

Point Reyes National Seashore
Project Review Form
PORE-41 (11/00 Rev.)

Project Name: Elephant Seal Overlook Trail Rehab. Project No. 02-22

Proposed Start Date _____ Target Completion Date _____
Work Location: Elephant Seal Overlook Trail

Prepared By: Shawn Maloney Submitted by: Bill Michaels

1. To be completed by Originator:

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|----------|
| | | Initials |
| • Is this project controversial or potentially controversial? | Yes ___ No <u>X</u> | |
| • Will there be ground or vegetation disturbance? | Yes <u>X</u> No ___ | |
| • Could the project affect Threatened or Endangered Species? | Yes ___ No <u>X</u> | |
| • Could the project affect water resources? | Yes ___ No <u>X</u> | |
| • Is U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service consultation required? | Yes ___ No <u>X</u> | |
| • Is Section 116 Archeological Clearance required by the Reg. Archeologist? | Yes ___ No <u>X</u> | |
| • Is Section 106 Cultural Resources Compliance/XXX Review required? | Yes ___ No <u>X</u> | |
| • Is a Board of Survey required? | Yes ___ No <u>X</u> | |
| • Are clearances required from any other Federal, State or County agencies? | Yes ___ No <u>X</u> | |
| • Is this project eligible for a Categorical Exclusion (if so, complete below)? | Yes <u>X</u> No ___ | |

2. Originator's Recommendation:

Categorical Exclusion as indicated in DM 516 (state in full):

C (12) Minor trail relocation or development of compatible trail networks on logging roads or other established routes.

3. Route to Superintendent for Concurrence:

[Signature] 4/11/02
Superintendent's Signature Date

4. Staff Review:

Route to	Reviewed	Concur	Comments	Name/Date
Assistant Superintendent				
Senior Scientist / T&E Coordinator	✓	✓		<u>[Signature]</u> 4/22/02
Chief of Nat. Res. Mgt.	✓	✓		<u>[Signature]</u> 5-9-02
Hydrologist	✓		go, see attached	<u>[Signature]</u> 5-9-02
Plant Ecologist	✓	✓	Attached	<u>[Signature]</u> 5-20-02
GIS Specialist	✓	✓		<u>[Signature]</u> 5-15-02
Research Biologist	✓	✓		<u>[Signature]</u> 5-13-02
Chief of Interpretation	✓	✓		<u>[Signature]</u> 5-20-02
Chief of Maintenance				<u>[Signature]</u> 4-8-02
Chief of Cultural Resources	✓	✓		<u>[Signature]</u> 5-21-02
Fire Management Officer	✓	✓		<u>[Signature]</u> 5/1/02
Other as Applicable				

5. RETURN TO SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE BY: 5.9.02

6. Approved for:

- Implement project based upon the Categorical Exclusion as indicated above
 Preparation of an Environmental Assessment:
 Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement:

Approved: [Signature] 5/22/02
Superintendent Date

Project Name: _____

No. 02.22

Statement of Problem: (Why is work or action necessary?)

Work is necessary to provide safe access for all visitors and open this trail to the handicapped visitors. Work is also necessary to stabilize the trail and remove the cows from the trail and surrounding hillsides.

Proposed Project: (Statement of work, location, methods, etc.)

This project involves the upgrade of the 0.16-mile Elephant Seal Overlook Trail at Point Reyes National Seashore to a handicapped accessible trail. The trail will be widened to a 4-foot trail tread as well as covered with compacted rock. Four retaining walls will be built. One retaining wall will hold a weak section of the trail in place; two other walls will hold unstable ground above the trail from covering the trail. The unstable ground prohibits wheelchairs and makes the trail slick. There will be slight adjustments in the trail route to better facilitate drainage. The last retaining wall will be built at the overlook viewing area. A path for a second viewing area above the existing one will expand the viewing area from 280 sq. feet to 1120 sq. feet. This expansion will accommodate the high visitor use. The existing split rail fence will be expanded to encompass the larger viewing area.

The trail and viewing areas will be fenced off to protect them from the effects of grazing. Currently, cows destroy parts of the trail yearly by weakening the surrounding hillside, causing unstable ground above and below the trail. A 10" culvert will be added at the beginning of the trail to keep the water from the Fish Dock Road off the trail.

Alternatives: (Discuss alternative actions considered)

1) No action: impacts will be continued erosion of trail, lack of access for the handicapped and a viewing area that is too small for the current visitation.

