

## Friends of Sunset Cliffs

A 501(c)(3) Corporation

P.O. Box 7858 San Diego, California 92107

September 29, 2015

Mr. Herman Parker, Park and Recreation Director  
City of San Diego  
Park and Recreation Department  
202 C Street, MS 37C  
San Diego, CA 92101

Re: Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Hillside Improvements Project

Dear Mr. Parker,

**Friends of Sunset Cliffs** continues to support the Hillside Improvements Project. We look forward to seeing the project come to fruition. The designated trail system will be a welcome improvement as will the re-vegetation with native species. Both of these improvements will ease the erosion in the park and offer a visual demonstration that the park is a valuable asset to the region of San Diego.

The park offers a stunning panoramic view of the Pacific in addition to the sculpted cliffs. Interpretive signage will offer educational possibilities for visitors to learn more about this unique park.

**Friends of Sunset Cliffs** has been thrilled the Coastal Conservancy has been supportive of the project and understands the value of this coastal regional park. We also appreciate the City Park and Recreation Departments' conscientious and collaborative process leading the project forward. We also honor the private donors' vision for the project.

Sincerely,

Barbara Booth Keiller, PhD  
Barbara Booth Keiller, PhD  
President, Friends of Sunset Cliffs

685 Silvergate Ave.; San Diego, CA 92106  
(619) 223-2784; [barbara@keiller.net](mailto:barbara@keiller.net)

Copy to: Lorie Zapt   Meredith Dawson   Andy Field   Ali Darvishi  
Joe Diab   Paul Jacob   Conrad Wear   Jim Winter

*Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Council*  
3611 Warner Street  
San Diego, California 92106



To: Mr. Herman Parker, Park and Recreation Director  
City of San Diego  
Park and Recreation Department  
202 C Street, MS 37C  
San Diego, CA 92101

Date: September 15, 2015

**Subject: Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Council Reiteration of Support for the Hillside Improvements Project**

Dear Mr. Parker,

On September 14, 2015, the SCNPC passed a motion reiterating its support for the Hillside Improvements Project.

Completion of the Hillside Improvements Project remains high priority for the SCNPC. As you know, this important project provides multiple valuable things for the park: safe pedestrian access, including ADA access; restoration to natural contours; removal of invasive species and revegetation with native species; educational signage; and safe seating. It is anticipated that these measures will also contribute to the preservation of the fragile bluffs and help to decrease runoff into the ocean.

We are pleased that the design (final plans) and permitting are now complete. As this is being written, we are told that City staff members are finalizing details with a contractor for Phase 1 construction, and we look forward to that construction beginning very soon.

The next step will be planning for Phase 2 construction, to complete the project. We greatly appreciate the fact that the City and Parks and Recreation Department have made the Hillside Improvements Project a priority for the city in the Regional Park Funds budget for the next several years, and we are pleased that there is some funding from a private donor as well.

We look forward to the construction that will complete the Hillside Improvements Project construction and make our vision a reality very soon.

We very deeply appreciate the City's continuing support of this project.

Sincerely,

Ann Swanson, SCNPC Chair

Ellen Quick, SCNPC Hillside Improvements Project Chair

Copy to:      Lori Zapf                      Meredith Dawson                      Andy Field  
                    Ali Darvishi                      Joe Diab                                      Paul Jacob  
                    Conrad Wear                      Jim Winter

## Exhibit 6: Project Letters

November 15, 2015

To: Ms Prentiss Williams  
California Coastal Conservancy  
1330 Broadway, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Oakland, CA 94612

Regarding: Sunset Cliffs Natural Park, Hillside Improvement Project

Dear Ms Williams,

The Sunset Cliffs Association (SCA) recently reviewed the City of San Diego (City) Grant Application to the California Coastal Conservancy (CC) (Grant Application) by the City Public Works Department. While supporting the goals of the proposed Hillside Improvement Project (Project) in Sunset Cliffs Natural Park (SCNP), SCA recommends that the CC, at their December 3rd meeting, condition approval of the Project on the City making changes, so the Project meets the environmental and regulatory findings of the City's MS4 guidelines for storm water management and protection of the near shore habitats.

