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## **I.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **I.1 Purpose and Scope**

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addresses at a project-level the potential environmental effects associated with implementation of the Malibu Parks Public Access Enhancement Plan – Public Works Plan (Plan), which includes the construction and operation of park facilities, camping, and trail improvements; various park programs, a fire protection and emergency evacuation plan; and related Plan policies and implementation measures. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the preparation of an EIR when a project, such as the proposed Plan, would have potentially significant impacts on the environment. EIRs are prepared to “inform public agency decision makers and the public generally of the significant effect of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project” (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15121). An EIR is intended to serve as an informational document for decisionmakers and the general public regarding the environmental consequences of a project.

While CEQA requires that major consideration be given to avoiding environmental impacts, the lead agency and other responsible agencies (agencies that have discretionary approval or permitting authority over the proposed project) must balance adverse environmental effects against other public objectives, including economic and social goals, in determining whether and in what manner a project should be approved.

### **I.2 Project Overview**

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) have prepared the Plan with the goal of maximizing public access and recreational opportunities for parkland and recreation areas in the coastal areas of Malibu and the Santa Monica Mountains in unincorporated Los Angeles County.

The Plan focuses on a coastal area in Malibu and the Santa Monica Mountains located along the southern California coastline. The Plan site includes public recreation areas (parklands and trail corridors) starting on the west at the east edge of Kanan Dume Road. The Plan site extends easterly to the Malibu Bluffs Conservancy Property (Malibu Bluffs). It extends southerly to Pacific Coast Highway at Corral Canyon Park and to Malibu Road by Malibu Bluffs. It extends northerly beyond the City of Malibu/Unincorporated Los Angeles County Boundary to the Santa Monica Mountains

"ridgeline" in Malibu Creek State Park in Corral Canyon. Public lands addressed in the Plan include Ramirez Canyon Park, Escondido Canyon Park, the Latigo Trailhead property, Solstice Canyon Park, Corral Canyon Park, Malibu Bluffs, National Park Service-owned land in Ramirez Canyon, Los Angeles County-owned land, City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power property, and State Parks-owned and National Park Service-owned land in upper Corral Canyon.

Public parklands that are owned and maintained by the National Park Service (Ramirez Canyon site/Solstice Canyon Park/Corral Canyon) and those owned and maintained by California State Parks (Malibu Creek State Park), are included in the Plan both to allow for comprehensive and strategic planning for developing trail connectors with the goal of establishing a network of parks, trails, and open space for public use, and to connect the Plan site to primary trails and access roads. However, the Plan does not discuss in detail the existing conditions and facilities or future plans of the National Park Service and California State Parks for these parklands beyond these trail connections. It focuses on establishing trail connections to these National and State parklands.

The Plan includes a comprehensive policy and implementation program proposed to enhance access and recreation opportunities at specific coastal parkland and recreation areas by creating an interconnected system of trails, parks, open space, and habitats; by improving alternative methods of transportation between parklands; and by identifying and completing recreational facility and program improvements for the park properties in the Plan area to support existing recreational demand and to facilitate an increased level of accessibility for visitors with special needs. The Plan provides the framework for implementing programs and improvements to the parklands and trail system included in the Plan area and addresses issues associated with growing visitation and demands for outdoor recreational opportunities in the Santa Monica Mountains and Malibu area, potential impacts to natural resources, and transportation needs to promote and facilitate public access opportunities in the coastal zone, while balancing the needs and concerns of private residents adjacent to public recreational lands.

The Plan addresses long term programmatic adaptation, improvement and maintenance needs to ensure the continued success of the various programs currently implemented and those proposed to facilitate public access and recreation opportunities for visitors with diverse backgrounds, interests, ages, and abilities. The proposed Plan identifies a comprehensive set of policies and implementation to enhance general and specialized public access, recreation, and public outreach opportunities by planning for the physical improvements, maintenance requirements, and the programmatic needs necessary to ensure safe access and recreation for visitors of all abilities to park areas in Malibu and the Santa Monica Mountains.

