage at the camp. Current visitation is 14,000 youth and adults each year. Current accommodations are for 766 persons, and more can be squeezed into camping areas. The existing master plan was approved in 2000, and has only partially been implemented. The revised master plan would be implemented over a 10-25 year period. The revised master plan seeks to maintain, with minimal expansion or disturbance, the existing usage footprint through upgrading facilities. New construction will include:

Western area: storage facility in the far west Beuche Canyon tent area; Facilities Yard extension and bike shop in the Old Corral area at the junction of Beuche with the main unnamed drainage; 10 cabins and 2 restrooms distributed through the main tent and cabin area, 8 expanded campsite areas throughout the main tent and cabin area, an environmental learning center central to the main tent and cabin area, fuel and propane farm at the eastern edge of the main tent and cabin area;

Range area: new facilities building and expanded campsite area;

Northeast Hill: 4 banks of solar photovoltaic panels, 3 cabins, 2 expanded campsite areas; portable storage expansion

Commons area: Administrative building; 4 expanded campsite areas; SCUBA building, canopy pavilion, expanded dining and kitchen building;

Southeastern Hill: 10 staff housing buildings (5 previously permitted), restroom building (previously permitted), Lido deck, Hill canopy pavilion, 9 cabins, restroom and propane farm.

General: New and remodeled bathrooms will accommodate males, females, youths, and adults. The plan will reduce the Camp's water and energy consumption with the addition of wind and/or solar power and water saving devices and a desalination system, consolidate facility maintenance and supplies areas, and provide for shade structures. Flood control using gabions to leave natural streambed is proposed. There is a question of determination of riparian area buffers for compliance with the Santa Catalina Island Specific Plan.

SEA RESOURCE DESCRIPTION: Johnsons Landing (Santa Catalina Island SEA Area No. 17) is located in the eastern canyons and ridges of Silver Peak on the northeast seashore at Emerald Cove. Although this area was badly damaged by goats, there is recovery, and the camp area includes a number of special interest island endemic species on the sea bluffs, in the coastal sage chaparral, and in the island succulent shrub habitats, including *Arctostaphylos catalinae*, *Ceanothus arboreus*, *Cercocarpus betuloides* var. *blancheae*, *Dendromecon harfordii*, *Galvesia speciosa*, *Lavatera assurgentifolia* ssp. *glabra*, *Lyonothamnus floribundus* ssp. *floribundus*, *Prunus ilicifolia* ssp. *lyonii*, *Quercus pacifica*, *Rhamnus pirifolia*, *Ribes viburnifolium* and *Scrophularia villosa*. Other species of interest in the SEA include *Xylococcus bicolor*.

Action Requested: Review of the Supplement to Biological Constraints Analysis and Biota Report. This project has been previously reviewed under Project No. **99-038** at previous SEATAC meetings on 13 September 1999, 7 February 2000, and as **R2010-00774** on 23 August 2010.

Previous minutes of R201000774 are available at: <http://planning.lacounty.gov/agenda/seatac/>

Applicant's remarks:

- The solar panels, desalination, and waste water recycling (into use such as for toilets) are parts of the plan which are proposed but not detailed and may not be permitted under current legislation. These are longer-term objectives.
- The current 375 limit on PAOT resulted from a misunderstanding during a telephone inquiry from County. This 375 was the number of persons at that time in the camp, and not the camp capacity based on parcel size and camp facilities. Other Island camps with less land and facilities have larger mandated PAOT.

- The watershed is approximately 640 acres for the stream that runs through the Camp. The Catalina Island Plan specified the 100-foot buffer. The previous plan of using gabions (which last only 20 years) for stream control has been changed to cross-stream, pre-formed vertical elements recommended by Gerhard Bombe of Orange County Parks. Rip-rap will be used to support the check dams on the downstream side. The entire dam structure should silt in and provide riparian areas in addition to flood control for the camp.
- Utility corridor will be 20 feet wide.

