

Management Plan

Hearn Gulch Headlands Preservation and Public Access

May 2007

The Redwood Coast Land Conservancy (RCLC), a California non-profit, public benefit corporation, undertakes this plan to define, preserve and manage this property located between State Highway 1 and the Pacific Ocean approximately five miles south of the town of Point Arena at Mendocino County Post Mile 10.02. The physical address is 29750-29800 South Highway 1. The land consists of five-parcels, Assessor's Parcels 142-010-03 through 142-010-07, (Exhibit A) totaling about 6 acres. The area is unimproved, with one large headland, one smaller finger-type headland and two small wind-protected coves with a sandy beach and seasonal creek in the northern cove.

Purpose

The purpose for acquiring this undeveloped oceanfront property is to permanently protect the scenic and abundant natural qualities of the land and maintain the public's access to the area. For years, despite private ownership, these parcels were used by the public for picnics, whale watching, ocean access, etc. The RCLC will now be able to provide legal public access to the scenic beauty of this spectacular section of the California coast. This project will provide the public opportunities for walking, birding, photography and the study of native flora and fauna. In addition, the unobstructed ocean view from Highway 1, in an area the county has designated "highly scenic corridor," will now be maintained in perpetuity.

Existing Site Conditions

The five undeveloped oceanfront parcels are within the Iversen Landing No.1 Subdivision. The wind-swept parcels are situated on an elevated coastal terrace with broad bluffs approximately 60 feet above the ocean surf. On the northern portion of the property, a wide, gradual depression leads to a small cove and sandy beach. The general absence of tree cover on all the parcels affords spectacular whitewater views of sea stacks, caves and dramatic rock formations.

Observations and several studies have documented environmental conditions that require consideration prior to planned development.

- **Identification of Sensitive Resources, Habitat Types:** A botanical survey of a portion of the property was first done in 1994. Additional botanical studies were conducted in 2003 and 2005. These surveys showed a variety of native and exotic plants and Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHAs). The property contains four California Native Plant Society (CNPS) List 1B plant species, two riparian habitat areas (one seasonal), and plants conducive to the Behrens Silverspot butterfly, a federally listed endangered specie.
- **Parking:** Over the last sixty+ years the public has been using an unpaved portion of State Highway 1's Right Of Way (ROW) to park and gain vehicle access to the property. Since the

property had never been fenced or “signed”, vehicles have been driven out onto the headlands and down to a point approximately 75 feet south of the property’s sandy beach.

- **Cultural Resources Survey:** An archaeological survey and onsite evaluation was conducted in 2004. No prehistoric or historic-period cultural resources were discovered; therefore, no recommendations were made.
- **Geologic Evaluation:** A registered California geologist did a geological evaluation of the property in 2004. From a geologic standpoint, the existing highway access, parking and public trail areas are situated on land suitable for these uses.
- **Existing Trails:** Basically three unofficial trails currently exist on the property. One, created by past vehicle use, leads out from the highway to a midway point on the large headland. Another leads down the wide northern depression to the Hearn Gulch Cove, Creek and sandy beach. The third is a footpath that runs from the beginning of the smaller, most northern headland out to the edge of that headland’s bluff top. In addition, the steep face of Sea Cave Cove shows evidence of past occasional foot traffic.
- **Vehicular Damage:** Extensive past vehicle use not only created unsightly rutted “roads” out to the headlands and down toward the sandy beach, but also caused eroded areas near the highway. This vehicle trespass throughout the year, including the wet season, denuded the native grasses and other plants to bare soil.
- **Safety Concerns:** The western face of both headlands is extremely steep and subject to unpredictable erosion. Warning signs will be installed to notify the public of this hazard.
- **Invasive Plant Species:** Preliminary inspection of the headlands indicates the minor presence of two species of invasive plants. Prior to the end of the Development Phase, a botanist will be engaged to survey the entire property for invasive plant species and tag them for removal.

Development Plans

All development shall be done in accordance with California Coastal Commission Permit A-1-MEN-06-052 in a manner that protects the conservation values of the property “taking into account the fragility of the natural resources in the area” (Coastal Act Sections 30212 and 30214) and the property’s numerous ESHAs. Reference is made here to the project’s **Site Plan** (March 2007 edition, attached) for an overview of the project’s improvements and their location.

- **Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area (ESHA):** The existing parking area, once suitable fencing has been added, and the property’s two designated foot trails will minimize any impact on existing ESHAs. Of particular interest is the abundant presence of Purple-stemmed Checker Bloom (*Sidalcea malvaeflora ssp. malvaeflora*), a CNPS List 1B plant, some of which are located in the Caltrans ROW / parking area. While if necessary, plants can be transplanted to other appropriate, viable locations on the property, a portion of the proposed

bollard and chain fencing (see **Parking** below) will be located so as to prevent vehicles from moving north in the Caltrans ROW to where a significant population of Checker Bloom exists. The property also contains vegetation conducive to the Behrens Silverspot butterfly. While there have been no recorded sightings of this specie on the property, recorded sightings have been made in the coastline area about seven miles north of the property (Stornetta). RCLC is currently conducting an additional botanical survey focused on the property's *Viola adunca* plant locations, a host plant. This survey will also include a more general review of any other plant / vegetation on the property that may be of benefit to this butterfly.

- **Parking:** All the property's natural attributes, to include native plant life, should be preserved and to that end, pedestrian-access-only will be allowed from the existing small parking area. A bollard and chain barrier to prohibit vehicular traffic from going beyond this parking area onto the coastal terrace will be erected in accordance with a Caltrans Encroachment Permit and in consultation with a CNPS botanist.