The Plan's policy and implementation program provides site-specific development standards and other implementation measures to 1) complete trail connections for the Coastal Slope Trail, the Beach to Backbone Trail, from the beach to Malibu Bluffs and other connector trails, and to ensure adjacent lands are protected as natural and scenic areas to enhance the recreational experience of trail corridors, and 2) identify site-specific public access, recreational facility, and program improvements for Ramirez Canyon Park, Escondido Canyon Park, Latigo Trailhead, Corral Canyon Park, and the Malibu Bluffs Conservancy Property.

The proposed trail, recreational facility, and program improvements include implementing specific public works projects to develop new camp and day use areas and critical park support facilities (parking, trailhead amenities, park administrative and maintenance facilities, etc.), to improve alternative and public transportation opportunities to recreational resources, and to provide trail and park features designed to increase accessibility for visitors with disabilities. In addition, the Plan addresses Ramirez Canyon Park program and operational elements that support special public outreach and educational opportunities, as well as the existing administrative infrastructure associated with operating specialized public outreach programs at the Park, conducting open space acquisitions, planning, research, and the management of conservation of parklands in the surrounding coastal zone area.

### **1.3 Public Works Plan Background**

The City of Malibu Local Coastal Program (LCP), certified by the California Coastal Commission (Commission) on September 13, 2002, and adopted by the City of Malibu, is the standard of review for all projects requiring a coastal development permit in the City. The City's LCP contains numerous policies that encourage development of new public access, recreational resources, and associated support facilities in Malibu. The City's LCP also contains a comprehensive set of policies and implementation measures to ensure that such uses and facilities are developed in a manner consistent with the resource protection policies of the LCP and the Coastal Act.

On June 10, 2009, the Commission certified an amendment to Malibu's LCP, incorporating Section 3.4.2, the Malibu Parks Public Access Enhancement Plan Overlay (Overlay), which is a special land use and implementation plan overlay that includes a comprehensive set of policies and development standards for public access and recreation-oriented development within specific park properties and recreation areas in Malibu, including Ramirez Canyon Park, Escondido Canyon Park, the Latigo Trailhead

property, Corral Canyon Park, and the Malibu Bluffs Conservancy Property. The Overlay further identifies specific actions necessary to implement improvements intended to enhance public access and recreation opportunities throughout the area covered by the Overlay including: creation of an interconnected system of trails, parks, open space, and habitats; improvement of alternative methods of transportation between parklands in the area; and identification of recreational facility and program improvements for the park properties to better support existing recreational demand and to facilitate an increased level of accessibility for visitors with diverse backgrounds, interests, ages, and abilities.

Pursuant to Section 30605 of the Coastal Act, the Plan has been developed to serve as the facilities plan for lands subject to the Overlay, as defined by Section 3.4.2 of the Malibu LCP. The Plan area also includes specific park and recreation areas located within adjacent lands of unincorporated Los Angeles County.

### **The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy**

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Act was enacted in 1979 by Assembly Bill 1312 based on the recommendations of the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Commission. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Act was signed into law by Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. on September 27, 1979, as Chapter 1087 of the Statutes of 1979, and pursuant to the California Constitution, the Act became effective on January 1, 1980. Since its establishment, the Conservancy has helped to preserve over approximately 60,000 acres of parkland in both wilderness and urban settings, and has improved more than 114 public recreational facilities throughout Southern California. In addition, the Conservancy has given grants to nonprofit organizations for outdoor and environmental educational and interpretation programs that have served hundreds of thousands of children and other park visitors.

### **The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority**

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) is a local government public entity established in 1985 pursuant to the Joint Exercise of Powers Act (Government Code Section 6500 *et seq.*) consisting of a partnership between the Conservancy and the Conejo and Rancho Simi Recreation and Park Districts, which are local park agencies established by the vote of the people in those communities.

Like the Conservancy, the MRCA is dedicated to the preservation and management of local open space and parkland, watershed lands, trails, and wildlife habitat. The MRCA manages and provides ranger services for about 60,000 acres of public lands and parks

and provides comprehensive education and interpretation programs for the public. The MRCA also provides natural resource and scientific expertise, critical regional planning services, park construction services, park operations, fire prevention, ranger services, educational, and leadership programs for thousands of youth each year.

