

UNIT 567

MCGRATH STATE BEACH

GENERAL PLAN

July 1979

Don Hook

Santa Barbara/Ventura Coastal State Park System General Plan

GRATH

Department of parks & recreation
State of California - the Resources Agency
P.O. Box 2390 • Sacramento, 95811

PRELIMINARY MAY 1979



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Santa Barbara/Ventura Coastal State Park System General Plan

VOLUME 8

preliminary

GENERAL PLAN

MCGRATH

STATE BEACH

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MAY 1979



This is the eighth in an eight-part document which is the General Plan for seven coastal State Park System units in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. To obtain complete information for any one of the units, two booklets are needed -- the Summary, Introduction, and General Information booklet and the booklet that pertains specifically to the unit. Below is a list of all the booklets that make up the General Plan.

<u>Volume Number</u>	<u>Name</u>
1	Summary, Introduction, and General Information
2	Point Sal State Beach
3	Gaviota State Park
4	Refugio State Beach
5	El Capitan State Beach
6	Carpinteria State Beach
7	San Buenaventura State Beach
8	McGrath State Beach and Natural Preserve

McGrath State Beach -- Volume 8

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DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

O. BOX 2190, SACRAMENTO 95811

Resolution 36 - 79
Resolution adopted by the
CALIFORNIA STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
at its regular meeting in Santa Barbara
July 13, 1979

WHEREAS, The Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation has presented to this Commission for approval the proposed General Plan for the Santa Barbara/Ventura Coastal State Park System; and

WHEREAS, This reflects the long-range development plan as to provide for the optimum use and enjoyment of the unit as well as the protection of its quality;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the State Park and Recreation Commission approves the Department of Parks and Recreation's General Plan for the Santa Barbara/Ventura Coastal State Park System, preliminary dated May 1979, subject to the following amendments:

1. Delete from Carpinteria State Beach Preliminary General Plan the final sentence of Paragraph 2 at Page 23 which presently reads as follows: "Provide parking for concession patrons."
2. Insert at Page 35 in the Gaviota State Park Preliminary General Plan after the heading "Access Roads" the following footnote:

* "See correspondence dated May 31, 1979 between Director of Parks and Recreation and the Public Utilities Commission on the subject which is attached hereto as part of the Appendix."
(Attachment H).

.....
[Condition 3 by the Commission related solely to San Buenaventura State Beach. It is four paragraphs long, and was deleted from this copy to save space.]

And such environmental changes as the Director of Parks and Recreation shall determine advisable and necessary to implement carrying out the provisions and objectives of said plan.

[Note: See Volume 1 of the Santa Barbara/Ventura Coastal Preliminary General Plan. Attached to that volume is a 26-page Addendum dated Feb 1980 that designates the Preliminary as the Final. A few excerpts follow.]

General Data

REVISIONS TO GENERAL PLAN

ADDENDA: SANTA BARBARA/VENTURA COASTAL STATE PARK SYSTEM GENERAL PLAN

MCGRATH STATE BEACH GENERAL PLAN

- page 38: Item MG-2, delete "Repair shower/dressing seat benches, patch holes in the walls, refinish doors. Treat door with a rust inhibitor".
- page 41: a) Line 11, replace "bicycle/hiking" with "multi-purpose".
b) Line 24, replace "bicycle/hiking" with "multi-purpose".
- page 42: a) Line 4, replace "bicycle/hiking" with "multi-purpose".
b) Line 15, replace "bicycle/hiking" with "multi-purpose".
- Plan 8-6: General Plan: Under "Legend", replace "BICYCLE" (which appears twice) with "MULTI-PURPOSE".

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS ON THE
SANTA BARBARA/VENTURA COASTAL AREA GENERAL PLAN
AND DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS FROM THE
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

- 7 Wetland restoration and enhancement is a stated policy of the California Department of Parks and Recreation and will be pursued when and if site specific development or land use is budgeted or proposed.

McGrath State Beach (Volume 8)

Restoration of water flow (tidal and freshwater) in the marshland near the campsites could provide valuable wildlife habitat.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this General Plan. If you have any questions, please contact Fred A. Worthley Jr., Regional Manager, Region 5, at 350 Golden Shore, Long Beach, CA 90802. The telephone number is (213) 590-5113.

McGRATH STATE BEACH GENERAL DATA

Location: On the Ventura County coastline between the cities of Ventura and Oxnard.

Size: 120 hectares (295 acres) with 3,184 meters (10,445 feet) of ocean frontage and 883.9 meters (2,900 feet) of river frontage.

Facilities: 174 developed campsites (each with stove, cupboard, table, and drinking water), restrooms with hot showers, trailer sanitation station, service yard, 2 employee trailers, a temporary campfire center, and temporary bike campground. Utilities are electricity, water, and telephone.

Vegetation: Basic plant communities are coastal dune, coastal sage scrub, riparian, and saltwater marsh. Two rare and endangered vascular plants species, namely salt marsh bird's-beak and Ventura marsh locoweed, have been collected at the state beach. However, no collections have been recorded since 1945.

Wildlife: McGrath State Beach provides important habitat for a wide variety of resident and migratory wildlife. Several rare or endangered species have been observed in the Santa Clara River mouth area. These are the California least tern (which nests in the area), Belding's savannah sparrow, and black rail. Large numbers of the endangered brown pelican have been seen using the river mouth.

Outstanding Natural Features: Wide sandy beach and sand dunes, flora and fauna of Santa Clara River mouth area, pickleweed marsh, and the McGrath Lake area.

Historic and Archeological Values: No systematic archeological reconnaissance has been performed at McGrath State Beach. No sites have been recorded. There is a high potential for the presence of Native American and Euro-American sites. This unit is part of the general flow of history for the Santa Barbara/Ventura coast.

Interpretive: Themes for guided walks include recreation opportunities; natural history of sand dunes, beach, and sand bar; ecology of the riparian community; and ecology of the marsh community. There are special walks for bird identification. Campfire programs cover many topics on the outdoor environment.

Ownership

Acquisition of McGrath State Beach occurred in 1961 with the purchase of 120 hectares (295 acres) from Rita S. McGrath et al. Several conditional easements were made during the acquisition process at the Santa Clara River mouth and are included in the ownership deed. Under one of these easements Hugo McGrath and Associates retains the right to breach the sandbar between the ocean and embayment when necessary to protect agricultural lands. Water in this embayment can raise the level of groundwater in surrounding areas, endangering agricultural productiveness. A similar easement pertains to McGrath Lake where Hugo McGrath and Associates retains the right to breach the sandbar between the lake and the ocean to lower the water level. Recently, whenever the lake level needed lowering, Hugo McGrath and Associates has used a portable pump rather than breaching the sandbar, which has resulted in less disruption to the unit.

In 1962, the unit was classified a state beach. Existing facilities at McGrath State Beach were completed in 1964. Except for minor development, the unit remains the same today.



Resource Element



RESOURCE ELEMENT

This section has been prepared pursuant to Section 5002.2 (amended September, 1978) of the Public Resources Code, which requires that a Resource Element be prepared following classification or reclassification of a State Park System unit. In meeting this requirement, this element contains: the declared purpose of the unit in terms of its classification as a state beach; a summary and evaluation of recreational values and of natural and cultural resources; a statement of allowable use intensity; and resource management policies necessary to protect important resource values.

In response to the initial recommendation by the Channel Coast Area office and subsequent concurrence by District 5 and the Resource Preservation and Interpretation Division, it is proposed that the area at the mouth of the Santa Clara River, which is within McGrath State Beach, be classified as a natural preserve. This recommendation is based on the site's outstanding wildlife values, including habitat used by a number of endangered species, which are discussed in detail in the Resource Summary and Evaluation section of this Resource Element.

Unit Identification and Classification

McGrath State Beach is located on the coastline between the cities of Ventura and Oxnard in Ventura County. The unit is generally bounded on the north by the northern embankment of the Santa Clara River, on the east by Harbor Boulevard, on the south by the Southern California Edison Mandalay Generating Plant, and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. Two parcels, one located in the center and the other in the southeast corner of the unit, are privately owned. The unit contains 120 hectares (295 acres), with 3.2 kilometers (2.0 miles) of ocean frontage. Vehicles enter the unit by an entrance off Harbor Boulevard.

McGrath State Beach lies on the seaward edge of the broad Santa Clara alluvial plain. The terrain both of the unit and surrounding land is relatively flat and low-lying. The shoreline is straight and bordered by a moderately sloping sandy beach, 30 to 60 meters (100 to 200 feet) wide during the summer months. A low ridge of hummocky sand dunes separates the sandy beach from the inland flats. These dunes vary in height to a maximum of about 8 meters (26 feet) above mean sea level. The low-lying inland plain between the dunes and Harbor Boulevard is 3 to 5 meters (10 to 16 feet) above mean sea level.

Two outstanding features of the unit are the Santa Clara River and McGrath Lake. A large bay is formed much of the time at the mouth of the Santa Clara River as a result of natural and man-caused factors. This water area is used extensively by a large and diverse number of water-associated birds and is very popular as a site for birdwatching.

McGrath Lake, which provides a slightly different aquatic habitat, is also very important to birdlife. Most of the lake is in the southern part of the unit.

Recreation facilities at McGrath State Beach include 174 developed campsites (each with a stove, cupboard, and table), 3 restrooms with flush toilets and hot showers, a trailer sanitation station, temporary bike campground, and a campfire center.

In June 1962 McGrath State Beach was classified a state beach by the then State Park Commission. A state beach is now a category of state recreation unit. The Public Resources Code currently defines these units as follows:

State recreation units consist of areas selected, developed, and operated to provide outdoor recreational opportunities. Such units shall be designated by the State Park and Recreation Commission by naming, in accordance with the provisions of Article 1 (commencing with Section 5001) and this article relating to classification.

In the planning of improvements to be undertaken within state recreation units, consideration shall be given to compatibility of design with the surrounding scenic and environmental characteristics.

State recreation units may be established in the terrestrial or underwater environments of the State and shall be further classified as one of the following types:...

- (d) State beaches, consisting of areas with frontage on the ocean or bays designed to provide swimming, boating, fishing, and other beach-oriented recreational activities. Coastal areas containing ecological, geological, or scenic resources of significant value shall be preserved within state wildernesses, state reserves, state parks, or natural or cultural preserves.

The proposed natural preserve, shown in the General Plan map, is entirely within McGrath State Beach. The proposed preserve is about 65 hectares (160 acres) and is located in the uppermost part of the unit. The site is bounded by the border of the unit to the north and east, the access road adjacent to the northwest campgrounds to the south, and the ocean to the west. The preserve includes the main channel of the Santa Clara River and adjacent natural lands of riparian shrubland and saltwater marsh.

Under the classification section of the Public Resources Code, Article 1.7, Section 5019.71 (amended 9-7-78), a natural preserve is defined as follows:

Natural preserves consist of distinct areas of outstanding natural or scientific significance established within the boundaries of other State Park System units. The purpose of natural preserves shall be to preserve such features as rare or endangered plant and animal species and their supporting ecosystems, representative examples of plant or animal communities existing in California prior to the impact of civilization, geological features illustrative of geological processes, significant fossil occurrences or geological features of cultural or economic interest, or topographic features illustrative of representative or unique biogeographical patterns. Areas set aside as natural preserves shall be of sufficient size to allow, where possible, the natural dynamics of ecological interaction to continue without interference, and to provide, in all cases, a practicable



The Santa Clara rivermouth provides habitat used by several rare, endangered, and threatened species. It is proposed that this area be designated a Natural Preserve.

management unit. Habitat manipulation shall be permitted only in those areas found by scientific analysis to require manipulation to preserve the species or associations which constitute the basis for the establishment of the natural preserve.

Resource Summary and Evaluation

McGrath State Beach is in the Coastal Strip Landscape Province. This province includes lands along the immediate coastline of California and offshore islands, where flora and fauna are directly influenced by the maritime climate.

The following resource information is summarized from the Inventory of Features prepared for McGrath State Beach and the proposed natural preserve.

Scenic Values

Scenic values of McGrath State Beach include open views of the low-lying beach frontage, riverain, and oceanside lake environments, and distant views of the Channel Islands on clear days. Due to the low relief of the landscape, the ocean can be seen from Harbor Boulevard only from the bridge across the Santa Clara River.

Land in and near the unit is flat, low-lying, and treeless, with substantial shrub vegetation at the southern bank of the Santa Clara River, the north and east shoreline of McGrath Lake, and around the campground units. Consequently, most views inside the unit are of unobstructed beach shoreline, dunes, and sandflats. One powerline extends along the length of the unit, just west of Harbor Boulevard.

