



**MINUTES OF THE SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREA
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEATAC)
MEETING OF 7 February 2011**

(Minutes approved as amended on 7 March 2011.)

PERSONS IN ATTENDANCE:

SEATAC MEMBERS

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

REGIONAL PLANNING STAFF

Adam Thurtell, (Planner)
Dr. Shirley Imsand (Biologist,
SEATAC coordinator)
Dr. Wesley Colvin (Biologist)
Mark Child (Planner)

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

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NextEra Meteorological Tower, R2010-01539, APN 3240-011-003

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2. **Bat Survey procedure discussion, p.2,**
3. **Camp Emerald Bay, Boy Scouts of America, R201000774, RCUP 301000068, RENV 201000027, p.3**
4. **NextEra Meteorological Tower, R2010-01539, APN 3240-011-003, p.5**
5. **Appendix A: Bat Survey Guidelines, p. 8**

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
7 February 2011**

OFF-AGENDA ITEMS

1. Minutes of previous meeting **6 December 2011** were approved as amended by electronic mail on 4 January 2011. Robb Hamilton moved for approval and Dan Cooper seconded the motion.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. **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 - **The current procedures and guidelines version, is posted on the web, but is out of date on many points and needs revision.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
 - **The reports and minutes from the SEATAC review shall be considered by the planner and the Regional Planning Commission in making decisions about permitting the project.**
 - **SEATAC suggested that having adjunct members, at-large members, or alternates would be the best solution to the quorum problem. These additional members will have completed the same application process as the SEATAC members and be appointed by the Planning Director.**
 - **The Planning Director shall be empowered to remove biologists from the Certified List due to ethical breaches of trust in preparation of biological reports.**
 - **Applicants seeking approval of the reports are required to appear before SEATAC the minimum number of meetings needed for their reports to be approved or three times for each project.**
 - **“Buffer” is no longer used in SEA designation. Essential areas on the periphery of SEAs are included in the SEA designation if they meet the SEA criteria. For areas that are essential for connectivity that do not meet the criteria, a designation of ETA (Ecological Transition Area) is used.**
 - **Previously submitted biota reports from adjacent areas should be used as reference material for current projects under consideration, but are no longer acceptable in lieu of a current report for the specific project.**
2. **Bat Survey guidelines for alternative energy, other projects with apparatus projecting into air, and any project for which bat impact is an issue. (See Bat Survey Guidelines in Appendix A.)**
 - **Because bats and bat migration are so poorly known, SEATAC recommends listing suggested sources for material to produce the list of possible bats. Use information from existing studies, EIRs of nearby projects, Western Bat Working Group, California Department of Fish and Game Guidelines and surveys, Bureau of Land Management Guidelines and surveys, USDA Forest Service Guidelines and surveys.**
 - **Literature review will be part of BCA. Need for surveys and collection of observational data will be determined through consultations with the project biologist and recommendations of SEATAC.**

A member of the public mentioned that some of the newest bat recording devices (eg. Pandion) analyze recorded bat sounds to the point of determining species.

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 or prefabricated elements for check dams 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 ridgeline 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, and the newly provided Hydrology 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, and 6 December 2010.

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

Applicant's presentation: Exhibits of proposed reinforcement of stream channel walls using County Public Works standard double-wall design with 5-ft. face of wire revetment and interior fill of rocks and rubble was described. Excavated wall dirt will be used to fill upland area between wall and excavated stream bank and be vegetated. The plan does not show the reinforced western wall of Beuche Creek next to the western camping area, but this is also planned. About 600 ft. of lining is proposed. For fuel modification impact, the Fire Department will be working with the Camp to determine flexible boundaries on the fuel modification areas.

SEATAC Comments and Recommendations

- **SEATAC stated that the effect of the walls could be to remove the sediment component of the creek drainage (removing sediment that perpetuates the beach), and further that there may be a tendency to scour the bottom of the creek increasing downward erosion.**

Applicant stated that there may be intermittent use of riprap (approximately 1 foot diameter maximum) to prevent channel deepening and scour, though it is not a definitive part of the plan at this time. Such riprap would collect sediment, which might create a problem for the flood control system.

- **SEATAC stated that for aesthetic considerations, perpetuation of the beach, and perpetuation of the offshore influences, the creek should probably be left as is, but to protect the camp facilities there needs to be some form of creek channelization. The proposed solution is the probable best solution to the problem.**

- **There needs to be mitigation of construction impacts and disruption of stream banks.**

Applicant states that the proposed system will allow re-vegetation of the stream banks, which was not possible under the existing stream bank conditions.