Justification:

The Elephant Seal Overlook Trail was originally a cow path that happened to provide a view of the developing Elephant seal colony near the established trailhead and parking area for the Chimney Rock Trail. The colony was established in 1995 when the first pup born at the site and has continued to grow each year. In 2002, 80-90 elephant seals were on the beach during the December to March pupping and breeding season, with 35 pups born at the site. Although, elephant seals pup and breed at other sites within the Seashore, the Drakes Beach colony site the overlook provides a unique opportunity for visitors to watch and learn about seal behavior in a natural setting. The Seashore uses a shuttle system during the weekends in the winter months, which brings as many as 900 visitors per day to the Chimney Rock area.

During the pupping and breeding season, elephant seal docents work at the overlook on all weekend days to educate the visitors about the elephant seal colony. The docents use spotting scopes to give visitors a close-up view of the activity, interpret the seal behaviors, and provide visitor safety and ranger assistance. The docents talk to an average of

500 visitors per day. The trail and overlook are currently not large enough to accommodate this amount of visitor use. In addition, the trail and overlook are not available to handicapped visitors because of the smaller width, the walk-through gate, and the soft and muddy condition of the trail during the months of its highest use.

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Point Reyes National Seashore
Impact/Mitigation Matrix

Project Name: Elephant seal overlook trail up grade No. 02-22

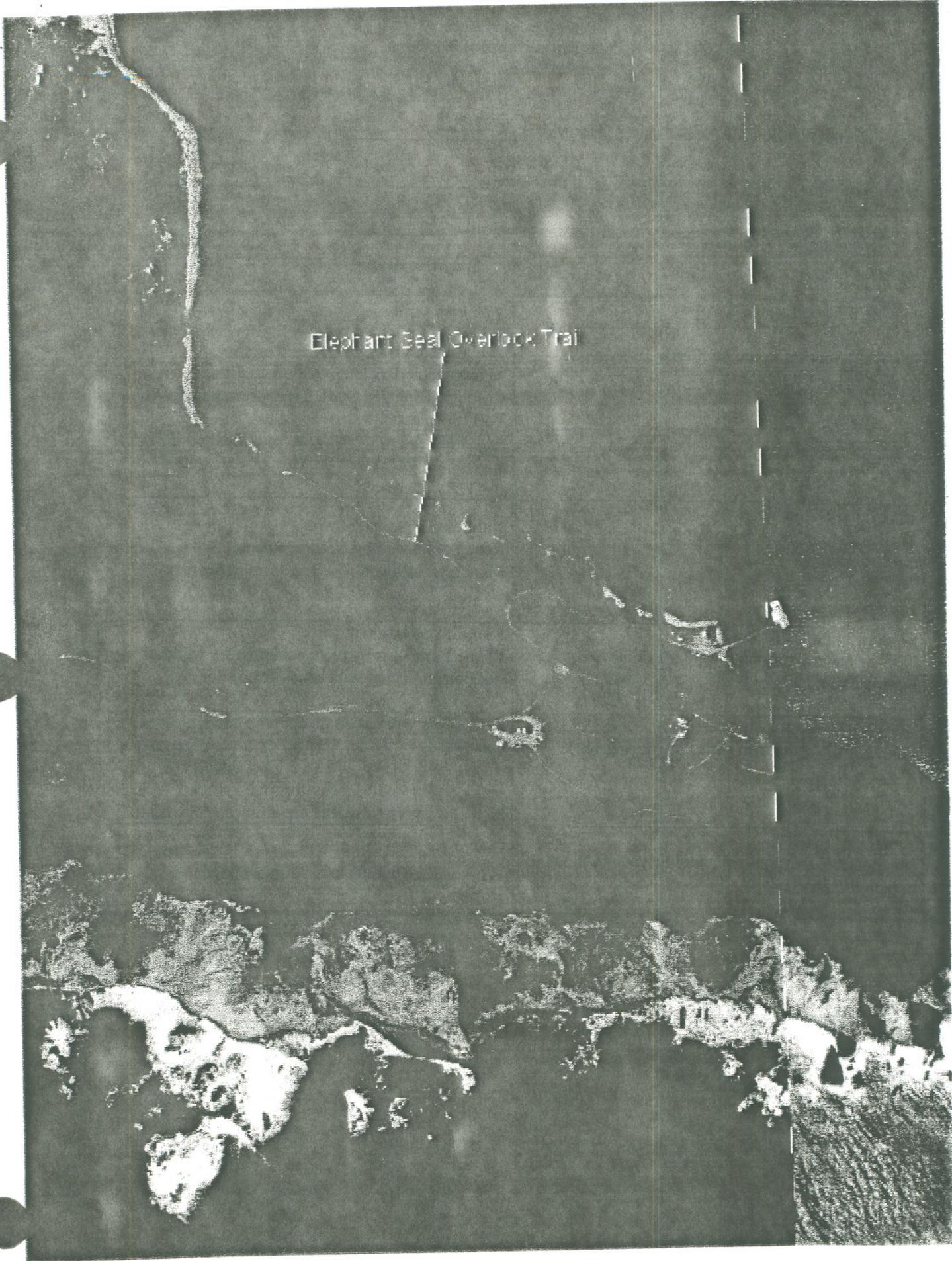
Work Location: Elephant seal overlook trail **Proposed** **Target**
 Start Date **Finish Date**