Willows in the riparian areas along the shoreline of the river and lake provide visual screens or barriers. The open water areas in the lagoon, and adjacent riparian vegetation, provide an interesting visual contrast. Myoporum has been planted at the campground to provide screening between individual campsites. This shrub provides a visual barrier from ground level to a maximum height of about five meters (16 feet).

Climate

The climate of the Ventura-Oxnard area is typical of coastal southern California with mild winters and slightly warmer summer temperatures.

The comprehensive weather station nearest McGrath State Beach is located at Oxnard, although precipitation data are available for the City of Ventura, which is closer. High temperatures from late spring to fall average between 21° Celsius (C) or 70° Fahrenheit (F) and 24°C (75°F). Low temperatures during this period average between 9°C (49°F) and 13°C (55°F). January is the coldest month of the year with an average maximum temperature of 18°C (65°F) and average nighttime temperature of 6°C (42°F).

Winds in the Ventura-Oxnard area during much of the year consist of daytime moderate sea breezes flowing in off the ocean. At night, the breezes reverse to a gentle offshore wind as a result of differential heating and cooling of ocean and land. The hot, dry Santa Ana winds from the interior occur infrequently in the fall and winter.

Annual rainfall in the Ventura-Oxnard area is about 38 centimeters (15 inches), of which 95 percent falls between November and April. Average monthly rainfall during the summer is negligible.

Hydrology

The Santa Clara River and McGrath Lake are the principal surface hydrologic features at McGrath State Beach.

The Santa Clara River originates about 113 kilometers (70 miles) above the mouth in the San Gabriel Mountains and drains about 4,140 square kilometers (1,600 square miles). Stream flow is appreciable in the downstream portion only during and just after rainfall, due to climate and basin characteristics. Annual stream flow, as recorded several miles above the proposed natural preserve, is extremely variable and ranges from nearly 0 to 1,110 cubic hectometers (900,000 acre-feet), with an average of 148 cubic hectometers (120,000 acre-feet).

Stream flow characteristics at the mouth below Harbor Boulevard are somewhat different from those recorded above the mouth because of sewage and irrigation discharges into the river. Secondary treated sewage effluent is discharged into the river near the mouth from the Ventura Water Renovation Facility located on the upcoast bank of the river across from the state beach. Treated effluent from the plant is discharged into the river mouth embayment at an average rate of about 26,500 cubic meters (7 million gallons) per day or 10 cubic hectometers (8,000 acre-feet) per year. This discharge and the nearby return of irrigation water provide a year-round flow in the lower river, which would otherwise be dry most of the year.

The flood hazard at and near McGrath State Beach is quite high, due to the closeness of the Santa Clara River and the low-lying nature of the terrain. Damaging floods can occur when winter storms bring widespread rain for several consecutive days. The Army Corps of Engineers has estimated peak flows and the extent of flooding for the "intermediate region" and "standard project" floods. The intermediate regional flood could occur on the average of once every 100 years. The standard project flood is more extensive and is determined by considering the most severe combination of hydrologic and meteorologic conditions that could reasonably occur. Flooding resulting from either of these events would inundate the entire unit except for the upper portions of the dune ridge along the shoreline. The flood of 1969, which caused widespread flooding in the unit and the surrounding region, was slightly less than the projected intermediate regional flood.

The Santa Clara River mouth is a dynamic environment with constantly changing hydrologic conditions because of natural variations in watershed inflow, discharge of treated effluent and irrigation return water, sandbar formation at the river mouth, and ocean tides.

A sandbar is continuously being formed across the mouth of the river by wave action and littoral drift. When river flow is low, the sandbar completely blocks all direct river outflow and an embayment is formed between the mouth and Harbor Boulevard. The water volume in the embayment is increased by the continuous inflow of treated effluent and irrigation return water. If the sandbar is not breached by natural forces or maintenance crews, the water in the embayment can raise the level of ground water in the adjacent low-lying areas in the state beach campground and the agricultural fields east of Harbor Boulevard.

Under present management the berm is mechanically breached by shovel or tractor by State Park System employees or farm maintenance people before groundwater levels adversely affect operations. Hugo McGrath Associates and successors retain the right to breach the sandbar when necessary to protect upriver agricultural lands, through an agreement made during unit acquisition. Once the bar is breached, the outflow widens and deepens the channel until the embayment reaches its minimum volume, usually in a few hours.

If stream flow in the river is high, as during and immediately after storms, water level in the embayment rises faster than the sandbar can build up, which results in a natural breaching. If the berm is breached and the river flow is not high, high tides may flood into the embayment. The length of time required for wave action to reestablish the sandbar barrier depends on several factors, but generally it takes about two weeks when upstream watershed runoff is negligible. During the summer when inflow into the embayment is limited to discharge of treated effluent and irrigation return water, the sand barrier remains intact for two to four weeks before it is mechanically breached. This period may be extended as a result of heavy storm runoff, like that which occurred in March 1978 and which effectively increased the storage capacity of the embayment through channel erosion.

Water quality in the embayment is quite variable due to periodic flushing and ponding of embayment waters. However, during low-flow periods coliform levels are known to exceed state water quality objectives for harbors and tidal prisms (areas where saltwater and freshwater mingle). Dissolved oxygen levels below those needed to sustain most fish life have also been recorded in certain portions of the embayment under low-flow conditions.

The hydrology of McGrath Lake is largely influenced by upstream irrigation runoff. The lake is maintained at a fairly constant level during the rainless period by the inflow of irrigation runoff and the release of water by a pump located near the upper end of the lake. The deed requires that the lake depth be maintained from 3.5 to 4.7 feet above mean high tide. This pump is operated and maintained by Hugo McGrath and Associates and drains water to the beach through an underground pipe in the dune area. During periods of heavy rainfall, rising water levels in the lake can raise ground water levels in the adjacent agricultural fields and endanger crops. When this occurs, special measures are taken by Hugo McGrath Associates to lower the lake's level. In past years, maintenance crews would mechanically breach the low sand dune ridge which separates the lake from the ocean. In 1978, however, a large portable pump unit was temporarily put into operation several times during the winter season to draw the water down to its normal level.

Geology and Seismicity

The data so far compiled on this unit are useful for general planning efforts but must not be considered as an adequate base for actual construction decisions.

McGrath State Beach is mapped as recent alluvial and sand dune materials. Alluvium covering the inland portion of the unit, as well as most of the lowland in the Ventura-Oxnard basin, was deposited in the last 20,000 years by the Santa Clara River system. Along the beachfront, these alluvial deposits are overlain by beach and dune sands deposited more recently by wind and wave action. Sand particles in the surf zone are continuously being shifted to and from the ocean with each wave. During the winter, highly turbulent seas and wave action associated with storms result in a net offshore movement of sand and the formation of subtidal berms. Thus, during early spring the beaches are narrow and steeply sloped. Offshore sand is gradually deposited back on the beaches by the more gentle wave action which occurs during the summer. By the end of summer, the beaches are wider and have a more gradual, gentler slope. As the sand is shifted back and forth, a longshore current (littoral drift) gradually transports the particles southward, resulting in a net downcoast movement of beach sand. Beach sand must therefore be replenished from upcoast sources.

The Santa Clara River is a major source of sand for the beaches at McGrath State Beach and other downcoast areas. Large amounts of silt and sand are washed down the river annually during winter storm runoff. Much of this material is carried out to sea, but some is transported down the coastline in the beach zone.

Additional sand is periodically deposited on the beach just downcoast of the Santa Clara River mouth as a result of annual maintenance dredging of the Ventura Marina located upcoast of the river. During the spring a suction dredge removes accumulated sand and silt from the marina mouth. The State Department of Parks and Recreation allows this material to be transported by slurry pipeline across the river mouth berm and discharged within the surf zone. To date, this operation has not resulted in any long-term degradation of the beach area.

Several faults exist in the Ventura-Oxnard area. The Oak Ridge fault extends along the Santa Clara River through the proposed preserve. This is a major fault which has shown displacement during the last two million years but not in the past 200 years, and probably not during the last 500,000 years. The active Ventura fault lies along the base of the Ventura Hills in downtown Ventura, about 5 kilometers (3 miles) north of the unit. Active faults may also exist under the Santa Barbara Channel. Earthquakes associated with movements along these and other active faults in the southern California area are possible triggers for the potential hazards of groundshaking, liquefaction, seismic-induced settlements, and tsunamis (seismic seawaves). The estimated potential for seismically induced liquefaction in the proposed natural preserve ranges from high to moderate. From 0.3 to 0.6 meters (1 to 2 feet) of settlement of the Holocene sediments can be expected during a seismic event.

Soils

The oceanside border of the unit is identified as coastal sandy beach (see Soils Map, appendix). The channel of the Santa Clara River is mapped as riverwash, and is characterized by highly stratified water-deposited layers of stony and gravelly sand that contain relatively small amounts of silt and clay. These areas are frequently inundated during and just after storms, and are subject to scouring, cutting, or deposition depending on stream flow and bed load.

Tidal flats along the central part of the southern border of the proposed preserve are periodically covered by either tidal or brackish river water. These tidal flats consist of very fine sandy loam, silt loam, and clay loam. This soil type is highly saline and supports only salt and water-tolerant vegetation. The pickleweed (Salicornia sp.) flat just northwest of the existing campground is overlain with Camarillo loam, which consists of sandy loam, loam, and clay loam. This soil type is considered poorly drained and is vegetated with salt-tolerant grasses and forbs.

Most of the land in the inland part of the unit, including the existing campground development, is categorized as Hueneme loamy sand. This soil type has a surface layer of loamy sand and is underlain by stratified sandy loam, loam, silt loam, and silt below a depth of about 100 centimeters (40 inches). This moderately permeable soil type has severe limitations for use as septic tank filter fields.

Biotic Features

Plant Life. Several plant communities exist at McGrath State Beach (see Vegetation Map, appendix). A coastal dune plant community grows along the sand dune ridge which parallels the beach from the Santa Clara River mouth to the lower end of McGrath Lake. Vegetation established on these hummocky dunes includes species typically found on relatively undisturbed dune systems. Sea-fig (Carpobrotus aequilaterus) is dominant in the unit's northern part, while sand verbena (Abronia maritima) is the major species on the downcoast dunes near McGrath Lake.

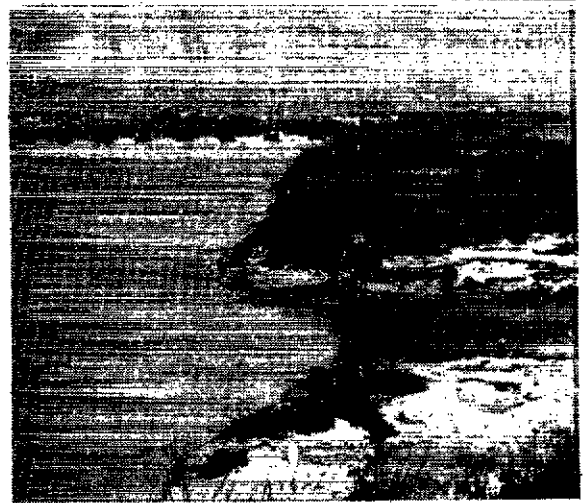
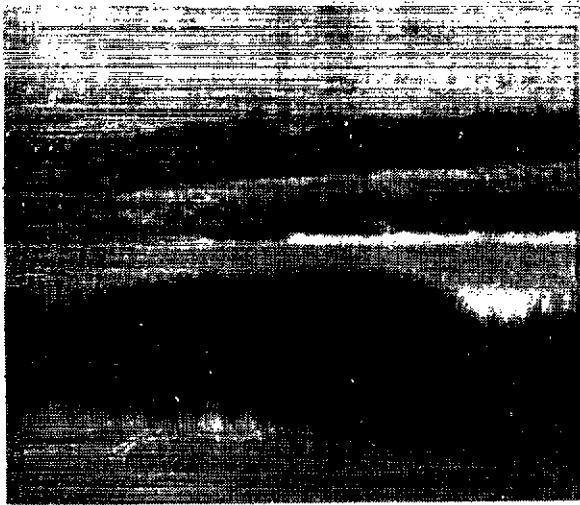
The sand flat, inland of the coastal dune in the central portion of the unit, is sparsely vegetated with Hottentot fig (Carpobrotus edulis), sea-fig, haplopappus (Haplopappus sp.), and other forbs and grasses common to disturbed coastal areas.

There is a coastal sage scrub community along the unit's central portion between Harbor Boulevard and the sparsely vegetated sand flat. The area contains species characteristic of this plant community such as coyote bush (Baccharis pilularis ssp. consanguinea), saltbrush (Atriplex sp.), coastal sage brush (Artemisia californica), as well as many exotic invaders. This site does not represent an outstanding example of coastal sage scrub, because of its relatively small size and the number of exotic species present.