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<http://planning.lacounty.gov/agenda/seatac/>

- **SEATAC requested an update of table of sensitive species to include a current 9-quad analysis from both CNDDDB and CNPS. Possible species on the Los Angeles County Sensitive Bird List should be included. eBIRD should be used to update observed avifauna. Evaluation of observed and possible should be based on habitats on-site.**
- **SEATAC requested maps of location for sensitive species.**
- **SEATAC mentioned that the utilities could possibly go underground to avoid surface impact in the 100-foot buffer zone and ESHA that should be along and in the creek.**
- **SEATAC states that the EIR should state compelling reasons for increase of PAOT from 375 to 950, and demonstrate no significant impact on biology. SEATAC would like to see this biological impact justified.** Applicant states that this is in the burden of proof with the Dept. of Regional Planning application for permits.
- **SEATAC needs to see a hydrological report detailing how the check dams are to be arranged and what the expected sediment regime will be compared to what exists now. The 100-foot spacing of dams may be too close for what is really needed, which should minimally impact the natural course. SEATAC recommends maintaining the stream hydrology very close to what is natural. Soil cement should be considered. SEATAC listed some known hydrologists including Hasan Nouri of Orange County and Lewis Engineering of Sierra Madre, Los Angeles County.**
- **The natural vegetative habitat along the stream should also be considered as a goal of the stream plan, if that can be facilitated. The Channel Islands tend to have reduced riparian areas or special vegetation areas in the flood plains such as island cherry woodland.**
- **SEATAC stated that the chief concern for the marine environment is sediment from the creek impacting the nearshore algae and habitat of the nearshore marine community. This should be discussed in the Biota Report supplement.**
- **SEATAC found many non-island plants and even some invasive plants in the landscape plans. SEATAC recommended that proposed landscape plans be redone to include only island natives, and that care should be taken to specify only island subspecies and plants propagated from island populations. For example, *Eschscholzia californica* var. *peninsularis* listed by Thorne's paper indicates an island population (variety name not current). [Thorne, R.F. 1967. A flora of Santa Catalina Island, California. ALISO. 6, 3: 1-77. 1969. Supplement. ALISO 7(1): 73-83.]**
- **SEATAC recommended locating the facilities yard in the alternative of the gun range space, and reducing the footprint in the area labeled "ruderal" that has tent platforms west of Beuche Creek. This area is actually a mix of island native plants, landscape, and ruderal, could be considered "ESHA" by the County of Los Angeles. Applicant mentioned this area does have a cabin constructed of 1960s donated aerospace materials which the camp would like to retain.**
- **SEATAC wants to see a letter from the County Fire Department defining what fuel modification requirements will be. These should be what is shown on maps for the project.**

4. Review of Significant Ecological Area (SEA) Program

Discussion leaders: Julie Lowry and Mark Herwick, staff of Department of Regional Planning, General Plan revision.

Ms. Lowry gave a summary of the panel of 9 experts convened on 16 November 2010 to evaluate the proposed SEA Program and the proposed SEA boundaries. The experts were asked to evaluate the boundaries based on the SEA criteria and overarching Theory of Connectivity to determine if the boundaries adequately represented the County's biodiversity and the ecological systems that support the biotic resources. Panel experts were also asked to make subtractions of areas they knew did not fit the SEA criteria. No areas were deleted. Although additions to the proposed boundaries were not likely, experts were asked to document resources within and outside the boundaries to further inform the process. Additions were suggested in a few areas.

The experts were Steve Nelson, PCR; Dr. Gary Wallace, USFWS; Kimball Garrett, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History; Dr. Daryl Koutnik, Impact Sciences; David Magney, David Magney Environmental Consulting; Kristeen Penrod, Science & Collaboration for Connected Wildlands; Dr. Seth Riley, National Parks Service; Marc Blain, BonTerra Consulting; and Greg McGowan, Arcadis.

- S.Riley pointed out a number of areas where **mountain lions** roam in Los Angeles County (Verdugo Mtns., near I-405, and CA-101, for example) and suggested connective areas be designated, where they did not currently exist.

- K.Garrett stated that low grass and forb cover for **raptor foraging** was not adequately represented in the study. The southern part of Los Angeles County has severe loss of this habitat, and the northern part of the County does not have enough on the Valley floor; therefore, the SEAs in the northern part of the County should include additional agricultural areas as ETAs for raptor foraging.

- **CHOKES POINTS:** The expert panel recommended identifying "choke point" areas within the SEAs and having special biological review for these points, even for a single family residence.

SEATAC stated further that design of single family residences can majorly change the permeability of a choke point. A choke point is a constricted natural area through which wildlife and plants must pass to maintain populations and genetic diversity. There were some suggestions of mechanical identification, but ultimately it was recommended that subjective inspection by a biologist would be best and most efficient.

Ms Lowry briefed SEATAC on the four proposed SEAs where the boundaries are still being evaluated as part of the Update.

- **ANTELOPE VALLEY SEA:** The experts recommended that FEMA floodplain data, updated in 2009, be used to delineate SEA lines in the Little and Big Rock Creek areas of the Antelope Valley. These areas encompass some agricultural lands and are a good indicator of water influence and sheet flow onto the dry lake beds on Edwards Air Force Base.