- **Plans should show quantitatively the amount of area that will be vegetated under the proposed scheme as compared to the amount of area that can be vegetated under the existing scheme.**

- **The plans need to include a plant palette of strictly island natives from the Santa Catalina Island Conservancy list. (No plants should come from off-Island stock nor be non-native to the Island). Some landscape diagrams should be included in plans, which specify temporary irrigation for establishment. Submit these plans to County biologist for approval.**

- **There is some concern for riprap impeding the use of the stream channel by Island fox transiting between the shore and upland natural areas.**

ACTION TAKEN: SEATAC, on a vote of four out of four members present, recommends that the project be deemed compatible with the SEA by incorporating the recommended mitigations. No further review by SEATAC is required.

4. NextEra Meteorological Tower, CEQA-exempt project to study feasibility of wind and solar alternative energy installations. (BCA is example reference)

Project R2010-01539, APN 3240-011-003: Height 60 m, Tower diam. 203 mm, 4-Guy Wire Radius 70.7 m, Base 3 X 3 ft., Anchors 5-8 ft. deep

SEA RESOURCE DESCRIPTION: SEA #58 – Portal Ridge-Liebre Mountain:

The SEA is in close proximity to the Mojave Desert, the San Gabriel Mountains, and the Tehachapi Foothills. This position, at the intersection of three major geographical regions has produced the most diverse and unique flora found in the County. The area contains ten distinct plant communities, representing the transition between desert, foothill, and montane environments. The diversity of the area is further enhanced by the presence of many northern species, some of which are rare in the County, reaching their southern limit here. An example is foothill woodland, an uncommon plant community more common in central and northern California that occurs in this area. It is represented often by *Quercus douglasii*, *Q.lobata*, and gray pine (*Pinus sabiniana*). On the lower slopes are southern oak woodland, valley grassland, and riparian woodland. Despite the commonness of most of the plant communities present, this area is very valuable because it possesses such a concentrated diversity of vegetation types. The SEA is relatively large, and the precise locations of its most unique resources are not known. Foothill woodland habitat should be set apart when encountered, and attention must be given to connectivity with the other habitats.

ACTION REQUESTED: SEATAC recommendations for data for SEATAC BCA

Compiler's note: After the meeting, it was determined that the project is NOT exempt categorically from CEQA review because of the exception of its location in an SEA, an environmentally sensitive area [PRC §15300.2(a)]. Project will be subject to a standard CEQA review.

SEATAC Comments and Recommendations

- SEATAC decided to concentrate on the met tower project itself, and did not review the prospectus map of the larger project to be based on the met tower data.
- The site is close to the Desert Pines County Sanctuary. SEATAC member Michael Long brought biological data he has collected at the Desert Pines County Sanctuary and gave it to the applicant's biologists and to the interested SEATAC members. 23 sensitive species were identified at this nearby site.
- A map of the local region locating the project site with respect to local roads and public open space is needed. [Scale should show the (labeled) Desert Pines County Sanctuary.]
- Eriodictyon californicum* is known from Santa Barbara and north, so this identification should be checked. It is not totally unlikely given the mixing of regional influences in the Portal Ridge-Liebre Mountain SEA. *E. crassifolium* is an expected species. There is a discrepancy between the text and the floristic list.
- It would be preferable to give all measurements in one system. Usually for SEATAC, since the reports are public record, the English system of feet, acres, etc. is used.
- Maps are needed for observations of all sensitive species, and in addition, unusual occurrences that indicate species are at the edge of their ranges. Mixing of species at the edge of their ranges is a noted criterion for designation in this particular SEA. For example, the Coast Horned Lizards and Blue Oaks should be mapped. Blue Oaks in Los Angeles County are rare, the result of a terrane (land block) that was reoriented along the San Andreas Fault and then moved relatively to the south of the main distribution of the Blue Oaks.
- Attention should be given to State requirements for recognition and mitigation for oak woodlands. An Oak Woodland Management Plan is being prepared for Los Angeles County which may be soon adopted. It will guide policy on oak woodlands until adoption of ordinances for oak woodlands.
- For the larger project, impacts of equipment moving over roadways, and roadway construction must be addressed. The met tower project probably does not have significant impact in these respects.
- Burrowing owls should be surveyed according to protocol survey times and seasons (winter and summer), as they are likely in the habitat of the project.
- The literature should be more extensive. SEATAC recommends consulting a paper on the flora of the mountains in the vicinity, which can be purchased at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden:
BOYD, STEVEN. 1997. Vascular flora of the Liebre Mountains, Western Transverse Ranges, California. Herbarium, Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, Claremont, CA 91711
- p.8 The stated scale of 1 inch = 200 meters seems to not apply to the maps, and may be a typographical error.
- p.11 ¶3 Reword: "The proposed project site and its parcel are within the boundaries of the Portal Ridge-Liebre Mountain SEA."
- p.13 The guywire installation radius is shown as 164 feet in the figure, and this does not accord with the listing of 232 feet on p.12. It is important to know what will be used on the project to judge impact.
- p.16 ¶SEATAC questioned the term "heavy agriculture."