The river mouth and lake area support two different types of riparian plant communities because of different hydrologic situations. The Santa Clara River channel environment is constantly changing as a result of the erosive force of winter runoff, and the deposition of silt, sand, and gravel. Short-term fluctuations in water level during the filling and emptying of the embayment area also directly influence the type and distribution of vegetation.

Much of the vegetation along the beach south of the Santa Clara River is considered riparian shrublands. This area is densely vegetated with willow (Salix sp.) and giant reed (Arundo donax). The understory is composed of a variety of other shrubs, forbs, and grasses, including poison oak (Toxicodendron diversiloba), western rag weed (Ambrosia psilostachya), mugwort (Artemisia douglasiana), and horsetail (Equisetum laevigatum).

Under normal winter conditions, with light to moderate runoff, the deposition of sand and silt in the river creates berms in the main channel which extend below the Harbor Boulevard bridge. During the mid-1970s, riparian shrub-type vegetation became well



The changing nature of the rivermouth ecosystem is illustrated in photographs taken from the same location, looking from the mouth toward Harbor Boulevard before and after major storms. The photo on the left was taken in November 1977. The photo at right, taken in March 1978, shows extensive modification of the downcoast river shoreline.

established on these berms. However, extremely high storm runoff in early 1978 resulted in heavy streambed erosion and the complete loss of all vegetation in the main channel. Storm runoff also cut away an estimated 30 percent of the riparian shrubland along the southern riverbank. Although erosion in the floodplain occurs every year, the events of 1978 reflect extreme conditions. In time, future deposition of sand and silt can be expected to rebuild the riverbank and main channel berms. Vegetation similar to that which existed on the site earlier is already establishing itself.

McGrath Lake supports a riparian community different from the one in the river mouth area because water levels are maintained at a fairly constant elevation by pumping, although some seasonal variation does occur. Vegetation in and around the lake has become well established because of this relatively stable environment. Willows are present along the water's edge on the northern and eastern shores of the lake. Bulrush (*Scirpus robustus*) is established in the center of the lake and near the eastern shore. Fringes of the lake, which flood during the winter, support small stands of pickleweed, saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), and jaumea (*Jaumea carnosa*). McGrath Lake is an excellent example of a brackish-water lake and marsh ecosystem, even though much of the water flow in and out is regulated by local farming interests.

A large expanse of saltwater marsh, about 8 hectares (20 acres), is located between the existing campground and the river mouth. A portion of the marsh lies on the inland side of the low flood control levee. Drainage of the marsh is controlled by a flood gate located at the intersection of the levee and the coastal dunes. Vegetation is primarily pickleweed, jaumea, and saltgrass.

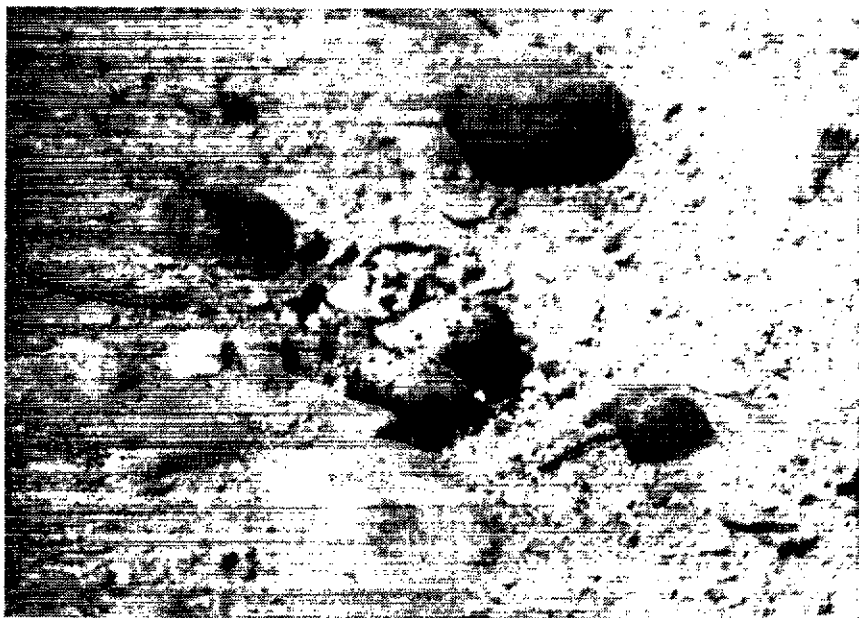
The campground area is vegetated with myoporum (*Myoporum laetum*) planted between campsites for windbreaks and screening. Hottentot fig is established in dense stands in the center islands of each campground group.

Two plant species listed in the Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California by the California Native Plant Society have been located at McGrath State Beach. Salt marsh bird's-beak (Cordylanthus maritimus) was collected before 1945 in the general location of the river mouth downstream from Harbor Boulevard. No recent collection has been recorded. This species typically is found in coastal salt marshes and is listed as endangered in part of its natural range. Ventura marsh locoweed (Astragalus pycnostachyus var. lanosissimus) was collected from a site east of Harbor Boulevard just outside the state beach entrance. However, the species has probably been removed from this site as a result of intensive agricultural land use.

Animal Life. McGrath State Beach provides important habitats for a wide variety of resident and migratory wildlife.

The habitats at the mouth of the Santa Clara River are in a state of constant change because of seasonal variation in river flow, erosion, and deposition of streambed material, and changes in the salinity gradient. In spite of the unstable nature of this region, the embayment is used extensively by a wide variety of avian species. When the embayment is flooded it provides a wide expanse of open water and is used by gulls, shorebirds, waterfowl, and other water birds for both feeding and resting. When the shoreline sandbar is breached, mudflats exposed by the receding waters in the embayment provide feeding habitat for a wide variety of shorebirds specially adapted to probe the muddy substrate for worms and other invertebrates. The area is also used extensively by nesting shorebirds and other water birds.

A bimonthly bird census was taken at the embayment from May 1972 to April 1973. Annual use of the area was estimated from these observations to be more than 500,000 bird-days, including 10,000 bird-days by brown pelicans, 35,000 by ducks and geese, 3,000 by egrets and herons, 77 by coots, 108,000 by shorebirds, 247,000 by gulls, and 20,000 by terns. (One bird-day is defined as one bird using or observed in an area for one day or a fraction thereof.)



Although least tern nests or "scratches" are well camouflaged on the sandy berms, eggs (two are shown here) and young are very susceptible to human disturbance and predation by dogs.

The riparian habitat at McGrath Lake also supports a wide variety of water birds. Species composition at McGrath Lake is somewhat different than that at the Santa Clara River mouth as a result of different habitats provided and the smaller size of the lake. No comprehensive census of bird use in the lake area has been conducted, but use is expected to be considerably less than that reported for the river mouth embayment, primarily because of the lake's smaller size. However, tule and other vegetation around the lake provide a stable and high-quality marshland habitat which is not found at the river mouth.

The willow thickets bordering the river mouth embayment provide good habitat for a variety of passerine (or perching) birds. Some of the common groups represented in the community include hummingbirds, flycatchers, thrushes, towhees, blackbirds, and sparrows.

Raptors, including white-tailed kite, red-tailed hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, marsh hawk, red-shouldered hawk, and American kestrel are commonly seen hunting over the river bottom, riparian shrublands, and open fields of the unit.

The habitats provided at McGrath State Beach do not support a large number or variety of mammals. Most mammals of the site are of the rodent group. However, the riparian habitat along the river and lake also supports other animals like striped skunk (Mephitis mephitis), raccoon (Procyon lotor), and opossum (Didelphis marsupialis). The black-tailed hare (Lepus californicus), Audubon cottontail (Sylvilagus audubonii), and brush rabbit (Sylvilagus bachmani) may also be found in these areas. Mule deer (Odocoileus hemionus) and coyote (Canis latrans) are also expected to occasionally frequent the river bottom. A complete list of animals thought to be present in the unit is included in the Inventory of Features.

The pickleweed marsh which lies between the existing campsite and the mouth of the Santa Clara River provides good habitat for several small rodents including the California meadow mouse (Microtus californicus). This animal is known to be a major prey species of the white-tailed kite, which was once threatened with extinction but is now increasing in numbers. The marsh also provides a habitat type characteristically used by the rare black rail and endangered Belding's savannah sparrow.

The population of Beechey (California) ground squirrels (Otospermophilus beecheyi) at the unit is very high, particularly at the existing campground area and adjacent sandy flats. Ground squirrels are known to feed on a wide variety of plant items, including green herbage, seeds, nuts, bulbs, fleshy fruits, and flowers, as well as available food scraps. The exotic hottentot fig established in the center of each campground group appears to be one of the main sources of food for squirrels at the unit. The large ground squirrel population has been a management problem for many years.

The coastal sage scrub community, located adjacent to the southeastern corner of the existing campground, provides habitat for wildlife species adapted to dry, brush-type environments. However, the value of this area to wildlife is limited due to the small size of the area and its isolation from other similar habitats.

Twenty-one species of fish are reported throughout the Santa Clara River drainage. Most of these are freshwater forms and are restricted to the upstream portion of the embayment where tidal influences are minimal. Marine fishes which are known to frequent estuarine waters and may occur within the embayment include starry flounder (Platichthys stellatus) and slough anchovy (Anchoa delicatissima). The embayment may serve as a spawning ground for top smelt (Atherinops affinis) and a nursery for striped mullet (Mugil cephalus) and staghorn sculpin (Leptocottus armatus).

Several rare and endangered species listed by the California Department of Fish and Game are known or may be expected to occur in the unit and nearby.

The Santa Clara river mouth is one of three recognized active nesting sites of the California least tern in Ventura County. This species is considered by both the state and federal government to be in danger of extinction. Although the area is not listed among the 27 proposed essential habitats for least terns in California, a significant number of least terns can be expected to continue using this area if disturbance by humans and dogs is kept to a minimum during the breeding season.

The endangered brown pelican (Pelecanus occidentalis californicus) is also known to frequent the embayment area. These birds feed and rest in the area and breed on the Channel Islands, the coastal islands off Lower California, and in the Gulf of California.

The embayment and salt marsh at the unit provide some habitat typically used in southern California by the rare black rail (Laterallus jamaicensis coturniculus), the endangered Belding's savannah sparrow (Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi), and the endangered light-footed clapper rail (Rallus longirostris levipes). Observations of both the black rail and Belding's savannah sparrow have been reported in recent years. The clapper rail is more typically associated with extensive marshland with daily tidal exchange. All these species can be expected to occur at the unit, even though infrequently. The Belding's savannah sparrow may even nest in the pickleweed marsh.

Two other endangered species, the Southern bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus leucocephalus) and peregrine falcon (Falco peregrinus anatum), may be seen flying over the unit on rare occasions.

Cultural Resources

(Detailed regional information can be found in Volume 1 of this General Plan.)

Existing Sites and Features. Only an incomplete inventory has been carried out at McGrath State Beach and no cultural resources have been identified. There is a possibility that as yet unrecorded resources exist in the unit.

Recreation Potential

The unit contains 3,184 meters (10,445 feet) of ocean frontage, most of which is wide sandy beach 30 to 60 meters (100 to 200 feet) wide during the summer season. The intertidal beach is terraced and moderately to steeply sloping during the winter, but a more gradual slope exists during the summer. The beach is used for sunbathing, picnicking, beachcombing, fishing, and general beach activities. Nearshore waters provide good "beach surf" for surfing.

Recreation facilities at the unit include 174 developed campsites (each with a stove, cupboard, and table), 3 restrooms with flush toilets and hot showers, a trailer sanitation station, temporary bike campgrounds, and a campfire center.

The river mouth embayment and McGrath Lake support outstanding wildlife habitat and provide an excellent opportunity for the visitor to observe and photograph a wide variety of birds. A large number of species can be observed in the area year round; however, the largest concentration is during fall and winter migration.

Interpretive Potential

Among the many resources valuable for interpretation at McGrath State Beach are the recreation activities, and the wildlife habitats and vegetative communities of the Santa Clara River and McGrath Lake. The relationships between the river, salt marsh, and coastal dune also have interpretive potential.

Other subjects with good interpretive value are: beach geology and other physical processes such as sand movement, ocean currents, and tides; local weather conditions; dune vegetation and ocean-beach dynamics; and the influence of the Channel Islands.

Declaration of Purpose -- McGrath State Beach

McGrath State Beach was established to make available the sandy ocean beach and related uplands in the vicinity of the mouth of the Santa Clara River in Ventura County for public recreational use and enjoyment. In general, all public outdoor recreational activities which relate well to the ocean and which can be accommodated without impairing the scenic or natural integrity of the site, may be provided.

McGrath Lake and the Santa Clara River mouth are recognized for their outstanding natural features and shall be managed to protect and perpetuate the river and seashore lake ecosystems.