### **Joint Agency Malibu Parks Public Access Enhancement Plan - Public Works Plan**

The Conservancy and MRCA are jointly proposing the Plan to extend and improve a variety of trail connections and achieve implementation of a key segment of the Coastal Slope Trail and the Beach to Backbone Trail in the Plan area and, thus, ultimately connect significant Federal and State-owned coastal parklands, including Ramirez Canyon Park, Escondido Canyon Park, the Latigo Trailhead property, Solstice Canyon Park, Corral Canyon Park, and Malibu Creek State Park, for the benefit of the public seeking recreation and retreat within the Malibu coastal area.

In addition, the Conservancy and MRCA strive to maintain and develop new recreational, interpretative, and educational programs that will accommodate various means of access for all visitors. As such, the proposed Plan provides for specific improvements to existing park facilities in the Plan area, for development of trail resources, and limited overnight recreational opportunities designed to accommodate visitors of diverse backgrounds, interests, ages, and abilities. Given the various constraints of each park property addressed in the Plan, the need to preserve, protect, restore, and enhance coastal parklands for the benefit of coastal resources, and in the interest of all people, the Conservancy and MRCA have considered a combination of design features and public programs specifically intended to facilitate access opportunities that provide alternative solutions to accessibility where the physical challenges of natural parks, or current limitations on accessibility due to lack of transit or necessary support facilities, might otherwise deny access to people of all races, cultures, and incomes.

### **1.4 Scope of the EIR**

The scope of this EIR is the result of preliminary research and analysis undertaken by the Conservancy and MRCA. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Sections 21080(c) and 21080.1, and CEQA Guidelines Section 15063, an Initial Study (IS) was prepared for the proposed Plan (see *Appendix A*). The IS determined that a number of environmental issue areas may be impacted by the proposed Plan. As a result, the IS determined that

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an EIR should be prepared to address the Plan’s potential significant impacts on a variety of environmental issue areas.

Pursuant to Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the Conservancy and MRCA, as co-Lead Agencies, prepared and circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to public agencies, special districts, and members of the public requesting input on the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR(see *Appendix A*). The NOP was circulated by the Conservancy and MRCA on September 8, 2009 to adjacent residents, other public agencies, and organizations. In addition, notices were published in the Malibu Surfside News and Malibu Times. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period. Responses to the NOP (see *Appendix B*) were considered in preparing this EIR. Notices of Availability of this EIR were mailed to public agencies, interested persons, and individual property owners within the Plan vicinity. In addition, a notice was published in the Malibu Surfside News.

This EIR addresses all potentially significant environmental impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed Plan, including, without limitation, those identified in the NOP and in comments in response to the NOP. Potentially significant issue areas include the following:

- Aesthetic/Visual Resources
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Fire Hazards
- Geology, Soils, and Seismic Hazards
- Global Climate Change
- Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology, Drainage, and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation, Circulation, and Parking
- Utilities/Service Systems

**I.5 EIR Format and Organization**

This EIR draws on pertinent policies, guidelines, and existing reports and documentation to determine baseline conditions, impacts, and design of mitigation measures. The City of Malibu’s Local Coastal Program and General Plan, including recommendations established by the City’s 2000 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the County of Los Angeles Malibu Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan for the Malibu and Santa Monica Mountains area, and the Municipal Code and Local Implementation Plan of the City of Malibu, were integrated into this analysis, as appropriate. Copies of pertinent documents and guidelines are available for review at the MRCA located at 570 West

Avenue 26, Suite 100 Los Angeles, CA 90065. The content and format of this EIR meet State CEQA Statutes and Guidelines requirements.

The *Executive Summary* provides an overview of the EIR conclusions, including a summary table of environmental impacts, mitigation measures, and residual impacts.

The *Project Description* describes the proposed Plan in detail and necessary agency approvals required for project implementation.

The *Environmental Setting* section describes the existing physical conditions for each environmental resource investigated in this EIR. This section provides the context for assessing potential environmental impacts resulting from development of the proposed Plan.

The *Consistency with Adopted Plans and Policies* section evaluates the proposed Plan's compatibility with existing surrounding land uses and consistency with City of Malibu Local Coastal Program goals and policies, the County of Los Angeles Malibu Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan for the Malibu and Santa Monica Mountains area, and other regional planning documents, where appropriate.