The backup information for this letter is contained in the SCA July 31, 2015 submittal to the Water Board requesting that the SCNP be included in the MS4 Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP). The WQIP, with the SCNP added, was adopted by the Water Board in September 2015. The SCA submittal can be found at:

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/rwqcb9/water\\_issues/programs/stormwater/docs/wqip/comments/Sunset\\_Cliffs\\_Association.pdf](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/rwqcb9/water_issues/programs/stormwater/docs/wqip/comments/Sunset_Cliffs_Association.pdf)

The Grant Application, as it stands, is inadequate as a request for \$800,000 to fund completion of Working Drawings for DSD No. 236548 and construction. The inadequacies of the Grant Application are based in part on the information provided in the above hyperlinked URL for the Water Board WQIP, and can be broken down into the following categories:

1. **Errors, omissions and contradictions**
2. Omitted discussion of the **marine waters and habitats** adjacent to the SCNP.
3. Failure to plan for **episodes of maximum rainfall**. It is doubtful the bioswales will accommodate storms with periodicities of approximately 5 to 10 years. The proposed trail system will be damaged by uncontrolled and untreated SCNP runoff and Point Loma Nazarene University (PLNU) run-on that could be controlled, in large part, by upslope LID/BMPs.
4. **Not following MS4 guidelines** that have been in effect since 2007, and updated order of May 8, 2013.
5. Taking a **piecemeal planning approach**.

1. **Errors, omissions and contradictions – that will negatively affect SCNP:**

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- SCA assumes that **Phase 1A of the Project is a completed, existing Project**, because construction drawings are complete and a contract has been let to the successful bidder. As a result, Phase 1A is not subject to MS4 regulation. Since the construction drawings for **Phase 1B** are not complete and Phase 1B has not gone out to bid, it is **subject to MS4 regulations**. This is not mentioned in the Application.
  - **Incorrectly filling out Development Services Department Form DS-560** – the Storm Water Requirements Applicability Checklist (Form DS-560) Omitted to check two yeses in Part B on the DS-560 form, and as a result the City has the Project classified as a Standard Development Project, rather than a Priority Development Project that requires a much more stringent CEQA review.
    - **Item 6 – Hillside development greater than 5,600 square ft:** There is >5,000 sq ft of impermeable surface being added at the multiuse trail / utility road per the 100% plans. It will generate runoff and be an eyesore in a natural park.
    - **Item 7 – Water Quality Sensitive Area:** SCNP is located adjacent to an area of environmental sensitivity, the Pacific Ocean and the intertidal and subtidal areas used on a daily basis by Park visitors.
  - **SCA Appeal of Project Design:** Failed to note that SCA appealed the original SD planning hearing, and that the City of San Diego Planning Commission, on Mar 27, 2014, conditioned approval the plan to include: 1) removal of all storm drains / pipes which were to be added; 2) add a vegetated bioswale upslope of the multipurpose trail; 3) use native plants in the bioswale rather than exotics; and 4) all curb dissipaters have filter fabric underlayment and any runoff be released at non-erosive velocity. These are all positive improvements and should have been noted.
  - **The Application counts non-native annual grasses as part of the 80% cover.** The California Native Plant Society, states for all cities and state agencies: “insists that all landscaping, mitigation, restoration, revegetation, and habitat/species recovery monitoring plans include provision for identifying and managing non-native plants and identifying potential for damaging the genetic structure of local native plant communities.” Exotic annual grasses should not be counted as part of the 80% cover.
  - **Properties will be demolished**, but the plans state they will be protected in place. The demolishing of the Ladera Street buildings, contouring and vegetation of this area is needed, but this is no longer on the project.
  - **The Application does not note that the Lower Parking Lot storm drain outfall is not functional.** The 100% plans show that this is an intact structure even though ~30% of drainage outfall is no longer there, the remainder is undermined, cracked and missing portions, and the storm drain itself in the lower parking lot is also deteriorated.
- 2. Omitting discussion of marine waters and habitats:**
- The Application fails to recognize that the SCNP, in addition to being a wonderful 1.5 mile long coastline area of San Diego with magnificent view sheds and open space accessible to the Public, also provides access to intertidal and subtidal habitats that have been continuously degraded by the accelerated erosion from run-on and runoff through SCNP from the late 1970s forward. Erosion and marine problems were officially reported in a 1992 letter from the San Diego Water Board to the City requesting the City resolve the marine pollution issues plaguing the SCNP.

## Exhibit 6: Project Letters

- The Application is silent on how adverse impacts will be aggravated by the current Project. These impacts are caused by erosion of Parkland due to features such as trail dips that transport uncontrolled storm water from the SCNP and PLNU down slope.