Declaration of Resource Management Policy -- McGrath State Beach

It shall be the resource management policy of the State Department of Parks and Recreation to:

1. Encourage recreational and interpretive uses which relate well to the unit's beach and ocean orientation. These uses shall be permitted to the extent that they do not substantially detract from, diminish, or harm the recreational, natural, or cultural values present. In planning facilities, the department should consider the use that it will encourage, public safety, and the potential impact on the unit's natural or cultural values. In this regard, the department shall strive to ensure that developments in the unit and public use are in proper relation with the resiliency of the environment.
2. Protect the scenic values of the property, including both interior views and views from adjacent lands, by carefully siting and landscaping all developments in the unit.
3. Use plants native to the region in landscaping to provide a more natural setting and more suitable wildlife foods, and to reduce the need for watering and other costly maintenance. No exotic plant shall be introduced that may naturalize and encroach upon natural plant and animal communities.
4. Eliminate or control unwanted exotic (nonnative) plants and weeds. Hand, mechanical, and biological control measures will be preferred over chemical methods of weed control. Herbicides proposed for plant control shall meet all requirements in the department's Pesticide Handbook.
5. Control animal populations, such as ground squirrels, when necessary to minimize potential public health hazards. The reduction or elimination of preferred habitat of nuisance species shall be considered first when control becomes necessary. For

example, Hottentot fig established for landscaping within the central portions of the campground units provides ideal habitat for ground squirrels and is thought to encourage the nuisance and health hazard problems which have been reported in the unit for years. A program to eradicate the solid concentrations of Hottentot fig shall be prepared and implemented in the unit, particularly in the vicinity of the campgrounds. The central portions of the campground units shall be revegetated with plants which provide landscaping but do not encourage squirrel populations. Dwarf coyote brush and saltgrass are natives adapted to local climate and edaphic conditions, and may be suitable for revegetation.

6. Protect and perpetuate the lake and marshland environment at McGrath Lake for its high wildlife values. A buffer zone shall be established around the state-owned portion of the lake in which no facilities shall be permitted except for interpretive trails and observation points. These facilities shall be carefully sited so that visitor activities will not diminish use of the area by wildlife. The acreage needed to preserve important habitat, including the buffer needed to insure continued wildlife use of the area, is shown in the category of low use on the Allowable Use Intensity Map.
7. If possible, minimize or eliminate illegal off-road vehicle use at the unit. This has been a particular problem in the Santa Clara River bottom and on lands in the downcoast portion of the unit.

Vehicle use in the river bottom area threatens ground-nesting sites used by several bird species, including the California least tern, which is listed by both federal and state agencies as being in danger of extinction. Off-road vehicle users usually enter the unit illegally by driving under the Harbor Boulevard bridge from upstream access points. The unit is adequately posted with signs along the upstream side of bridge supports. Increased patrol efforts by ranger staff may be the only measure available to reduce use by knowing violators.



Access to the McGrath Lake and dune area by unauthorized off-road vehicles will be controlled to protect the fragile ecosystem.

Illegal vehicle use in the downcoast section of the unit is seriously disturbing the narrow strip of sand dunes and the vegetation that helps stabilize them. Wildlife around McGrath Lake is also adversely affected. Most of the illegal entry into the area is from the narrow strip of county property between the ocean and the Southern California Edison Mandalay Generating Plant. To eliminate illegal vehicle entry, a vehicle barrier, such as a line of anchored posts, could be placed along the county property between the generating plant's fence and the plant's shoreline outfall structure. The distance between these two points is roughly 30 meters (100 feet). This action would require an agreement for construction of the vehicle barrier on county property, or state acquisition of the roughly 2.5-hectare (6-acre) site from the county.

8. Provide special protection for any rare, endangered, or threatened plant and animal species in the unit.
9. Include provisions in all development plans for the existence of any yet-unrecorded cultural resources.
10. Manage the area at the mouth of the Santa Clara River, as specified in the Resource Element, to perpetuate and provide for public use and understanding of its natural values.
11. Administer other values not specifically mentioned in this element, under guidelines in the department's Policies, Rules, Regulations, and Orders, and Resource Management Directives.

Allowable Use Intensity -- McGrath State Beach

California state law (Section 5019.5, Public Resource Code) requires that the department cause to be prepared a land carrying-capacity survey before any recreation development plan is completed. As a step in determining carrying capacity, the department is using "allowable use intensity," which is a more recreation resource-oriented concept.

The determination of allowable use intensity has three basic interwoven components: (1) management objectives; (2) visitor perceptions and attitudes; and (3) impact of any development and use on natural and cultural resources (determination of ecological and cultural resource sensitivity).

Management objectives for McGrath State Beach are generally set forth in the statutes defining a state beach in the Unit Identification and Classification section of this Resource Element.

Visitor perceptions and attitudes are sometimes referred to in relation to "social carrying capacity" and involve assessing what the recreationist perceives as an acceptable recreational environment; what degree of isolation or crowding is acceptable; what amount of site deterioration is acceptable; and other perceptions and attitudes pertaining to the quality of visitors' recreational experience. These factors are very difficult to quantify and are related to social development and the environmental awareness of the society.

The third component in determining allowable use intensity involves an analysis of the natural and cultural resources to determine the physical limitation of the area for development of facilities and the ability of the ecosystem to withstand human impact (ecological sensitivity). This analysis is based on a number of considerations including

archeological and historical sites and features; scenic values; soils, their erodability and compaction potential; geologic factors, such as slope stability and relief; hydrologic considerations, including potential for pollution of surface waters, flooding, or for depleting surface and ground waters through water use; vegetation characteristics, such as durability, fragility, and regeneration rates; and wildlife considerations, such as tolerance to human activity, wildlife population levels, and stability. Additional considerations in determining ecological sensitivities are rare and/or endangered plants and animals, unique biotic features or ecosystems, or examples of ecosystems of regional or statewide significance (marshes, riparian areas, and vernal pools).

Based on the preceding factors, allowable use intensity for McGrath State Beach was determined and delineated (see Allowable Use Intensity Map, appendix). Included in this map is a general description of the types of activities which may be appropriate in the categories of high, moderate, and low uses. These activities are given for general planning purposes only. On-site field investigations by qualified resource specialists are recommended before the selection of specific sites and the design of new facilities. Site investigations may indicate that higher or lower use intensities would be appropriate.

Declaration of Purpose -- Natural Preserve

The proposed natural preserve in McGrath State Beach would be established for the primary purpose of protecting and perpetuating the river ecosystem at the mouth of the Santa Clara River. Resource values of particular significance include: estuarine waters, which are used extensively by a wide variety of waterfowl and other water-associated birds; nesting habitat of the endangered California least tern; and riparian shrubland and saltwater marsh communities. Public use of the area shall be allowed, but limited to those activities that are directly related to the appreciation of the natural values for which the preserve is established, and which do not reduce or interfere with wildlife usage of the area. Development in the preserve shall be restricted to facilities which protect or enhance natural entities. Development shall provide for visitor use of the area, as long as wildlife and other values of the area are not adversely affected.

Declaration of Resource Management Policy -- Natural Preserve

It shall be the resource management policy of the State Department of Parks and Recreation to:

1. Protect and perpetuate the river ecosystem for its high wildlife value. This ecosystem is subject to periodic and dynamic changes. Both floodplain topography and vegetation are affected by flooding, scouring, silt transport, deposition, and a constantly changing river course. These factors must be recognized in the management and protection of the proposed natural preserve. Although the dynamic nature of the area sometimes appears to be detrimental to the natural resources, calamities such as severe flooding or deposition of silt enhance the diversity of the area and its long-term attractiveness to plant and animal life.

Under Section 5019.71 of the Public Resources Code, the "natural dynamics of ecological interactions" in natural preserves are to be allowed to continue without interference where possible. Due to a wide variety of human alterations to the upper watershed of the Santa Clara River, such as water impoundments, other channel modifications, and effluent discharge, dynamics that once existed in the river mouth cannot be restored. However, the department shall manage the river mouth area to allow for the most natural and dynamic state possible. In some cases, management toward the natural state may require direct action to modify certain undesirable conditions.

2. Allow only those passive recreational and interpretive uses which do not significantly disturb the natural values for which the area is established. "Significant disturbance" shall be determined by the professional judgment of a staff natural heritage specialist.
3. Identify least tern nesting sites each year in the natural preserve. These sites shall be monitored to ensure that nests are not flooded by rising water levels in the embayment. The sandbar at the mouth of the river shall be breached when flooding threatens the nesting sites. If not threatening the least tern nesting sites or upstream agriculture, water in the embayment shall be allowed to pond to provide additional feeding territory for adult birds. Signs identifying nesting sites and the protected status of the birds shall be placed around the nesting area when deemed necessary to protect the colony. Signs shall be placed no closer than 100 feet from the colony, if possible, to minimize the chance that visitors will find the actual nest sites. Other measures to protect the breeding sites may be taken as needed.
4. Allow sand dredged from the Ventura Harbor to be disposed of along the ocean shoreline in the natural preserve. Such disposal operations shall not detract from the natural values of the preserve. Before the laying of slurry pipelines, a department resource ecologist shall be notified to ensure that disposal operations will not disturb the least tern nesting sites.
5. Establish a comprehensive water management program for the natural preserve, with the objective of providing the best possible wetlands habitat. Major factors to be considered in this program shall be the rights reserved by Hugo McGrath and Associates, and any successor, to enter the unit to dredge, remove sand and other substances, and do other work as necessary to keep the river channel open to permit water flow from the river to the ocean. Other factors include the discharge of effluent by the Ventura-Eastside Water Reclamation Plant into the embayment just below Harbor Boulevard.

The program shall also address the operation of the existing floodgate between the main river channel and the saltwater marsh in the south-central portion of the preserve. Emphasis in this marsh area shall be placed on managing water flow in and out of the marsh for the long-term maintenance of salt marsh-type vegetation.

This program also shall investigate the feasibility of developing a water bypass from the river channel to the Ventura marina. This bypass may allow for more control over the water level in the embayment during low runoff periods.

6. Maintain the existing flood control levees in the natural preserve to protect outside developments.

Allowable Use Intensity -- Natural Preserve

Visitor use in the proposed preserve shall be limited to activities which are passive in nature, such as nature observation. Use shall be managed at a low level of intensity. These measures are necessary to protect and perpetuate the high wildlife value for which the preserve is established.

Nearly all of the preserve is subject to both frequent and infrequent flooding. Plans for any recreational use and development in the preserve shall always acknowledge this situation. Facilities developed in the preserve to enhance natural values, or to provide for appropriate public use and interpretation, shall be designed either to withstand flooding or to be removed during periods of high water.



Land Use and Facilities Element

LAND USE AND FACILITIES ELEMENT

Existing Conditions - Assumptions

Recreation Values

Due to the location of McGrath State Beach near major urban centers, its most important recreational value is overnight use in an ocean-related environment. Other recreation values include:

- About two miles of wide sandy beach
- An extensive sand dune area
- Educational opportunities at the Santa Clara River mouth and its important habitat area
- Educational opportunities at McGrath Lake and its important habitat area

Recreation Use

Principal recreation activities include:

Overnight camping for RVs, autos, and the bicycle/hiking trail users
Beachcombing/hiking/jogging
Swimming/sunbathing
Fishing
Surfing
Nature study
Photography

- There is a problem with domesticated animals (mostly dogs off leashes) and off-road-vehicles entering and disturbing sensitive habitat areas at the Santa Clara River mouth and McGrath Lake.
- There is no day-use access or facilities along the two-mile length of public beach.
- In peak-use periods, recreation facilities are full and overcrowded, causing overnight camping turnaways.



Some existing recreation uses at McGrath State Beach include overnight camping and swimming.

Physical Factors

- o The primary recreation season (April through September) coincides with the hot summer months.
- o Vehicular access to the unit is available off Harbor Boulevard.
- o Development potential is limited by the following physical factors:
 - Periodic flooding at the Santa Clara River mouth and at some existing facilities.
 - Sensitive habitat areas with rare, threatened, and endangered species in the Santa Clara River mouth area.
 - McGrath Lake is a sensitive habitat area dividing the unit into two sections.
 - Strong winds and localized poor soil conditions prevent vegetative screening.
 - Fluctuating water levels in both the Santa Clara River mouth and McGrath Lake areas. Water levels are controlled by agricultural interests upstream. Pumping equipment is allowed on unit property by ownership deed. The deed restricts the McGrath Lake level to be maintained between 3.5 and 4.7 feet above mean high tide.
- o The flat area next to the existing campground has potential for development because of the following physical factors:
 - Utilities are available.
 - The area contains only a poor example of a coastal scrub vegetative association.
- o It is impossible to have a road linking the upcoast portion of the unit to the downcoast portion due to the sensitive nature of McGrath Lake. Having only one entrance road is operationally desirable. It also restricts development in the downcoast area.