Prepared By: Shawn Maloney **Submitted by:** Bill Michaels

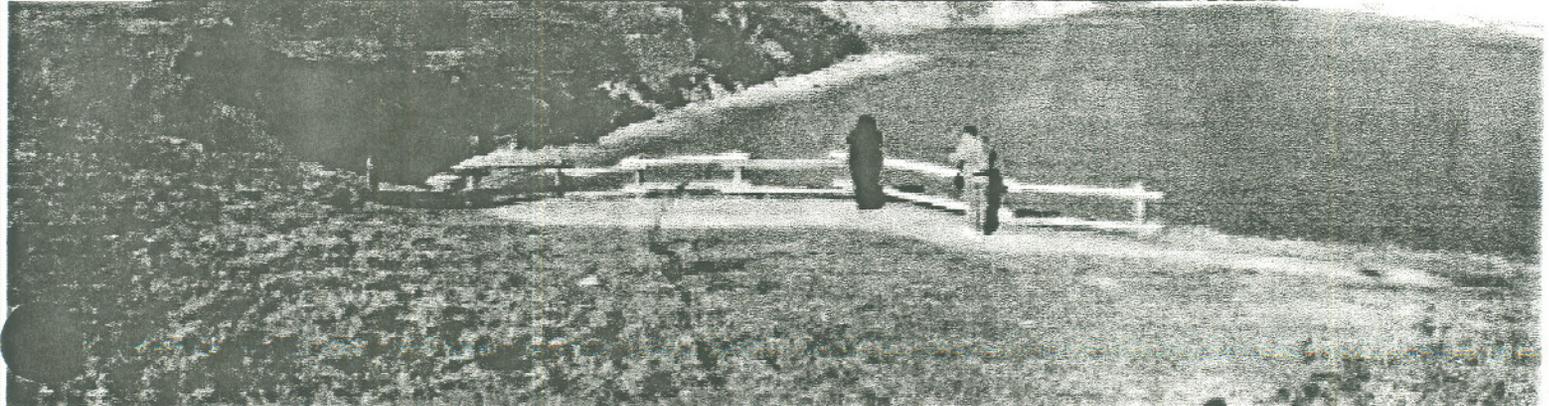