### 3. Possible marine pollution:

- The marine pollution, caused by runoff from the SCNP and PLNU Campus run-on, is well documented (see 1992 letter from the Water Board to the City). It includes adverse environmental impacts to tide pool plants and animals, including ones that are buried or prevented from settling and attaching to intertidal rocks, and degradation of nursery habitats for lobster and fish.
- A band of surf grass, which serves as a nursery habitat for juvenile lobsters for the first 1-2 years after they settle out of the plankton, can be found along most of the shallow marine waters adjacent to the SCNP. Adverse sediment stress due to not controlling runoff at the source, as recommended by MS4 regulations, will contribute, to a lesser degree than is now the situation, but it could be brought to natural levels if MS4 guidelines are written into a revised Application.
- Because runoff generated by impervious sources in the SCNP and PLNU campus is not controlled, treated, and infiltrated at the source, as recommended in MS4 regulations, marine pollution will continue, perhaps reduced somewhat, but significantly above pre-development levels required by MS4 regulations.

The issues that SCA feels should be addressed by the City, either in the Application, or as conditions for approval by the CC include:

- Now that the Water Board has included SCNP in its September amendments to **Order R9-2013-0001** (MS4 storm water regulations) due to environmental concerns about **Sediments** and **Erosion** in SCNP, the City will need to rewrite the Application for Phase 1B to bring it into conformance with MS4.
  - This major requirement of MS4 regulations was omitted by the City in their Application is clearly covered in the MS4 regulations in the Definitions Section, Article 16.

### 4. Not following MS4 guidelines:

- A key MS4 guideline for controlling pollutants not included in the Project plans is to locate BMPs to capture “pollutant generation at its source and is the best ‘first line of defense.’ Source control BMPs, both structural and non-structural, minimize the contact between pollutants and runoff, therefore keeping pollutants onsite and out of receiving waters. Treatment control BMPs remove pollutants that have been mobilized by storm water or non-storm water flows.”
- 
- It was originally thought that the bioswales would treat the water that flows into them. Because of how shallow they are, runoff from most rainstorms will overtop them and flow into the nearshore waters with its load of pollutants.
- Allowing storm water or runoff to flow into marine waters and habitats during periods of major rainfall events does not meet the criteria for BMPs in Finding 16. This finding states that pollutants “deposited and accumulate in MS4 drainage structures, will be discharged from these structures to waters of the U.S. unless they are removed. These discharges may cause or contribute to, or threaten to cause or contribute to, a condition of pollution in receiving waters. For this reason, pollutants in storm water discharges

## Exhibit 6: Project Letters

from the MS4s can be and must be effectively reduced in runoff by the application of a combination of pollution prevention, source control, and treatment control BMPs.”

### 5. Piecemeal planning approach:

- <http://www.sandiego.gov/thinkblue/pdf/stormwatermanual.pdf>
- “**Article 17. BMP Implementation.** Runoff needs to be addressed during the three major phases of development (planning, construction, and use) in order to reduce the discharge of storm water pollutants to the MEP, effectively prohibit non-storm water discharges, and protect receiving waters. Development which is not guided by water quality planning policies and principles can result in increased pollutant load discharges, flow rates, and flow durations which can negatively affect receiving water beneficial uses.”

As a result of the concerns listed above, SCA recommends that the CC Board of Directors, at their December 3rd meeting, not give an unqualified approval of the City’s request for an \$800,000 Construction Grant for the Project. Instead, we recommend the CC either withhold funds until the City resolves the issues SCA has raised, or condition an approval based on the City promising that they will answer the SCA concerns.

SCA will have a representative(s) at the December 3rd CC Meeting in Carmel (if the City of San Diego Application is on the agenda) and will answer questions the CC Board members may have about the Project.

Sincerely,

Craig Barilotti, PhD

Dan Mendiguchia

Norm Allenby

Camilla Ingram

Suhail Kahil



**KEVIN L. FAULCONER**

MAYOR

November 25, 2015

Mr. Herman D. Parker  
Director  
Park and Recreation  
City of San Diego  
202 C Street, MS 37C  
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Mr. Parker:

On behalf of the City of San Diego, it is my pleasure to offer support for the Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Trail and Habitat Restoration Project, which will improve the highly used trail system located within Sunset Cliffs Natural Park.

The Park and Recreation Department's efforts to improve park amenities will include the addition of new pedestrian trails, observation points and a habitat restoration effort that will prevent further coastal cliff erosion.

This project will provide much needed recreational opportunities for families, and will help to create a sustainable, healthy, educational, safe and vibrant outdoor recreational area.

I appreciate your strong consideration of the Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Trail and Habitat Restoration Project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin L. Faulconer". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Kevin L. Faulconer  
Mayor

KF/kc