Planning Issues

From our communication with interested people and organizations, through letters, interviews, questionnaires, and public workshops, we were able to identify a number of planning issues concerning McGrath State Beach.

Identification of Issues

The public identified these significant issues:

- The need for additional campsites during high demand periods
- The need for vegetative screening around campsites
- Native plants should be used for landscape planting

- The need for group campground facilities
- The need for separation between overnight users and day users by new entrance road
- The need for a permanent campfire center
- The need for a permanent bicycle campground
- Relocation of the service yard and employee trailers out of the Santa Clara River floodplain
- Insure buffer zone around Santa Clara River mouth and McGrath Lake for preservation purposes.
- Traffic light is needed on Harbor Boulevard at the unit entrance for safer use
- Widening of the Harbor Boulevard bridge to facilitate a safe bicycle trail across the Santa Clara River
- Removal of ice plant to control overpopulation of ground squirrel and feral cats

The public identified the following areas of significant agreement:

- Protection of both the Santa Clara River mouth and McGrath Lake with their sensitive habitat areas.
- Access for disabled to beaches and all developed facilities.
- Provide day-use access and facilities.



One of several public workshops held on this plan.

Facility Recommendations

The Santa Clara River Mouth

Discussion

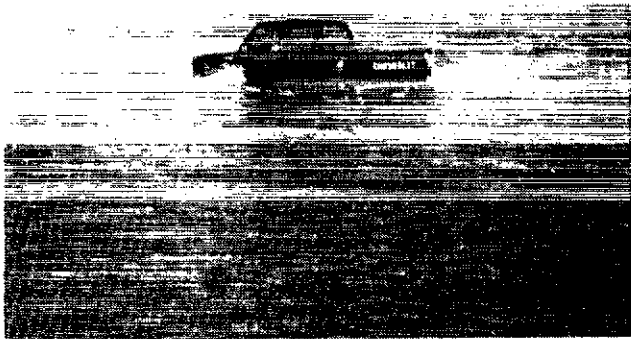
- The Santa Clara River mouth is an important habitat area supporting a great variety of wildlife, most notable of which are two rare, endangered, and threatened species, the California least tern and Belding's savannah sparrow. The endangered brown pelican has also been seen in the area. This area also contains a pickleweed salt marsh, which is a habitat type that has been substantially reduced in size in southern California. Pickleweed marsh is a valuable habitat for the endangered light-footed clapper rail as well as other estuarine-dependent species.
- Noise problems as well as erosion and disturbance problems affecting vegetation and wildlife are created by off-the-road vehicles entering the state beach from underneath the Harbor Boulevard Bridge into the Santa Clara River mouth area. This is especially critical for the endangered species which use this area.
- There is a problem with domesticated animals (mostly dogs without leashes) entering the unit from the north side (city property) beachfront area. This disrupts endangered species who use this area.

Recommendations

1. Because of its uniqueness and educational value to the southern California coastal area, it is recommended that the Santa Clara River mouth area be designated as a natural preserve where no development will be present except access trails and interpretive facilities.

A natural preserve is defined by the department as:

...distinct areas of outstanding natural or scientific significance established within the boundaries of other State Park System units. The purpose of natural preserves shall be to preserve such features



The designation of the Santa Clara rivermouth as a Natural Preserve will make it easier to enforce regulations to keep unauthorized vehicles out of this area and protect the fragile habitat.

as rare or endangered plant and animal species and their supporting ecosystems; representative examples of plant or animal communities existing in California prior to the impact of civilization... (Department's Policies, Rules, Regulations, and Orders.)

2. An interpretive signing program will be established around the boundaries of the natural preserve explaining regulations and the existence of endangered species.
3. Trails throughout the sensitive Santa Clara River Mouth Natural Preserve shall be determined by a department resource ecologist and changed periodically to avoid adverse impacts on the natural resources.

The Existing Campground Area

Discussion

- This area is located between the levee of the Santa Clara River mouth to the north, Harbor Boulevard to the east, Standard Oil property to the south, and the dune area and ocean to the west. Also included in this area are about 20 undeveloped acres located directly south of the existing campground. This area is not a good example of a coastal sage scrub vegetation because of its relatively small size and number of exotic species.
- McGrath State Beach now has 174 developed campsites. According to operational staff, during August 1978, for example, there were 26 consecutive days of turnaways. Turnaways (recorded at the contact station) represent only a fraction of the total people who would like to use the camping facilities at McGrath State Beach. Many people who use the reservation system know in advance when the unit is full. Also, many people do not attempt to enter the campground when the "campground full" sign is displayed. There is currently no way to tabulate these types of turnaways.
- At present, there is no day-use access or day-use facilities along the public beach.
- There are no group camping facilities at McGrath State Beach. At present, there are no coastal group campground facilities in Ventura County. However, there are proposed group camping facilities included in the Emma Wood State Beach and Point Mugu State Park General Plans.
- A campfire center is a type of amphitheater where people can gather for movies, slide shows, and talks near a campfire. This is an important facility for promoting the interpretive and educational experience at McGrath State Beach. The existing facility is temporary, small, in a poor location, and affected by traffic of the nearby road. Also, general camping noise interferes with programming.
- The California Department of Transportation has established a bicycle/hiking trail along the edge of Harbor Boulevard. It is part of the Pacific Coast Bicycle/Hiking Trail which runs the entire length of the state. Directly off this trail in the campground area, a permanent bicycle/hiking campground has

been proposed in the Ventura Coast Beaches Study issued by the State Department of Parks and Recreation in 1976. At present, there is only a temporary facility.

- The existing service yard and employee trailers are in the floodplain of the Santa Clara River. During heavy rains, flooding occurs.
- Because of soil conditions (high salt content and poor drainage), the varieties of plant materials that are able to thrive, while providing adequate wind protection and screening, are extremely limited. Myoporum, an exotic, is now extensively used. Existing plant material (Hottentot fig, Carpobrotus edulis), located in the center of each cul-de-sac campground, has provided habitat for an overpopulation of the ground squirrel, which creates a health and safety problem and a general nuisance, and attracts cats.

Recommendations

1. Since there is a demonstrated need for additional camping, it is proposed that there be a net increase of 68 campsites (removal of 20 existing and the addition of 88 new), bringing the total from 174 campsites to 242. These campsites will be located in the area directly south of the existing campground on property under present ownership of the State Department of Parks and Recreation. These campsites will be constructed in the existing cul-de-sac circle design, except for one area in the southeast corner, which will contain 8 sites around the inside of a large circle. Facilities in this area (tables, stoves, tentsites) are to be located in the interior of the circle. These sites can be used by individual campers or groups.
2. Access is needed to day-use and picnic facilities at McGrath State Beach. A 50-vehicle parking area is proposed, with access to the beach. Between the parking area and the beach, 10 picnic sites, each with table and stove, are to be developed. Since the parking area and road would be located on present Standard Oil property, development depends on potential acquisition of this area. Location of day-use facilities in this area will help evenly distribute people (both day users and overnight campers) along the beach frontage. This will help keep people out of the beach area of the natural preserve by allowing easier access to the southern portions of McGrath State Beach. Picnic facilities (table and stove) will be provided to keep day users from coming into overnight campsites to use these facilities. A low-water-use comfort station will be located next to the day-use parking area.
3. With the addition of day-use access and facilities, a new entrance road with a contact station and a turnaround with a trailer sanitation station and parking, will be required. For the best operational conditions, a separation in road access for overnight and day-use facilities is necessary immediately past the contact station. To accomplish this, the entrance road will be moved to the south along Harbor Boulevard. After a vehicle passes the contact station, a left turn will lead to the day-use area, while a right turn will take the visitor to the camping facilities. With the new entrance road design, removal of one 10-site "cul-de-sac" campground will be necessary.
4. With the relocation of the entrance, an area will be vacated where the service yard and employee trailer can be relocated. This location is out of the Santa Clara



An additional 88 campsites will be constructed in the foreground next to the existing camping facility. Twenty existing campsites would be removed, for a net gain of 68.



The plan proposes to provide day-use access. At present only overnight campers can enjoy recreational opportunities at the beach.

floodplain, and will provide enough area for an additional four employee trailer pads, storage building, extra parking for campground users, and a staging area for interpretive walks into the natural preserve.

5. With some modification, the existing entrance road can serve as a controlled entrance to the service yard and to the campground, without having to go past the contact station. These roads would be used exclusively by service and emergency vehicles. This area also has utilities (electricity, LPG gas, water, and the funded proposed sewage tie-in with the Ventura Water Renovation facility).



A new entrance road with contact station and turnaround will be built here. It will separate overnight camping and day-use facilities.



A permanent campfire center will be constructed, replacing the temporary facility shown here.

6. It is proposed that a new permanent campfire center be built where there is now a 10-site cul-de-sac campground. This permanent facility would have a seating capacity of 150 people, and contain a screen, movie and slide projector pedestal with electrical outlets, public address system, and fire ring. For easy access, it will be located in the approximate center of the existing and proposed campground.
7. It is proposed that a permanent bicycle campground be developed south of the existing campground adjacent to the Standard Oil property. The bicycle campground would contain 10 sites, each with a table and stove, and replace the existing temporary facility. A bicycle/hiking trail through the interior of the park is proposed to connect the campground to the downcoast area near the Mandalay Generating Plant and Outfall. This proposal follows recommendations in the Ventura County Beaches Study made by the State Department of Parks and Recreation (1976), and depends on potential acquisition listed in this General Plan.
8. In the area of the existing and proposed new campground, it would be desirable to try certain hardy native plants such as coyote bush along with the existing myoporum. The existing Hottentot fig (Carpobrotus edulis) must be removed from the middle of the cul-de-sac campground to help control the overpopulation of ground squirrels. This area could be planted with a hybrid bermuda grass or salt grass. Conifers, such as Monterey cypress or bishop pine, which are California natives, could also grow on the site to provide windbreaks and screening between campsites. It is intended that every effort be made to use native plants.



Ice plant will be removed from the middle of the "cul-de-sac" campsites to help control the overpopulation of ground squirrels.

The McGrath Lake Area

Discussion

- The portion of the McGrath Lake area now owned by the State Department of Parks and Recreation is an important habitat area and supports a great variety of wildlife.

Recommendation

It is proposed that no development occur in this area. Only access trails and educational facilities, such as interpretive panels, will be provided. A bicycle/hiking trail through the unit's interior is proposed to connect the bike campground to the downcoast area near the Mandalay Generating Plant and Outfall. This trail would pass by McGrath Lake on the inland side near Harbor Boulevard. The trail will provide access to bicyclists for interpretation and to service vehicles for surveillance of this fragile area. The completion of this bicycle/hiking trail depends on acquisition.

The Dune and Beach Area

Discussion

- The dune and beach area runs the entire length of McGrath State Beach. It contains a good example of a stabilized dune.

Recommendation

Because this is a disappearing resource in southern California, it is proposed that no development occur in the dune area. Access to this area will allow people to enjoy low density activities such as sunbathing, beachcombing, and surf fishing, which will not infringe on the natural resources.



No development will occur in the stabilized dune area of McGrath State Beach.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED PUBLIC FACILITIES

	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Removed</u>	<u>New</u>	<u>Total</u>
Developed Campsites	174	20	88	242
Combination Buildings	3	0	2	5
Day-Use Parking	0	0	50	50
Day-Use Picnic Sites	0	0	10	10
Comfort Station	0	0	1	1
Trailer Sanitation Station	1	1	1	1

Also:

A permanent campfire center with an approximate seating capacity of 150 persons will be constructed, replacing a temporary facility.

A permanent 10-unit bicycle/hiking campground will be constructed to replace a temporary facility.

Administration facilities will include relocation of the service yard, and construction of a storage building and four employee trailer pads. Also included will be the construction of a new entrance road with a contact station, and a turnaround with the trailer sanitation station.

Capacity of Facilities

Facilities at McGrath State Beach now serve about 145,000 visitors annually. The recommendations include upgrading and enhancing existing facilities and adding of new facilities. With those proposed additions, it is expected that annual visitation at McGrath State Beach will increase to nearly 200,000.

Hostel Facilities

The California State Park System Coast Hostel Facilities Plan, dated January 1978, recommends McGrath State Beach as a potential hostel site.

Because of the limited size of this unit and emphasis on preservation, this General Plan recommends that an alternative site be sought. A suitable building might be found in the City of Ventura near the California Coastal Trail. It is proposed, however, that a bicycle campground be constructed at McGrath State Beach (a temporary facility now exists). This development will help meet some of the needs that the proposed hostel facility would satisfy.