(Note: there is an existing paved Caltrans overlook and parking area suitable for all types of vehicles approximately 0.4 of a mile north of Hearn Gulch.)

- **Trail Improvements: Trail One**, an existing trail that takes visitors from the parking area out onto the large headland, will be armored with a layer of dark/duff colored crushed rock, approximately three feet wide, out sloped to minimize any concentration of rainfall runoff, and will extend only as far as deemed prudent and safe given the nature of this headland (see **Site Plan**). The western terminus of this trail will be emphasized by the placement of two 4 x 4 wooden posts, one on either side of the trail, with a wooden rail connecting the two posts approximately 2 ½ feet above grade. This will result in a specified pathway focus appropriate for the dense 3 to 8 inch vegetation cover that exists on this headland.

Trail Two, the trail to Hearn Gulch beach, is different in that 95% of it travels over a much less dense vegetation cover, mainly consisting of sparse low profile native grasses, and therefore has no current need for a crushed rock treatment. However, this trail's last 25 feet (+/-) descends a steeply angled dense bushy embankment that terminates at the Hearn Gulch creek and beach. Historic foot traffic has established a series of firmly embedded rock steps over this final narrow section of this trail. Where feasible, and by hand, RCLC intends to widen and deepen certain steps in this last section to include the placement of 4" x 8" x 3' treated wood ties anchored at each end with 36" rebar (3/4"). In addition, we are exploring the feasibility of installing 2 ½ inch diameter steel poles 3 feet above grade on one side of this section through which would be threaded a stainless steel cable or synthetic rope to provide a degree of hand support. This is a change from RCLC's previous plan for this section that called for a series of wooden steps connected together by an anchored steel cable on each side of a "staircase" supported underneath by an angled mass of placed rocks. Additional review of this concept indicated that the amount of underlying rock that would be required for long-term stability of the 45 degree "staircase" would alter the Hearn Gulch Creek streambed.

- **Signage:** RCLC is cognizant of, and sensitive about, this property's very fragile viewshed. "Sign clutter" is a concern. RCLC has an inventory of nonreflective painted sheet metal signs that have been professionally produced for this project. One sign at the designated point of pedestrian entry from the parking area will instruct the public as to the controlled nature of

this shoreline access as well as provide sponsorship information. Additional signage will be appropriately placed regarding eco-sensitivities and hazardous bluffs. Signs will be bolted to 4x4 treated wooden posts sunk in concrete with an overall height above ground level of approximately 2 ½ feet except for the entry sign which will be 38 inches above grade. The total number of signs will not exceed thirteen.

- **Fencing:** To prevent vehicles from going out onto the headlands, approximately 115LF of bollard and chain fencing will be installed on a portion of the western and northern boundaries of the existing vehicle pullout area. In addition, two “sheep fences” each approximately 15 linear feet (LF) in length, will be located along the northern bluff top of Sea Cave Cove to discourage the use of old trails down this very steep cliff. Consideration is also being given to installing a short 15 LF sheep fence at the head of an occasional trail that currently goes out onto the very narrow and hazardous northern headland. In keeping with the desire for low profile improvements on this property, all sheep fencing will have an approximate height of 2 ½ feet. Additional native low profile vegetation will be planted where appropriate and feasible to discourage other past use of volunteer trails down the steep cliffs of Sea Cave Cove.
- **Restoration:** In the two year period since RCLC acquired the last two parcels of land for this project, nature - and a couple of temporary signs - have conspired together to begin the restoration of previous human-caused erosion due to uncontrolled vehicle trespass. Not only has native vegetation growth in the previously rutted bare soil areas begun to transform these previously degraded areas, but CNPS 1B listed plants such as the Purple-stemmed Checker Bloom have taken advantage of the lack of competition to root in certain degraded locations. Therefore RCLC will continue to monitor this progressive trend and will not, at this point, initiate any further vehicle erosion restoration activities.

Maintenance

Volunteer work parties organized by the RCLC will carry out maintenance of the property, to include parking area, trails and improvements. RCLC volunteers will monitor the site monthly, gather litter, address any vandalism, and schedule repairs as necessary. As a non-profit public benefit corporation, the RCLC maintains liability insurance that meets generally accepted standards. Any safety or erosion problems will be addressed promptly and reported to the State Coastal Commission and/or Mendocino County. Currently litter does not seem to be a problem at the site, but monitoring of trash will be an essential on-going project. Signage will admonish all visitors to “pack it in / pack it out.” No garbage cans or toilet facilities will be provided.

Stewardship and Other Funding

RCLC has a 15 year presence in the southern Mendocino coastal area and the RCLC Board is confident that adequate funding can be raised from its members, the general community and local property owners to provide for small maintenance and repair costs. Community, State Coastal Conservancy and Caltrans grant funds were procured for the initial purchase of the property and some of the development costs. Additional grant funding for the proposed improvements are being pursued from public agencies and private and community foundations.

Amendment and Severability

This plan may be amended, as needed, with the concurrence of all appropriate funding and public agencies. Amendments may be considered for subsequent phases of development or for any other reason. In the event that the RCLC disbands or otherwise ceases to exist, title to the property and the public access will revert to the State Coastal Conservancy or other appropriate entity considered acceptable to the Coastal Conservancy.

George Anderson, President
Redwood Coast Land Conservancy

Date: _____

County of Mendocino

Date: _____

California Coastal Commission

Date: _____