

# Staff Report

**TO:** Board of Harbor Commissions  
**FROM:** John Moren, Director of Operations  
**DATE:** April 19, 2023  
**SUBJECT:** Surfers Beach Replenishment Pilot Project Update

**Recommendation/Motion:**

Receive project update.

**Policy Implications:**

Consistent with the District's goal to use excess sediment build-up from within the Harbor for beneficial re-use on Surfers Beach.

**Background/Discussion:**

The goal of the Surfers Beach Restoration Pilot Project is to remove sediment, which has built up inside the Pillar Point Harbor (PPH) outer breakwater and negatively impacted navigation, and move it to Surfers Beach for beneficial re-use. In addition to addressing coastal erosion and public access issues at Surfers Beach, this project would also address the issues associated with the shoaling that has occurred inside of the Harbor since the outer breakwater was constructed. The anticipated outcome is that the project will:

- improve the navigation within the outer harbor,
- improve impaired public access,
- mitigate recreational impacts,
- mitigate damages from coastal storms.

The proposed project is located at Pillar Point Harbor and Surfers Beach in the City of Half Moon Bay which is located just south of the Harbor and west of the unincorporated community of El Granada. The proposed Project would involve dredging of up to 100,000 cubic yards (CY) of clean sand accumulated along the inside of Pillar Point Harbor's East Breakwater and a one-time placement of that sand on Surfers Beach to form an elevated berm along an approximately 1,000-foot-long section of shoreline. The purpose of the Project is twofold, first, dredge the outer Harbor to improve navigational safety, and two, address erosion at Surfers Beach by restoring the sandy beach area using clean sand dredged from navigable areas of Pillar Point Harbor, including the area around the boat launch ramp. The project will also involve a large eelgrass mitigation effort, relocating eelgrass in the east basin prior to dredging and establishing a large eelgrass restoration area at the Harbor's

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west basin. This beach restoration project is designed to protect highly eroded portions of shoreline and Highway 1 and other coastal infrastructure. The project is expected to result in creation of an improved ecosystem and beach habitat, restore coastal access, and improve safe navigation within the Harbor.



*Photo showing the proposed Surfers Beach placement area.*

### **Project Updates:**

CEQA: Consistent with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) the District prepared an Initial Study (IS) with the intent to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the proposed project. The draft CEQA documents were posted for public review in October 2022 with the San Mateo County Clerk's office and the California State Clearinghouse, and a public notice was published in the Half Moon Bay Review at the same time. The required 30-day comment period ended on November 18, 2022. The Final IS-MND is available for download on the District's website: <https://www.smharbor.com/surfers-beach-pilot-restoration-project-schedule>, and a hard copy is available for review at the Pillar Point Harbormaster's Office.

Project Engineering and Design: Currently, the engineering team from ESA is coordinating with consultant Brad Damitz and District staff on revising the plans based on input from permitting agencies, and Final (100%) plans are in production.

Draft Technical Specifications and physical Monitoring Plan have been prepared. These documents will require final permit details such as special conditions, as well as pre-construction eelgrass survey results, before they can be finalized. The engineering team at ESA is prepared to finalize these remaining documents rapidly once the remaining details are available, so the project can be put out to bid ASAP.

Permitting and Environmental Review: Permit applications were submitted for the project in early 2022. District staff and consultants have been coordinating with agency staff to respond to ongoing requests for additional information. District staff and consultants have responded to each of these requests in a timely manner. Some of the additional information provided by the District to permitting agencies required new studies/surveys including:

- *Completion of an ambient noise analysis at PPH/Highway 1.* At the request of Coastal Commission staff, the District authorized ESA to send an acoustics specialist to deploy sound measurement equipment near the proposed construction area and conduct an analysis of potential impacts to wildlife due to construction noise.
- *Completion of a Surfers Beach Pilot Restoration Project Special Status Habitat and Species Analysis – supplemental assessment and update.* In response to an information request from Coastal Commission staff, consultant Damitz coordinated with coastal ecologist/botanist Dr. Peter Baye to conduct a site survey and assessment of habitat types and special status species in and adjacent to the project construction areas.
- *Prepared a Tier 1 Exemption Memo and a detailed analysis of prior sediment testing results in Pillar Point Harbor* and all reported spills in the Harbor since 2016. At the request of Army Corps of Engineers and US EPA staff, to address concerns about potential contamination of sediment in the Harbor, District consultant Damitz prepared this detailed assessment. The memo concluded that the sediment in the proposed dredging areas is clean and suitable for use for restoration of Surfers Beach.

Permit applications for the project were submitted to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, California Coastal Commission, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and Monterey Bay/Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuaries, for a volume of up to 100K cy of sand to be placed on Surfers Beach. While the analysis in the IS-MND determined that the project is not expected to result in any significant effects, there is still concern from permitting agency staff about certain special status species including Black Abalone, Steelhead, Coho Salmon, Green Sturgeon, and eelgrass, are mitigation requirements are currently being established.

The District prepared and submitted a proposed Eelgrass Mitigation Plan for the project and has coordinated several interagency meetings over the past 2 years to

discuss plans and obtain agreement from agency staff. However, recently National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) staff has expressed some concerns with the proposed methodology and as a result staff from NMFS, Army Corps, Water Board and Coastal Commission are still reviewing and coming to agreement on the details of the eelgrass mitigation requirements.

Schedule: The project timeline, in all likelihood, has unfortunately shifted to Spring/Summer 2024. The District was previously planning, and working hard to achieve a start date in the spring/summer of 2023 timeframe to begin a phased approach, first completing the eelgrass restoration components of the project, followed by Surfers Beach Project dredging and beach placement. This delay has been caused by the lack of required permits. Without the permits, we cannot finalize plans and put the project out to bid.

However, the District will continue to work with the permitting agencies to obtain the permits. Once permits are approved, an eelgrass survey will occur, all plans and specifications will be finalized based on permit conditions and eelgrass extent, and the project can then go out to bid. Because the eelgrass mitigation requires transplanting of eelgrass, there are restrictions on the timeframe that the construction must occur, with spring/early summer being ideal for allowing the eelgrass transplants to become established. Similarly with the placement of sand on Surfers Beach, construction should occur in the spring/summer timeframe to allow the constructed beach to adjust prior to the winter season. Because of these restrictions, it is highly likely that the project will go out to bid in summer/fall and construction will commence in spring 2024. However, if permits become available within the next few weeks, it might still be possible to move forward with eelgrass mitigation activities in summer 2023.

Funding and Grants: Additional funding is actively being sought for the project. The District and its consultants will continue to seek additional opportunities as more grant funds are announced. Applications have been submitted for more than 10 grant opportunities since 2020. Most recently an application for a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Coastal Resilience Program grant was submitted on April 12, 2023. Additionally, the project has already been approved for grant funding from California Ocean Protection Council (\$75K), California Division of Boating and Waterways (\$800K), and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (\$125K) for project related costs.

**Summary/Recommendation:**

Summary: Staff recommends the Board receive project update.

**Attachments:**

- 1) PPT Update Presentation