SEATAC indicated using the FEMA flood zones is a good idea.

- **SANTA CLARA RIVER SEA:** An evaluation of the Newhall Ranch area was recommended as part of the SEA program for consistency. Two of the endangered San Fernando Valley Spineflower populations to be preserved by the Newhall Ranch Specific Plan are already included in the proposed SEA. Numerous special interest populations which will be impacted are not preserved.

SEATAC agreed with this recommendation stating that it is the only known locality in the world for the endangered Spineflower. All existing populations of the San Fernando Valley Spineflower should be in an SEA. Not only the spineflower, but all special interest populations known on the Ranch should be in an SEA. Among the many special interest species, it has important populations of unarmored threespine stickleback (endangered fish), mariposa lilies, important nesting areas for endangered birds, populations of snails known only from the area, several populations of plants that could be new species. It is an important area for animal migration and connectivity. It is a very important area to try to capture in special review of biology, and for consistency of the SEA program.

- **SANTA CLARA RIVER SEA:** Golden Oaks Ranch has requested the filming area within their CUP along Hyle Creek be excluded from the SEA of the Santa Clara River as they daily have an average of 3 film crews working on-site. **SEATAC agreed that this exclusion seems to be reasonable and consistent with SEA criteria because the site is in constant development, turning over for various sets.**

- **SANTA SUSANA SEA:** SEATAC confirmed reports of southern spotted owls in the Bee Canyon of the northern slopes of the Santa Susanas and stated that they are in the oak woodlands from this area extending east to the oak woodlands of the northern slopes of the San Gabriels in the Placerita Canyon area.

- **SAN ANDREAS SEA:** The Centennial project applicant has requested that their project impact area be excluded from SEA designation and that only original SEA boundaries be retained. They have submitted biological data to the County as part of the EIR process. Frank Hovore, a recognized authority on Los Angeles County (LACo) biology, did contract work for Centennial in the 1990s. When Mr. Hovore worked on the proposed SEA boundaries, he recommended that the west side of the Aqueduct branch to Los Angeles be included in the SEA, but did not include the east side. Steven Nelson, the County's SEA consultant, visited the Centennial property this fall and remarked that he saw very few small mammal burrows on the east side of the aqueduct, which indicates that the grassland may not be an intact community.

SEATAC conducted a site visit to the property two times. They state that they saw a number of rattlesnakes, which does indicate the presence of rodents needed for rattlesnake forage, and they believe the grassland is largely intact and reasonably contiguous with observations on the periphery. The area is well-known as a raptor area, and birdwatchers make frequent visits to Quail Lake and the public periphery of Centennial to capture raptor sightings in this forb field of unique scale. Perhaps adjacent agricultural fields should be ETA area. The area is very important to LACo in that re-creation of this expanse of forb field is not possible, and scale does influence which raptors are seen. Presence of raptors also indicates presence of rodents needed for raptor forage. The meadow area along the north side of CA-138 definitely meets the SEA criteria and should be part of the SEA. A 2008 biota report prepared by BonTerra Consulting for the Centennial project identified as a "valuable foraging resource area" the wet meadows and drainage area immediately north of State Route 138 and east of the aqueduct; a 2002 report prepared by Impact Sciences reported tracks of mountain lion, bobcat, black bear, and numerous small mammal species in this area. SEATAC observed Pronghorn on the Centennial property on one of the visits and states that reintroduction of Pronghorn should be sustained as part of the heritage of Los Angeles County. This is the only area in LACo where Pronghorn may still be seen. SEATAC states that the entire Centennial area is connective and a junction area for a number of biogeographic provinces, very important to wildlife movement. The area east of the aqueduct is a geographic continuum of the Tehachapi foothills and SEATAC states the area is probably at least as valuable to designate "SEA" as the Little Rock Creek-Big Rock Creek areas further east in the Antelope Valley. Drawing the boundary at the aqueduct seems like an artificial boundary, and this should be supported by data that demonstrate a difference in the forb field habitat on the two sides. Otherwise, for consistency, the whole area should be included within the proposed SEA.

- **SAN ANDREAS SEA** The expert panel recommended including additional grassland and agricultural land around Fairmont Butte and to the southwest as raptor and tricolored blackbird forage area.

SEATAC states this is an exceptional area of wildflower fields and native grassland, particularly between the Fairmont and Antelope Buttes and Liebre Mountain. The area has agricultural fields ideal for foraging of birds, reptiles, and perhaps mammals. As much of this area as reasonably meets the SEA criteria should be included.

5. Public comment pursuant to Section 54954.3 of the Government Code.

No public comments were made.