The *Environmental Impact Analysis* section describes potential consequences to each environmental resource that would result from development and operation of the Plan's proposed improvements. The *Methodologies* used in the impact assessment of each environmental issue are discussed within the context of each impact section. *Thresholds of Significance* are used to evaluate the severity of the project's effects on each environmental resource. The primary criteria used to establish the EIR's thresholds of significance are based on CEQA Guidelines *Appendix G Initial Study Checklist*. The threshold of significance for a given environmental effect establishes the level at which the Conservancy/MRCA, as co-lead agencies, finds the effects of the project to be significant.

As stated in CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.7, a threshold of significance is:

*“An identifiable quantitative, qualitative or performance level of a particular environmental effect, non-compliance with which means the effect will normally be determined to be significant by the agency and compliance with which means the effect normally will be determined to be less than significant.”*

Each Environmental Impact Analysis subsection identifies significant or potentially significant environmental effects associated with the project and attempts to identify

mitigation measures capable of reducing those impacts to acceptable (i.e., less than significant) levels. Potential environmental impacts are separated into four distinct classifications. These classifications (i.e., Class I, Class II, Class III, and Class IV) are based on the significance level of environmental impacts.

**Class I** impacts are significant and unavoidable impacts that can neither be mitigated to a level of insignificance nor avoided. If the decision-makers decide to approve the project, they must make overriding considerations for each Class I impact (CEQA State Guidelines Section 15093).

**Class II** impacts are significant impacts that can be avoided or mitigated to a level of insignificance (i.e., potentially significant, but mitigable). If the decision-makers decide to approve a project with Class II impacts, they must make findings pursuant to CEQA State Guidelines Section 15091 that all significant environmental impacts have been avoided or substantially lessened.

**Class III** impacts are adverse impacts that are not significant and do not require mitigation (i.e., less than significant). Class III impacts do not require special action by the decision-makers.

**Class IV** impacts are considered beneficial and also do not require any special action by the decision-maker.

Each Impact section identifies *Mitigation Measures* which are intended to minimize, avoid, or reduce all significant and potentially significant impacts. The measures have been designed to be feasible from an economic, technological, legal, and social standpoint, as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15364.

The *Residual Impact*, or level of environmental impact remaining after implementation of a given mitigation, is listed after each mitigation measure.

In addition to analysis of the project (as proposed), CEQA requires that an EIR discuss the environmental impacts associated with the implementation of any required mitigation. The *Analysis of Impacts Post-Mitigation* in each environmental issue section evaluates how mitigation measures required in other environmental impact analysis sections of the EIR would affect the particular environmental resource under review.

The *Cumulative Impacts* discussion in each environmental issue section describes potential impacts from Plan buildout in combination with related past, present and reasonably foreseeable (e.g., proposed or approved but not built) projects in the area

listed in Chapter 3.0, as required in CEQA Guidelines Section 15130. Cumulative issues are those area-wide and additive concerns (air quality, traffic, biology, etc.) to which a project may contribute in an incremental manner. While these contributions may be considered individually limited in some cases, the potential still exists for these contributions to be cumulatively substantial.

The *Environmental Impact Analysis* section is followed with a brief discussion of *Other CEQA Concerns*, addressing potential Growth Inducement and Significant Irreversible Changes associated with the Plan, as required by CEQA Guidelines Sections 15126(c)(d) and 15126.2(c)(d). A section entitled *Impacts Found Not Significant* summarizes issue areas which were identified as being less than significant within the Initial Study.

As required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, *Project Alternatives* are considered to examine a reasonable range of project alternatives to reduce significant environmental impacts while achieving most of the project objectives. CEQA requires that EIRs describe a reasonable range of alternatives capable of feasibly attaining the basic objectives of the project. In addition, the specific alternative of the “No Project” must also be evaluated in a manner which assumes the status quo. The comparison of impacts from the proposed projects and the alternatives are presented in Section 8.0, and the environmentally-superior alternative among these scenarios is identified.

A draft *Mitigation Monitoring & Reporting Program*, to be included in the Final EIR, will follow the *Alternatives* section and will provide for the Conservancy’s and MRCA’s consideration and adoption a program for the monitoring and reporting on the revisions which the co-lead agencies have required in the project and the measures it has imposed in order to mitigate or avoid significant environmental effects, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15097.