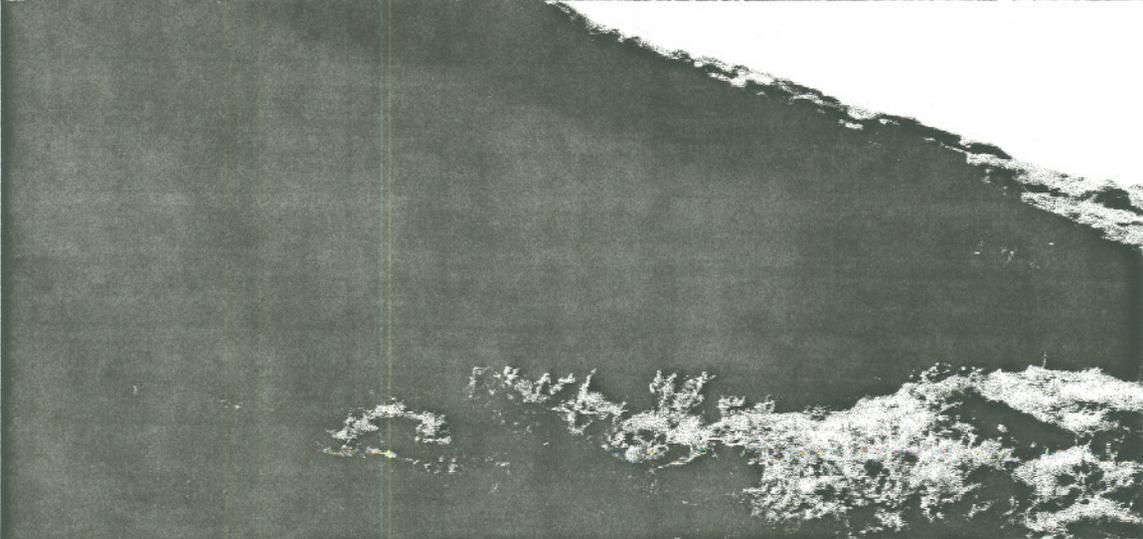
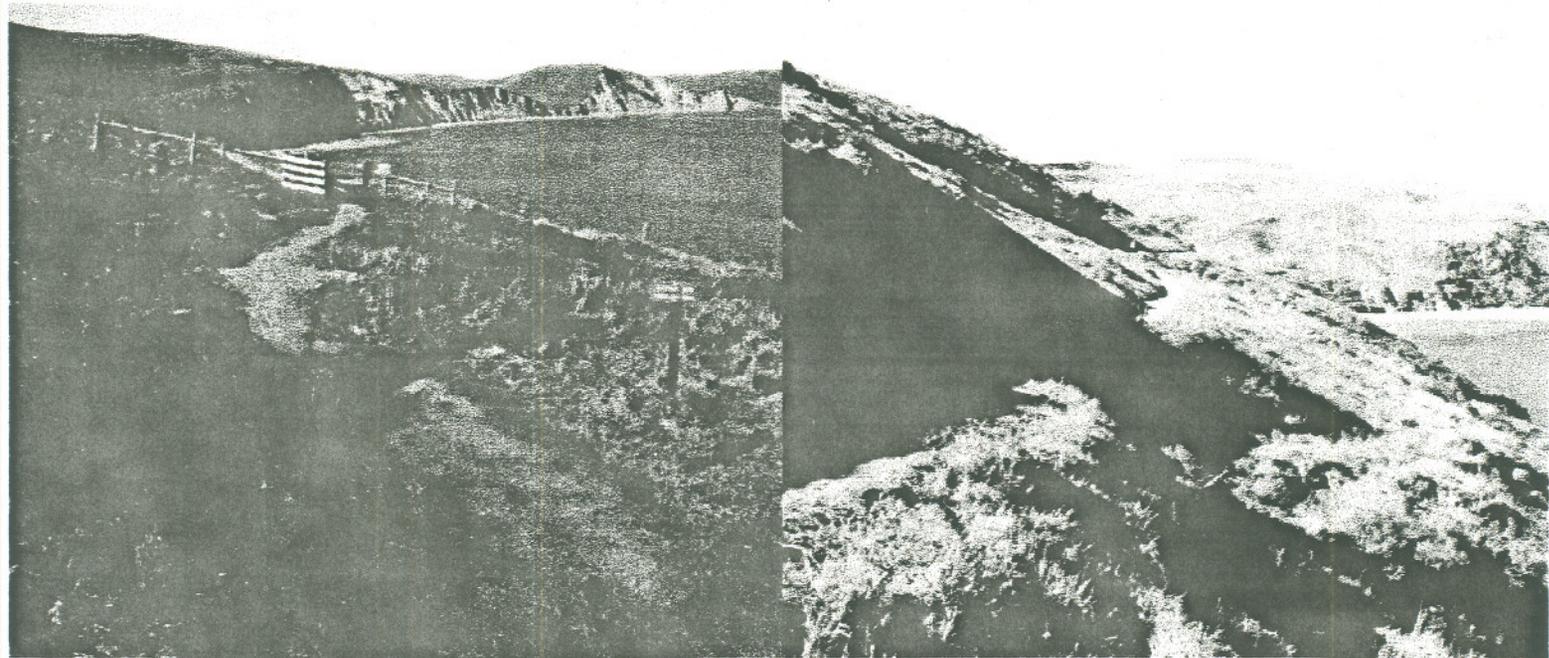
Impact **Mitigation and Responsibility**