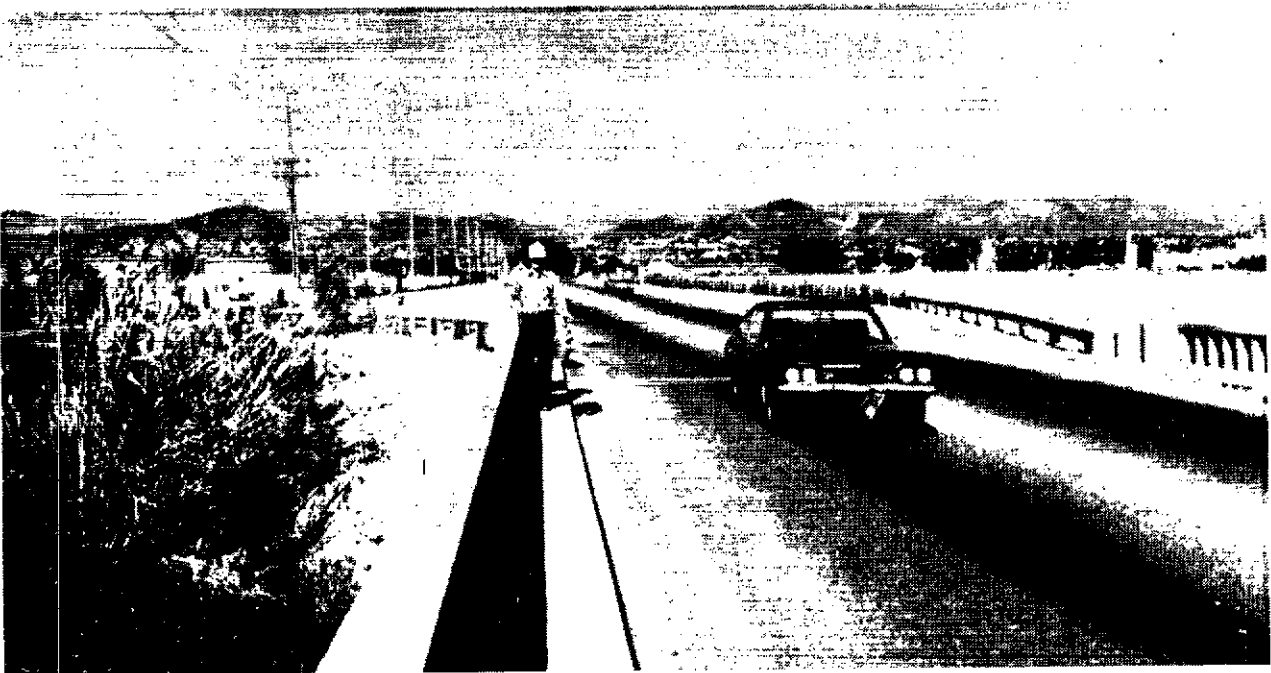
Transportation

Discussion

- Visitors come almost exclusively by car or recreational vehicle to McGrath State Beach. A few come by bicycle via the Pacific Coast Bicycle/Hiking Trail, which parallels the park on Harbor Boulevard. Visitors at present come to stay overnight, since there are no day-use facilities.
- There is currently no bus service linking the unit to any metropolitan area (Oxnard or Ventura).
- The Pacific Coast Bicycle and Hiking Trail crosses the Santa Clara River on the Harbor Boulevard Bridge. At present it is several feet wide, allowing little separation from high-speed vehicular traffic.

Recommendations

- Proposed day-use facilities will provide access to two miles of public beach. Access will be provided for cars, recreational vehicles, bicyclists, and hikers. Also, it will be important to encourage the South Coast Area Transit System to include stops for day users at McGrath State Beach.
- The Harbor Boulevard bridge is not owned by the Department of Parks and Recreation. However, the department recommends that the bridge be widened for safety reasons as part of the Pacific Coast Bicycle and Hiking Trail.



The Department of Parks and Recreation recommends that the Harbor Boulevard bridge be widened to safely accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians.

Interpretation

The primary interpretive themes are:

- Ecological Relationships of the Santa Clara River Mouth, Salt Marsh, and Coastal Strand.
- Wildlife Habitats and Vegetative Communities of McGrath State Beach and Its Natural Preserve.
- Recreational Opportunities to Be Found in the Unit, and Beach Safety.

The secondary interpretive themes are:

- Beach Geology
- McGrath Lake

Interpretive methods include:

- Ranger-guided tours
- Self-guided tours
- Campfire programs with audio-visual methods
- Observation platform
- Staging area
- Brochures
- Interpretive panels and signs
- Announcements and schedules
- The use of "whale flags" during whale migration season to let visitors know that whales have been sighted.



Ranger-guided tours are a very important interpretive method for helping visitors understand and appreciate the sensitivity of both the Santa Clara rivermouth and McGrath Lake.

Recommendations for Local Coastal Plan

The area across the street from McGrath State Beach is now zoned agricultural preserve and open space. The Department of Parks and Recreation would like to see this land use remain the same to help preserve the open and rural nature of this unit and the surrounding area.

The department recommends preserving the floodplain and water quality of the Santa Clara River. A high standard of quality is essential to protect the several rare, endangered, and threatened species.

The department is concerned about noise from the heliport located north of the Santa Clara River mouth. Excessive noise intrudes on the habitat of the known rare, endangered, and threatened species, and interferes with visitor enjoyment.

The department is concerned with the water level both at the mouth of the Santa Clara River and at McGrath Lake. The department would like to work out an operations plan with Hugo McGrath and Associates and others to regulate water levels to provide optimum wildlife conditions, while preserving surrounding agricultural lands.

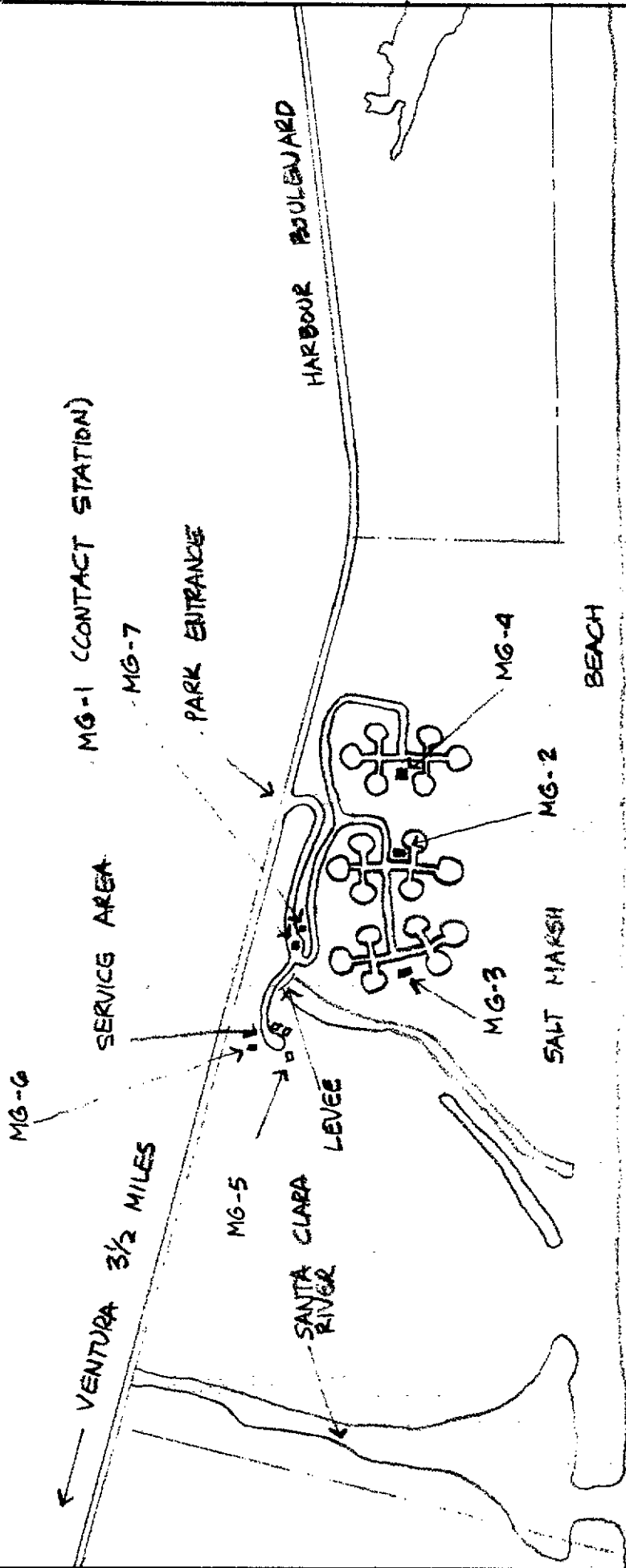
Traffic on Harbor Boulevard affects vehicular circulation at the entrance and exit to the unit. Lanes for acceleration, deceleration, and turning, and a stoplight are needed for pedestrian, bicyclist, and vehicular safety.

Excessive noise from the heliport north of the park is an intrusion on the habitat of known rare, endangered, and threatened species.



McGRATH STATE BEACH
SUMMARY OF EXISTING STRUCTURES WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Item</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
MG-1	Contact Station	Maintain. Raise the height of the floor about 7" to be equal with the outside curb. Install roof scuppers or a roof drain.
MG-2 3, 4	Combination Buildings	Maintain. Repair shower/dressing seat benches. Patch holes in the walls, refinish doors. Treat door with a rust inhibitor.
MG-5	Mobile Homes	Move
MG-6	Partial Remains of a Lifeguard Tower	Replace
MG-7	Interpretive Display	Maintain



MC GRATH STATE BEACH

Potential Acquisition

Additions are now being considered for McGrath State Beach. These additions could provide expanded recreational opportunities and additional resource management and protection capabilities. Acquisition of existing oil facilities depends on when oil operations are phased out.

It must be noted that acquisitions proposed in this General Plan as additions to existing units of the State Park System are not ensured. Desirable lands must be properly evaluated, selected, funded, negotiated, and transferred before their inclusion in the State Park System becomes a reality. If and when lands are acquired, no development can be permitted until an Inventory of Features and General Plan amendments have been prepared by staff and adopted by the Park and Recreation Commission.

Description

Size: There are three separate areas that could be acquired. Combined they total about 50 hectares (125 acres) (see General Plan Map).

Location: The potential acquisition areas are contiguous with the existing McGrath State Beach ownership. One area is adjacent to the upcoast boundary of the park and is owned by the City of Ventura. It covers that portion of the Santa Clara River mouth that is not state owned. The two other areas are located on both sides of McGrath Lake.

Access: Since the potential acquisitions are contiguous to the existing state beach, access will be through the existing unit entrance off Harbor Boulevard.

Surroundings: These potential acquisitions will consolidate state ownership between the Santa Clara River and the Southern California Edison Power Plant. With the ocean to the west and agricultural lands to the east, this unit retains an open and rural setting.

Existing Land Uses

- Walking/hiking/jogging/beachcombing
- Sunbathing/swimming
- Areas used as a garbage dump
- Off-road-vehicle use in sand dune and river mouth areas
- Standard Oil facilities
- Go-cart race track



One area considered for potential acquisition is the area south of McGrath Lake, now used as a go-cart racetrack.

Recreation and Preservation Values

- o Significant natural resources worthy of preservation include:
 - The sensitive habitat of the Santa Clara River mouth
 - The sensitive habitat of McGrath Lake
 - Extensive unstable dune and beach areas
- o Size and variety of topography could offer a wide range of recreational opportunities. Possibilities include:
 - Wide and sandy beach good for beach-related recreational activities.
 - Flat inland area good for potential day-use facilities.
 - Potential educational and interpretive facilities for sensitive habitat areas.
 - Flat area could accommodate a bicycle/hiking trail link for the overall Ventura area, as suggested in the Ventura County Beaches Study.

Land Use Concepts

Emphasize Landscape Preservation and Visual Protection

- o Maximize open space
 - Recreation use to be of low density in potential acquisition areas
 - Recreation development (day-use facilities) to be concentrated in one area
 - Preservation of the potential acquisition in the Santa Clara River mouth, McGrath Lake, and unstable dune-beach areas to be emphasized
 - Wild and open nature of sites to be preserved by removal of some of Standard Oil facilities (some operations will continue) and removal of "go-cart" area

Emphasize Recreation Uses Compatible with Natural Values (Low-Density, Nonintensive, Low-Noise, Low-Technology Recreation Use)

- o Bicycle/hiking trail, day-use picnicking, natural and cultural history interpretation, swimming, fishing, etc.

Transportation and Circulation

Circulation to Minimize Automobile Use

- o Road construction to be minimized
 - Existing roads and trails to be used where possible

- Access to remain at Harbor Boulevard entrance
- New internal road to be constructed
- o Non-automobile transportation to be encouraged
 - Bicycle/hiking trails could provide access to the resources at McGrath State Beach.
 - With the establishment of day-use facilities, there will be encouragement for a South Coast Area Transit stop.