The *Persons and Agencies Contacted*, *References*, and *List of Preparers* sections and *Appendices* provide additional data and information related to the project and its environmental review. Upon preparation of the Final EIR, the *Public Comments Received* during circulation of the Draft EIR and *Responses to Comments* will be located within the *Appendices*. The majority of technical data and reports which are summarized within the Environmental Impact Analysis section are located within the *Appendices*. Other sources of data referenced herein are available for review at the MRCA, 570 West Avenue 26, Ste 100, Los Angeles, CA 90065.

## **I.6 Standards for Adequacy of an EIR**

The standards for adequacy utilized within this EIR are consistent with the State CEQA Guidelines. Specifically, Section 15151 of the Guidelines states:

*“An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in the light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The courts have looked not for perfection, but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure.”*

## **I.7 EIR’s Relationship to the Decision-Making Process**

EIRs are intended to provide decision-makers and the public with information that enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes into account environmental consequences.

In a practical sense, EIRs function as a technique for joint fact-finding, allowing project proponents, concerned citizens, and agency staff an opportunity to collectively review and evaluate baseline conditions and project impacts openly through a process of full disclosure.

When EIRs indicate that unavoidable environmental effects could result from the implementation of a project, decision-makers are required to adopt a statement of overriding considerations if they choose to approve the project. In addition, when EIRs indicate that there are significant environmental impacts which can be mitigated, decision-makers are required to adopt findings that indicate how significant effects have been mitigated to acceptable (less than significant) levels.

This EIR is designed to address the above-mentioned concerns in a clear and concise manner and to provide decision-makers, agency staff, and the general public with an easy-to-read, full disclosure document.

To gain the most value from this report, certain key points should be kept in mind:

- This report should be used as a tool to give the reader an overview of the possible ramifications of the proposed project. It is designed to be an “early warning system” with regard to potential environmental impacts and subsequent effects on the local community’s natural resources.
- A specific environmental impact is not necessarily irreversible or permanent. Most impacts can be wholly or partially mitigated by incorporating measures recommended in this report during the design and construction phases of project development.
- This report, while a summary of facts, reflects the professional judgment of the author and the consultants. Therefore, the reader will have to individually weigh the facts it reports.

## **1.8 Environmental Review Process**

As indicated above, the Conservancy/MRCA considered the potential impacts associated with the proposed Plan as identified in the IS and have solicited agency and public involvement through a formal NOP process. Formal comments were accepted from September 8, 2009 to October 7, 2009. A Scoping Hearing was held on October 1, 2009 to receive comments from the public. Responses to the NOP were considered in the preparation of this document.

The Draft EIR was completed in February 2010. A Notice of Completion was filed with the State of California Office of Planning and Research (OPR) on or about February 2, 2010, which begins a required minimum 45-day public review period for the Draft EIR. Notices of Availability have been mailed out to public agencies, interested persons, and individual property owners within the project vicinity. In addition, a Notice of Availability has been published in the Malibu Surfside News. During the required minimum 45-day public review period, members of the public are invited to submit written comments on the EIR to the Conservancy/MRCA at the following address:

Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy  
Attn: Ms. Judi Tamasi  
5750 Ramirez Canyon Road  
Malibu, California 90265

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In addition, a public meeting to receive oral testimony is tentatively scheduled for Monday, February 22, 2010, to be held at a joint meeting of the Conservancy/MRCA Boards. For additional information and/or to verify the final date, time, and meeting location, please refer to the following website address: <http://www.mrca.ca.gov/>.

The comment period for the Draft EIR will close on March 22, 2010.

Following the close of the Draft EIR comment period, all comments and responses to those comments, and any pertinent additional information, will be reviewed and incorporated into a Proposed Final EIR. The Proposed Final EIR and the proposed Plan will be presented to the Conservancy/MRCA Boards for their consideration and action during a noticed public hearing. If the Plan is approved, the Plan and the Final EIR will then be reviewed by the California Coastal Commission, which may or may not take action thereon.

## **I.9 Lead Agency Designation**

Consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15051(d), the Conservancy and MRCA have agreed to cooperate through a joint exercise of powers to act as co-Lead Agencies. The Conservancy/MRCA, as co-Lead Agencies, have the responsibility for conducting the environmental review of this project, as well as the principal responsibility for approving the Plan.