<p>1.: T & E Species</p> <p>No T&E Species noted on PORE T&E Species locations book as of 20001.</p>	<p>Request site visit by Natural Resources Management division, plant ecologist and Resource Biologist Staff. To confirm absence of T&E Species. Also to help develop short-term mitigation if T&E species are found near the sites.</p>
<p>2.: Ground Disturbance</p> <p>Trail widening, retaining wall & railing construction.</p>	<p>Natural vegetation Growth Request site visit by Natural Resources Management Team for short term mitigation</p>
<p>3.: Vegetation Disturbance</p> <p>Trail widening, retaining wall & railing construction</p>	<p>Natural vegetation growth Request site visit by plant ecologist for Mitigation. Possible mulching with brush from site?</p>
<p>4. Visitor Impact:</p> <p>We may close the trail for safety during work.</p>	<p>All visitors will have safe access after project is completed.</p> <p>Work performed Monday through Friday. 99% of visitors thank the crew for improvements</p>
<p>5. Lack of funds</p> <p>It is possible that there may not be enough funds to complete the project.</p>	<p>Work will be completed as funds allow</p>
<p> </p>	<p> </p>

Elephant Seal Overlook Trail



Elephant Seal Overlook Trail



**Environmental Screening Form
Point Reyes National Seashore**

Project Description/Location: Elephant Seal Overlook Trail Rehabilitation.
Project involves trail tread improvements of widening the trail tread to four feet, adding additional crushed rock to provide a safe, all season, surface, construction of three retaining walls and expanding the viewing area. If possible, fence off the trail from cows to prevent the ongoing erosion and damage of the trail.

	Yes	No	Data Needed to Determine
Mandatory Criteria (A-N). Would the proposal, if implemented:			
A. Have material adverse effects on public health or safety?		NO	
B. Have adverse effects on such unique characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands; floodplains; or ecologically significant or critical areas, including those listed on the National Register of Natural Landmarks?		NO	
C. Have highly controversial environmental effects?		NO	
D. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?		NO	
E. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?		NO	
F. Be directly related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects?		NO	
G. Have adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places?		NO	
H. Have adverse effects on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have adverse effects on designated Critical Habitat for these species?		NO	
I. Require compliance with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act?		NO	
J. Threaten to violate a federal, state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?		NO	

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	Yes	No	Data Needed to Determine
L. Unique or important wildlife or wildlife habitat		NO	
M. Unique or important fish or fish habitat		NO	
N. Introduce or promote non-native species (plant or animal)		NO	
O. Recreation resources, including supply, demand, visitation, activities, etc.		NO	
P. Visitor experience, aesthetic resources		NO	
Q. Cultural resources, cultural landscape, sacred sites, etc.		NO	
R. Socioeconomics, including employment, occupation, income changes, tax base, infrastructure, etc.		NO	
S. Minority and low-income populations, ethnography, size, migration patterns, etc.		NO	
T. Energy resources		NO	
U. Other agency or tribal land use plans or policies		NO	
V. Resource, including energy, conservation potential		NO	
W. Urban quality, gateway communities, etc.		NO	
X. Long-term management of resources or land/resource productivity		NO	
Y. Other important environmental resources		NO	

Please answer the following questions.

1. Are the personnel preparing this form familiar with the site, and/or has a site visit been conducted? (Attach additional pages noting when site visit took place, staff attending, etc.)

yes - see photos

2. Has consultation with all affected agencies or tribes been completed? (Attach additional pages detailing the consultation, including the name, date, and summary of comments from other agency or tribal contacts.)

no consultation necessary.

Instructions

When you have completed a site visit (or if staff are familiar with the specifics of the site) and consultation with affected agencies and/or tribes, and if the answers in the checklist above are all "no," you may proceed to the categorical exclusion form (appendix 2) if the action is described in section 3-4 of NPS-12. If any answers in the checklist are "yes" or "data needed to determine," or if the action is not described in section 3-4, prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Attach maps, notes of site visits, agency consultation, relevant data or reports, the categorical exclusion form or other relevant information to this form to begin the statutory/administrative record file.

Signatory

In signing this form, you are saying you have completed a site visit or are familiar with the specifics of the site, that you have consulted with affected agencies and tribes, and that the answers to the questions posed in the checklist are, to the best of your knowledge, correct.