Potential Facility Recommendations

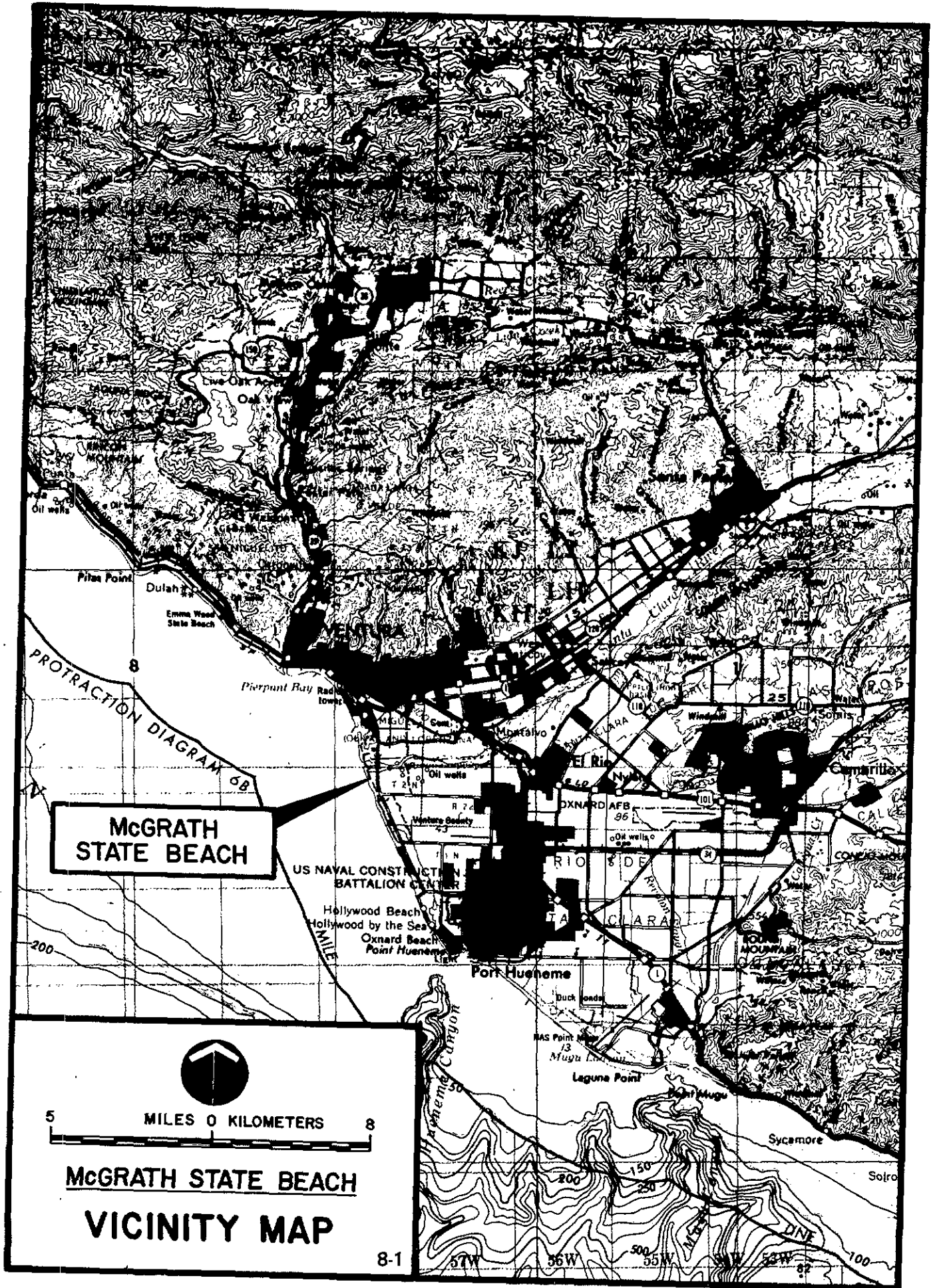
(Refer to General Plan Map for proposed location)

- o Construction of new internal road
- o Day-use parking for 50 vehicles
- o Comfort station
- o 10 picnic sites
- o Interpretive facilities
- o Bicycle/hiking trail

Concessions Element

No concession facilities are recommended for McGrath State Beach because of its limited day-use facilities and its location near urban areas that can supply overnight users' needs. Concessionaire services are most successful in high demand day-use areas. With only limited day-use facilities proposed for McGrath, concession services would not be feasible.

Appendix



**McGRATH
STATE BEACH**

US NAVAL CONSTRUCTION
BATTALION CENTER

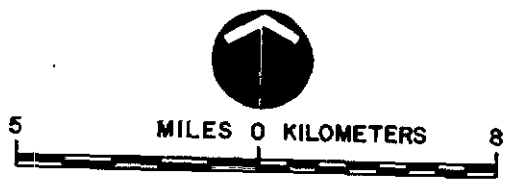
Hollywood Beach
Hollywood by the Sea
Oxnard Beach
Point Huemul

Port Huemul

Laguna Point

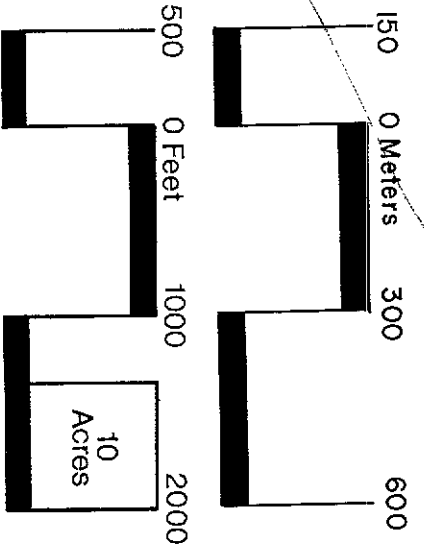
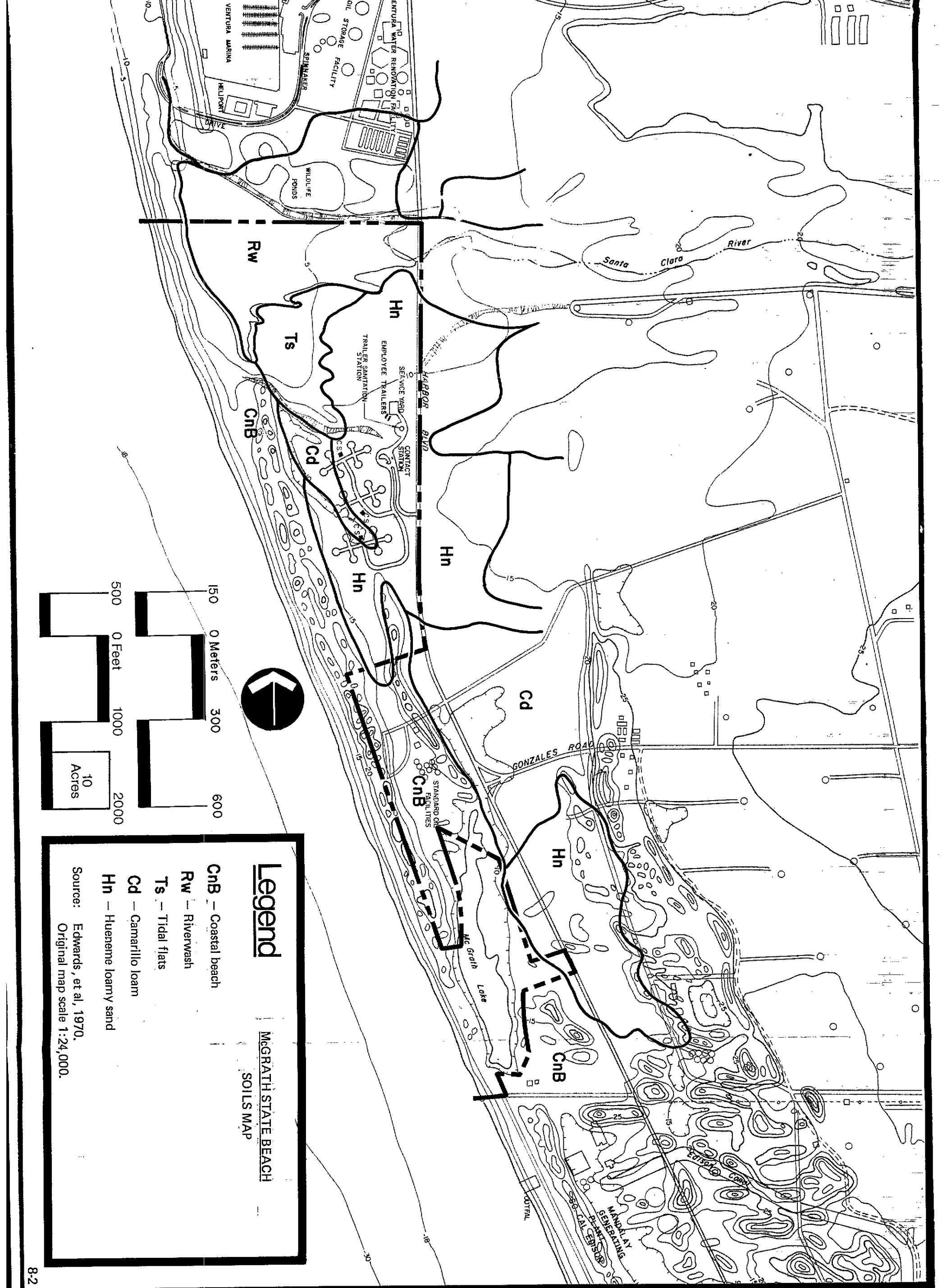
Sycamore

Solro



**McGRATH STATE BEACH
VICINITY MAP**

8-1



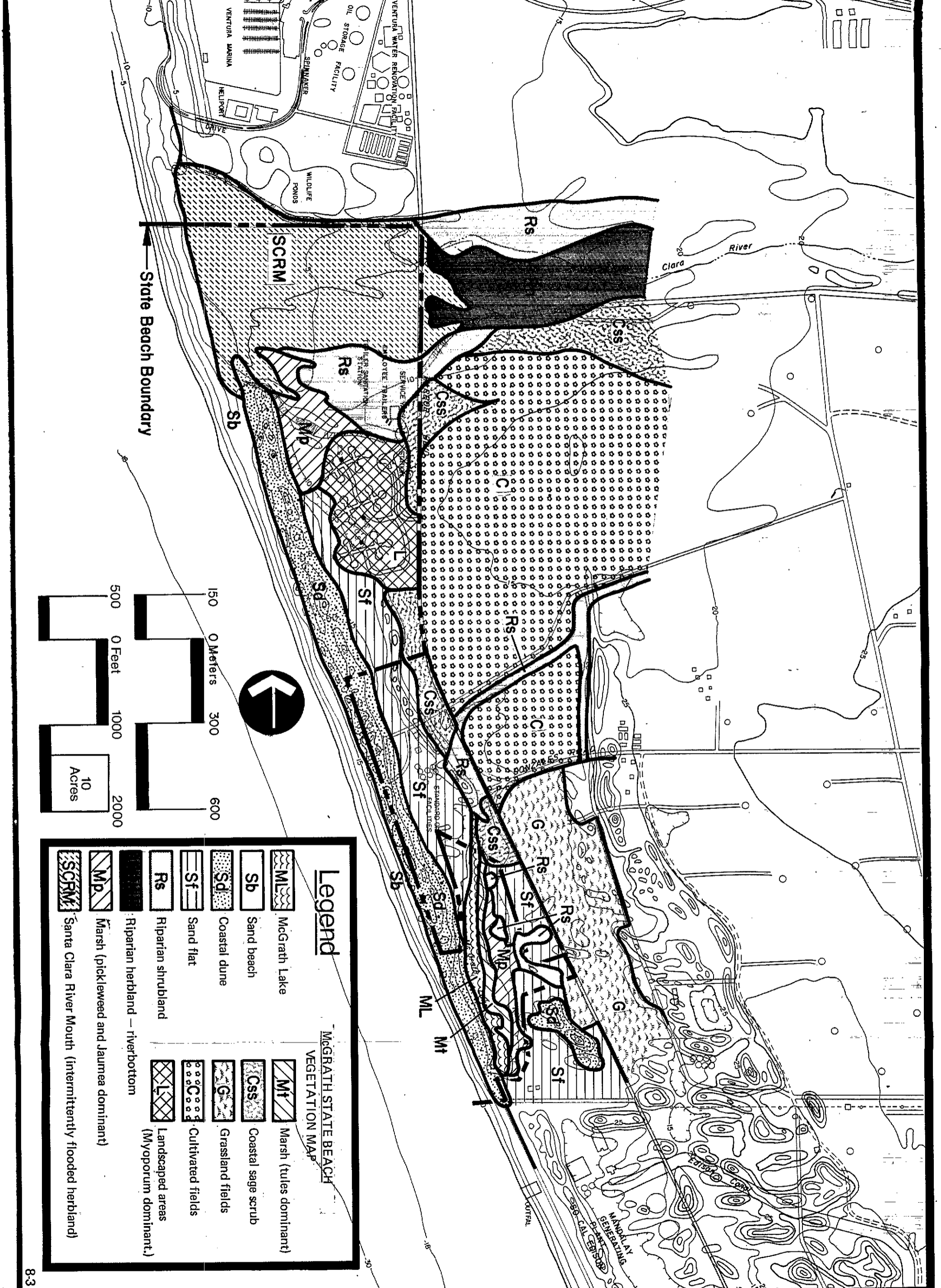
Legend | McGRATH STATE BEACH SOILS MAP

- CnB — Coastal beach
- Rw — Riverwash
- Ts — Tidal flats
- Cd — Camarillo loam
- Hn — Hueneme loamy sand