Coordinator's note: This zoning term refers to agriculture using large earth-moving, construction, and harvesting equipment and certain uses such as livestock in acreages larger than 1 acre and oil extraction.

- p.20 ¶3,5 needs acreage for the vegetation communities (apparently omitted by error) for 500 ft. circle around the site of the tower.
- p.20 ¶2.7.1 needs reexamination of habitat called “non-native grassland (Cheatgrass – 42.020.01)”. The species list is impressive for the number of native species (30 natives out of 34 total), which suggests something other than “non-native grassland.” The association with numerous species of showy wildflowers points to the possibility that it is actually a native forb field with included grasses or a forb field with some intrusion of nonnative grassland. With appropriate springtime survey, it may prove to be a wildflower field.
- p.20 The description of woody plants within the area suggests that part of the area might be a shrubland or tree stand. Needs more detail to make clear what the area is like, perhaps some photographs.
- p.21 ¶2 There is a discrepancy of 4 non-native species listed in the text and 5 nonnative species in the plant list.
- P.21 ¶4 Amphibians has an overstatement of “none are expected to occur as resident species.” On a seasonal basis (spring) there well could be species such as *Ensatina* sp. using the site, as they are recorded nearby. *Bufo boreas* is a possibility, even without nearby standing water. Western spadefoot toads (*Spea hammondi*) should not be ruled out since they use upland areas where there is seasonally ponded water, as could occur in the drainages on the parcel.
- The parcel main watercourse was visited by County and project biologists in January, had running water with water striders, and looked botanically diverse. It had several species of oaks, willows, cottonwoods, and a buckeye pod was found in the stream. Michael Long commented that the Desert Pines Sanctuary has an extremely large buckeye (*Aesculus californica*) in the southwest corner, that could well have originated from seed from the project parcel. The drainages on the project parcel should be more thoroughly surveyed for future reports.
- Raptor use of the project area should be acknowledged, perhaps using eBIRD for sightings. Prairie falcons were suggested as a raptor that could use the project area for foraging. The BCA should mention the project as in a known migration corridor for a number of raptors and design to survey for them during appropriate seasons.
- Phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*) were seen and SEATAC advises to look for breeding in the area. Western meadowlark, vesper sparrow, Scott's oriole, mountain plover, loggerhead shrike, mountain bluebird should also be checked.
- The tabulation of sensitive species is incomplete. It needs to include both the San Gabriel Mountains in the vicinity and the western Mojave Desert in the vicinity. Start with a recent download of the 9-quad CNDDDB (both verified and unverified) and 9-quad CNPS lists. Species should be added known for the area and habitats of the project by local experts. Species should be added from the County lists of sensitive bird species:
<http://losangelesaudubon.org/images/stories/pdf/vol.%2075%20no.%2003%20january%20february%202009,%20color%20web%20version.pdf>
- Observational data from eBIRD should augment observations from site visits.
- The complete list should be in an appendix, and the sensitive species possible in the habitats of the project should be extracted to the main narrative of “Characteristics of the site.”
- The bat potential species list needs expansion to include all possible bats, including those known south and north of the project area that could migrate through.
- Bat detectors on the towers should be installed as soon as possible to collect migratory data.
- Badgers should be listed as possible on the site. They are quite mobile, known from the area, and use a variety of different habitats. Any site with small mammals is potential badger foraging habitat.
- The Coast (Blainville's) horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) should appear in the sensitive species table as they were observed on the roads, and breeding could be possible in any loose soil. Four lizards seen on one day suggests there is a breeding population there somewhere.
- Guy wires are multiple. There are four ground attachment linear areas, but there will be a lot of wires. Are there bird avoidance devices planned for these wires? The project should thoroughly review documents about bird and bat mortality due to such wire complexes and documents that tested the effectiveness of avoidance devices.
- SEATAC states that for the Portal Ridge-Liebre Mountain SEA, wildlife movement along the San Andreas Fault Zone is a primary reason for designation of the area for SEATAC review. The SEA with its mosaic of habitats and connectivity is very important to the biodiversity of Los Angeles County. The conclusion section should deal directly with the project as it relates and as it could impact wildlife movement and other properties of the SEA. Conclusion should cover possible impacts to sensitive species and habitat by the project and design for future determination of what those sensitive resources are. There should be a

presentation of the regulatory environment and constraints on the site due to these legal strictures. Criteria and description of important aspects of the SEAs are found at:

<http://planning.lacounty.gov/view/sea-existing>

- Design for future study should be spelled out in the conclusion: include spring wildlife survey, vertebrate survey, migratory bird survey, winter raptor survey, year-long bat acoustic survey. Prairie Falcons and golden eagles could be seen year round. Swainson's Hawk would migrate through during a few days in April and May. Beware of easy survey techniques that may not be appropriate, for example, point counts might not pick up foraging golden eagles or migrating raptors. The objective for BCA is a list of all potential biological uses of the site and design must include all habitats and be done at appropriate times of day and seasons for all possible species. Design should show a regional consciousness and attention to SEA criteria.
 - Use of previous surveys is encouraged. Reference personnel could be LA County Museum of Natural History, Kimball Garrett of Ornithological Division, and Scott Harris of California Department of Fish and Game. Centennial project reports made to SEATAC would also be good sources of survey information.
 - SEATAC agreed to do review of an addendum for Biological Constraints Analysis within 2 weeks of the next SEATAC meeting on 7 March.
- Applicant would like a recommendation for MND or EIR at next meeting.
- SEATAC recommended beginning to think about mitigations that will be needed and evaluating them for effectiveness. Monitoring after construction is important to plan, so that pre-construction monitoring is comparable.

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

No public comments were made.

BAT SURVEY, Los Angeles County, for projects for which bat impacts are an issue, such as those with towers and wind turbines

Literature Review (for BCA):

(1) List of all bats potentially occurring on the site at any time. Those found north and south but unknown in LA County could possibly migrate through LA County. Include these. Use Peterson Guide and Jameson and Peeters for data and maps. In addition use existing studies and EIRs, information from Western Bat Working Group, mine surveys, guidelines and surveys by California Dept. of Fish & Game, Bureau of Land Management, Angeles National Forest Service, California Energy Commission, Fish and Wildlife Service, etc. Note that any species possibly present is at risk, but migrants are most affected by wind turbines. For example, Southern Long-nosed Bat *Leptonycteris curasoae* occurs in San Diego and San Bernardino Counties, on two sides of Los Angeles County, but is unknown from LA County. Nevertheless, if habitat is right or the bat species could pass through during migration, it should be included. There could be some bats unknown from California that should be included on the list.

(2) Tabulate literature for all bats potentially occurring on the site at any time.

- Species
- Distribution – geographic
- Distribution – local habitat
- Roosting behavior
- Migration pattern – season, height, other details
 - State “unknown” where there is little data
 - Include local seasonal migrants
- Hibernation
- Frequencies of emitted sounds
- Observed/ possible/ unlikely and why

(3) Survey design may be augmented with information from

http://www.wbwg.org/speciesinfo/survey_matrix/recommended_survey_methods.pdf

Plan to do pre-construction surveys and post-construction surveys in a similar way to evaluate population changes with construction. It is extremely important to do **both pre-construction and post-construction surveys** that are comparable to assess bat mortality from the constructed project, and ground mortality surveys should be included. These data can be used in adaptive management to specify best operational modes for wind turbines to conserve bats and birds. Due to variability between years, at least 2 years of data pre-construction and 2 years of data post-construction are the best plan.

Surveys and observational data (need is to be determined through consultation with project biologist and by recommendation of SEATAC and/or County biologist):

- (4) **Acoustic surveys by long-term recording devices shall be done pre- and post-construction.** Seasonally appropriate survey for location. Multiple years would be good. Deploy at varying heights on temporary towers in areas where survey may also be done post-construction. 1.5 m is probably too low a height to sample many bats, and records will be confounded with near-ground noise such as vegetation movement and insects—most bats fly higher. It is really important to place sensors within the anticipated height of impact, for example, ranges of wind turbine propeller sweep, 50-60 m.
- Deploy during nursery period
 - Deploy during migration periods for all possible bats
 - Surveys should be week-long records, at least 4 weeks for each season.

- (5) **Ground mist-net surveys** by qualified biologists during appropriate periods for local bats. Deployment over a creek or pond is often productive.
- (6) **Ground mortality surveys, pre- and post-construction**

Reid, Fiona. 2006. Peterson field guide to mammals of North America. (Peterson Field Guide Series). 4th edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Jameson, E.W., Jr. and Hans J. Peeters. 2004. Mammals of California. 2nd edition. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 429 pp.