<hr/> Interdisciplinary Team Leader	<hr/> Date
 <hr/> Technical specialist/field of expertise	<hr/> Technical specialist/field of expertise

Comments on PORE 02-22

A very good project idea, but there seem to be some additional logistics to be addressed.

It is important to note that the trail is currently built across a number of active land slides that have failed, even since 1996. In a few places the trail has already been rerouted. Expansion of the trail tread to accommodate wheelchair access will also result in further destabilization of these unstable slopes. Construction of retaining walls may retard this action, but won't prevent bank failure in the future.

I also support the exclusion fence. There seem to be a few problems that are not addressed.

1. What is the actual alignment?
2. Where will it tie into existing fences??
3. Will it cross the A-Ranch perennial stream or funnel cattle into it?


05-9-02

Barbara Moritsch, Plant Ecologist

5/20/02

Project Review 02-22 Elephant Seal Overlook Trail Rehab

Please meet with Michelle Coppoletta or Shelly Benson (PORE rare plant botanists) to schedule a pre-work site visit to ensure the project will not affect rare plants.

Rare plant survey of the proposed Elephant Seal Overlook trail project
Prepared by Michelle Coppoletta

On June 11, 2002 and August 20, 2002, rare plant surveys of the proposed Elephant Seal Overlook trail project were conducted. Three rare plant species were found to occur within the project area.

Six individuals of *Lasthenia macrantha* (Perennial Goldfields), a California Native Plant Society List 1B rare species, were found growing within one foot of the trail. We did a quick survey of the surrounding area to determine the extent of the population and found over 35 *Lasthenia macrantha* individuals occurring outside of the disturbance area on both sides of the trail. A complete survey of the area was not done but it is likely that there are more individuals in the surrounding habitat.

A much higher concern, is the small population of *Piperia elegans ssp. decurtata* (Point Reyes Rein Orchid) that occurs alongside the Elephant Seal Overlook trail. Currently, *Piperia elegans ssp. decurtata* is limited to two small populations at the tip of the Point Reyes peninsula that have been estimated to contain less than a few hundred plants. It is currently on the California Native Plant Society's List 1B 3-3-3, the highest level of endangerment short of extinction. Over the past two years, *Piperia elegans ssp. decurtata* (Point Reyes Rein Orchid) has been found growing directly alongside the Elephant Seal Overlook trail. Individual plants do not flower every year, making them difficult to mark and avoid. During the survey conducted on 6/11/02, known locations of past individuals were marked with flagging. On 8/28/02 one individual was found blooming in close proximity to the disturbance area. This was marked with flagging. According to Shawn Maloney, these individuals will not be disturbed during the project.

The third species of concern that occurs within the project area is *Calystegia purpurata ssp. saxicola* (Coast morning glory). This species is currently on the California Native Plant Society's List 1B and is a new addition to the Seashore in 2002. During the survey on 8/20/02, 97 individuals were found scattered within 3-5 m on both sides of the elephant seal overlook trail. Not all of the area surveyed will be disturbed, therefore this number is a slight overestimate of the number of plants actually impacted by the proposed trail work. Over 150 plants were found outside of the project area and many more (100+) were found scattered east of the Chimney Rock parking lot. Because these plants are very scattered and appear to be abundant outside of the project area, this species is of a lower concern.

Below is a list (not complete) of species found within the Elephant Seal Overlook Trail project area:

Species

<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	<i>Marah fabaceus</i>
<i>Allium species</i>	<i>Mimulus aurantiacus</i>
<i>Angelica hendersonii</i>	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
<i>Baccharis pilularis</i>	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>
<i>Brodiaea terrestris ssp. terrestris</i>	<i>Rubus ursinus</i>
<i>Bromus hordeaceus</i>	<i>Stachys ajugoides</i>
<i>Calystegia sp.</i>	<i>Toxicodendron diversilobum</i>
<i>Carduus pycnocephalus</i>	<i>Triteleia laxa</i>
<i>Castilleja (yellow)</i>	<i>Vulpia sp.</i>
<i>Chlorogalum pomeridianum var. divaricatum</i>	<i>Wyethia agustifolia</i>
<i>Cirsium quercetorum</i>	
<i>Cynosurus echinatus</i>	
<i>Horkelia californica</i>	
<i>Juncus sp.</i>	
<i>Lasthenia californica</i>	
<i>Lasthenia macrantha</i>	
<i>Lathyrus sp.</i>	
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	
<i>Lupinus (bicolor)</i>	

WACC PROJECT NO.