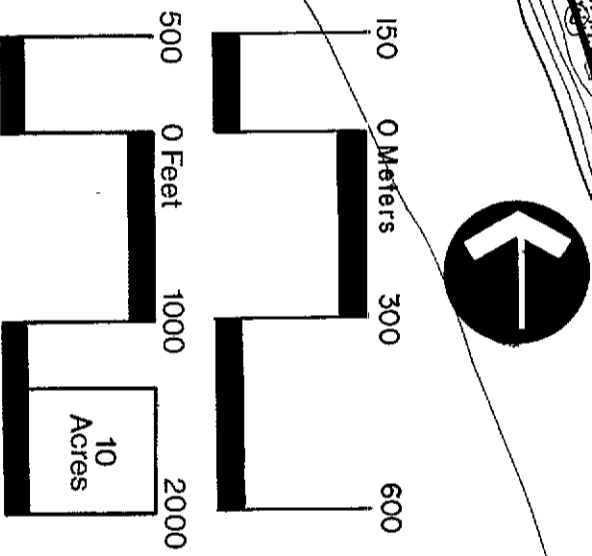
Source: Edwards, et al, 1970.
Original map scale 1:24,000.

8-2

SHEET NO. OF	DRAWING NO.	Santa Barbara/Ventura Coastal State Park System Plan SOILS MAP McGRATH STATE BEACH	RESOURCES AGENCY OF CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION		DESIGNED
			APPROVED _____ DATE _____	REVISIONS	DATE



State Beach Boundary



Legend	
	McGrath Lake
	Sand beach
	Coastal dune
	Sand flat
	Riparian shrubland
	Marsh (pickleweed and Jaumea dominant)
	Santa Clara River Mouth (intermittently flooded hermland)
	Marsh (tules dominant)
	Coastal sage scrub
	Grassland fields
	Cultivated fields
	Landscaped areas (Myoporum dominant.)
	Riparian hermland - riverbottom

8-3

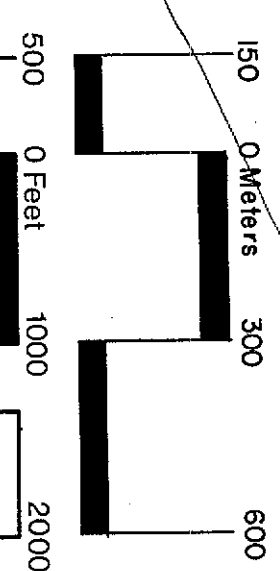
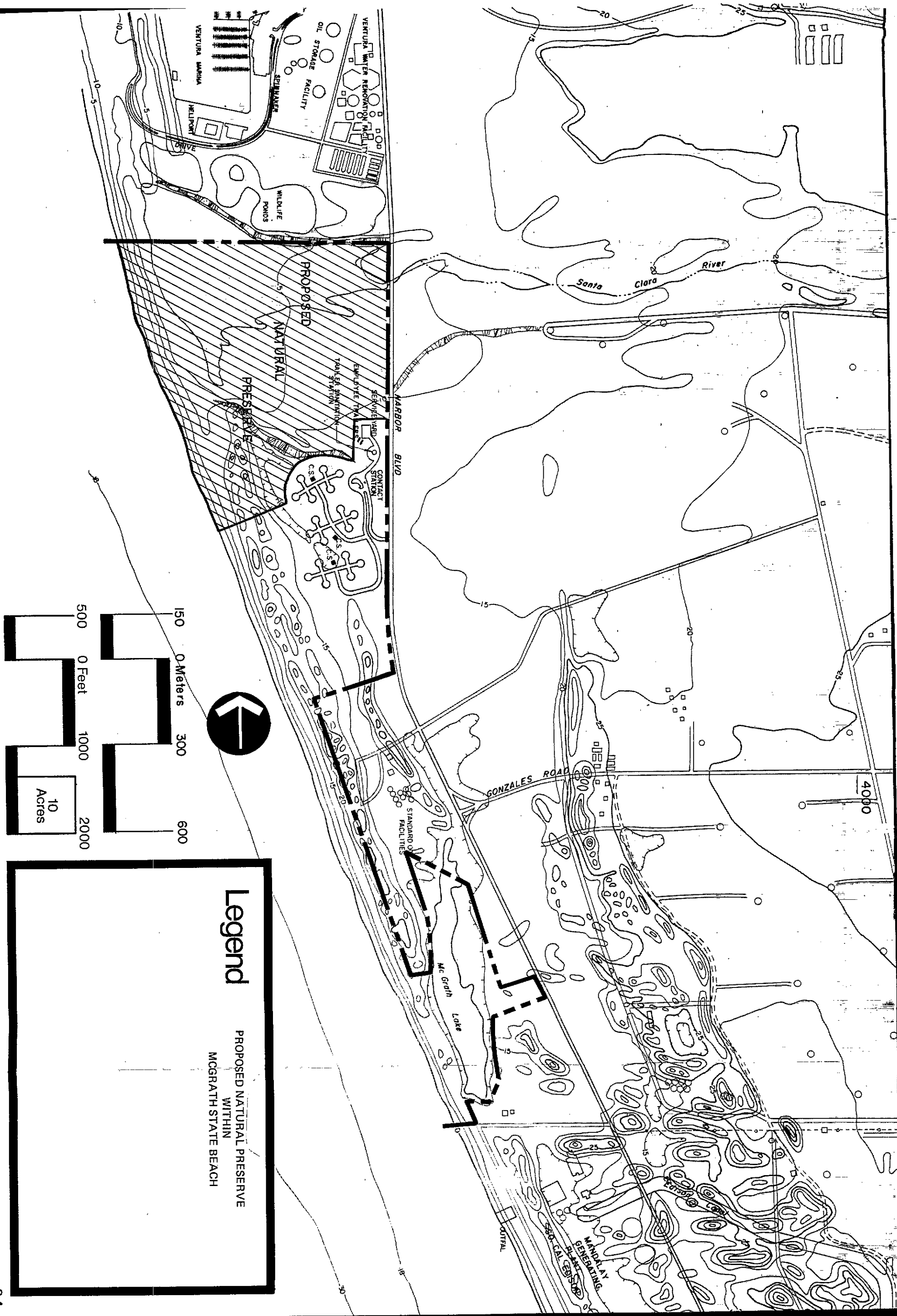


Santa Barbara/Ventura Coastal State Park System Plan
VEGETATION MAP
 McGRATH STATE BEACH

RESOURCES AGENCY OF CALIFORNIA
 DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

APPROVED: _____ DATE: _____

REVISIONS	DATE	DESIGNED
		DRAWN AUG. 1978 CHECKED



Legend

PROPOSED NATURAL PRESERVE
WITHIN
MCGRATH STATE BEACH

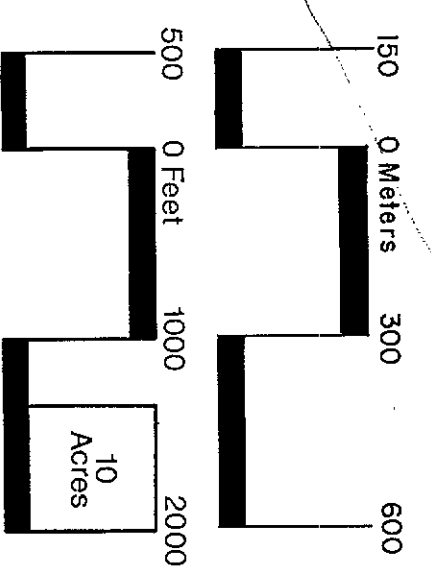
8-4

REVISIONS	DATE	DESIGNED

DRAWN
CHECKED



(1) Mapping units and representative facilities and activities are for general planning purposes only. Specific facilities and acceptable uses shall be approved by the Resource Preservation and Interpretation Division.



Legend	
Relative Intensity of Use	Allowable Use Intensity
High	High density camping, day-use parking, general beach activities
Moderate	Low density camping, walk-in camping, picnicking
Low	Hiking and interpretive trails, nature observation
Representative Facilities or Activities	

8-5

NOTES

1. "Potential acquisition proposals shown here are intended for long-range planning purposes only and are not a commitment for acquisition."
2. "The provision of facilities indicated on lands not presently owned by the California Department of Parks and Recreation is contingent on State acquisition of those lands. Land uses shown represent potential opportunities based on available data. Additional investigations will be initiated if and when acquisition is completed, and alternate land uses may be indicated or necessitated by further study."

RELOCATION OF SERVICE YARD

- Service Yard and Building
- 4 Employee Trailer Pads
- Interpretive Staging Area

NEW ENTRANCE ROAD

- Contact Station and Turnaround
- Trailer Sanitation Station

ADDITIONAL CAMPING

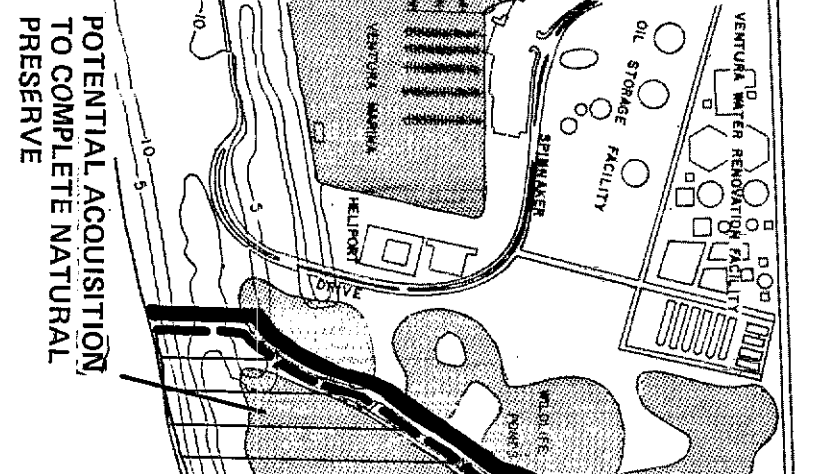
- 88 New Campsites
- 20 Existing Campsites to be removed
- 2 New Combination buildings

BICYCLE/HIKING TRAIL

- 10 Unit Bicycle/Hiking Camp-ground

DAY USE FACILITIES

- 50 Car Parking Area
- 10 Picnic Sites
- Comfort Station

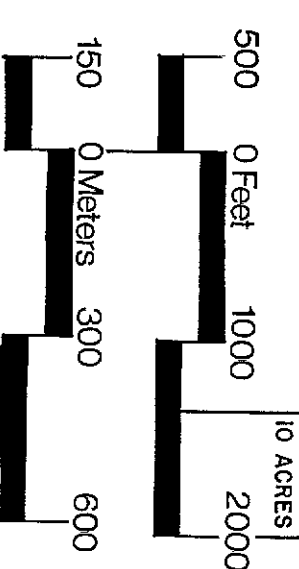


POTENTIAL ACQUISITION TO COMPLETE NATURAL PRESERVE

- Interpretive trails and panels

CAMPFIRE CENTER

- 150 Person Capacity



Legend

[Thick solid line]	POTENTIAL PROJECT BOUNDARY
[Dashed line]	STATE BEACH BOUNDARY
[Stippled area]	POTENTIAL NATURAL PRESERVE
[Diagonal hatching]	POTENTIAL ACQUISITION
[Dotted area]	POTENTIAL & PROPOSED FACILITIES
[Cross-hatching]	PROPOSED BICYCLE TRAIL
[Horizontal hatching]	REMOVE EXISTING FACILITIES

POTENTIAL ACQUISITION

Acquisition of oil related facilities contingent on phase out of operations.

Pacific Ocean

MANDALAY BEACH COUNTY PARK

MANDALAY GENERATING PLANT

MANDALAY BEACH

MANDALAY BEACH