CLEARANCE NO.

REPORT DATE: 9/26/2002

AUTHOR: Jessica Maxey

ARCHEOLOGICAL CLEARANCE SURVEY FORM

1. PROJECT: Elephant Seal Overlook Trail Up Grade

2. PACKAGE NO. None

3. CONSTRUCTION PROJECT DESCRIPTION: This project involves the upgrade of the 0.16-mile Elephant Seal Overlook Trail at Point Reyes National Seashore to a handicapped accessible trail. The trail will be widened to a 4-foot trail tread as well as covered with compacted rock. Four retaining walls will be built. One retaining wall will hold a weak section of the trail in place, two other walls will hold unstable ground above the trail from covering the trail. the unstable ground prohibits wheelchairs and makes the trail slick. There will be slight adjustments in the trail route to better facilitate drainage. The last retaining wall will be built at the overlook viewing area. A path for a second viewing area above the existing one will expand the viewing area from 280 sq. feet to 1120 sq. feet. This expansion will accommodate the high visitor use. The existing split rail fence will be expanded to encompass the larger viewing area.

The trail and viewing areas will be fenced off to protect them from the effects of grazing. Currently, cows destroy parts of the trail yearly by weakening the surrounding hillside, causing unstable ground above and below the trail.

A 10" culvert will be added at the beginning of the trail to keep the water from the Fish Dock Road off the trail.

4. CONSTRUCTION PROJECT LOCATION: The Elephant Seal Overlook Trail is located on the Point Reyes headlands, just north of the Fish Dock Road. The new fence will be located on the hillside above the trail somewhere between 80 and 120ft elevation.

5. SURVEY AREA SIZE (a) AND BOUNDARIES (b):

(a) Total = 1.9 acres.

(b) The survey area was an odd shape surrounding the existing trail and viewing area. (The survey went further up the slope than down)

6. DATE(S) OF SURVEY: September 25, 2002

7. SURVEYOR(S): Jessica Maxey, PORE Cultural Resources Tech.

8. NUMBER OF PERSON-DAYS IN SURVEY: (1 hour for one person)

9. DESCRIPTION OF AREA SURVEYED: The survey area surrounded the existing trail. The area was heavily grazed and the hillside is lined with cattle and deer trails therefore the soil is visible through the heavy vegetation. The soil generally consists

of a yellowish-white friable clay except where the trail has been covered with a gravely composite.

10. SURVEY PROCEDURE: The PORE Archaeological Base Map (R. Edwards, 1969) was consulted and the nearest recorded archaeological site was mapped at approximately 120 meters from the trailhead.

11. DESCRIPTION OF CULTURAL RESOURCES LOCATED: No Cultural Resources were located within the project area.

12. EVALUATION OF CULTURAL RESOURCES LOCATED: N/A

13a. NATIONAL REGISTER STATUS:

- On Register:
- In Process of Nomination:
- Eligibility Determination in Process:
- No Action Yet
- Does not Meet Criteria
- Not applicable (N/A)

13b. SHPO Consultation:

- N/A
- Yes:

14. EFFECT OF PROJECT ON CULTURAL RESOURCES: No effect.

15a. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Clearance Not Recommended
- Clearance Recommended with the Following Condition(s):
 1. If concealed archaeological resources are encountered during project activities, all work is to stop. Take all necessary steps to protect the resources and notify PORE Cultural Resources at 464-5127 (or 464-5204) immediately.

15b. This archeological clearance completes Section 106 documentation for this undertaking.
 This clearance must be included with other Section 106 documentation (e.g. Triple X Form) prior to SHPO or ACHP distributions.

16. ENCLOSURES:

- USGS Map(s)
- Project Map(s)
- Scale(s)
- Project Design Data
- Site Record(s)

17. NATIVE AMERICAN CONSULTATION or TCP Survey: None

18. REFERENCES: Archaeological Base Map, R. Ewards, 1969

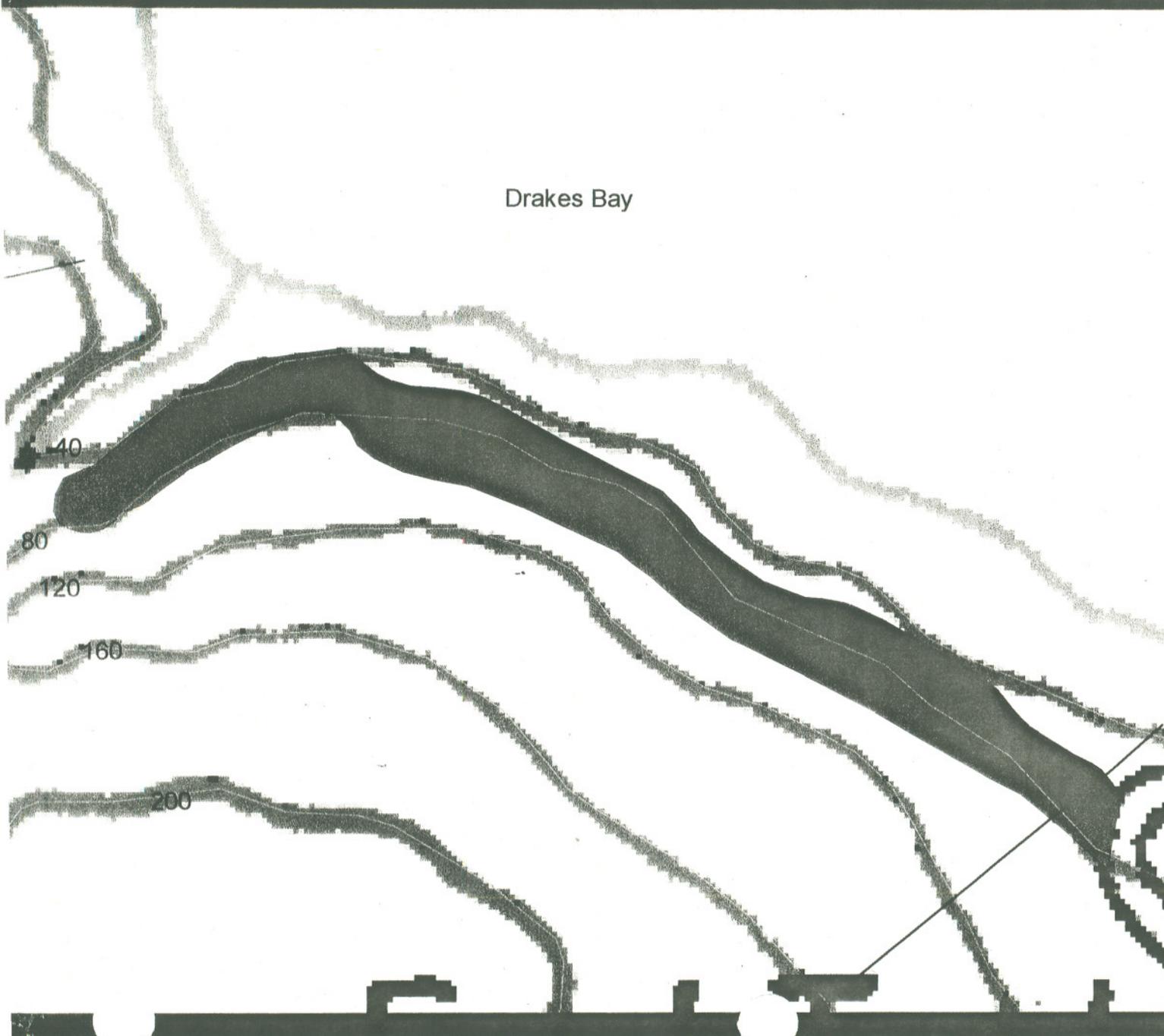
NOTES: This clearance survey form was reviewed by Archaeologist Mark Rudo.

Form Revised February 8, 1993

Archaeological Clearance

Elephant Seal Overlook Trail Up Grade

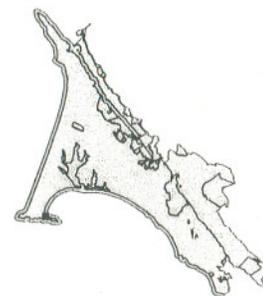
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Drakes Bay

- Fence
- Trail
- Topography
- Survey Area

Map Location



Cultural Resources
Point Reyes National Seashore



0 30 60 Meters

1 : 1,709 1 Inch = 43.40 meters

25, 2002

