

Focus Group Session 4 (Optional)

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this final focus group was to give an update on the schedule and deliverables of the project, present the initial design for the Main Beach dune and receive targeted feedback from participants. The recommendations for the other two sites were also presented.

Participants primarily focused on providing feedback for the initial dune design, particularly on the experimental design plots and recreation impacts. This summary is organized by questions asked during the discussion part of the focus group session.

What do you like the most about the initial dune design?

Some participants highlighted the different design plots using different substrates like cobble, logs, or a mix of the two, liking how the experimental design of the dune plots would provide more lessons learned for the greater region. They thought dunes were appropriate for this setting, would better protect the beach than a wall, and liked the walkways providing access. One participant was curious on how high the dunes would be and if they would block the view from the boardwalk (5' and would not block). The dunes will not be higher than the wall at the boardwalk's edge. Another participant asked why dunes were not considered for a longer stretch of beach. This dune project is serving as a pilot and due to the smaller dune footprint, it will not significantly impact the space for beachgoers, is mutually beneficial with other projects, and has a streamlined permitting process. The lessons learned can be applied to other areas in the future.

What are your biggest concerns with the initial dune design?

A concern was raised about the potential river inlet migration and wave energy damaging the dunes. The initial design uses harder methods of mixed cobble and logs to anchor it and help protect the dunes from the San Lorenzo River inlet migration, especially since there is a sand berm already placed annually (or so) there and the recently completed "culvert" project to reduce the lagoon depth that should reduce the risk of flooding and migration. A question was raised about cobble potentially being displaced after a storm event. There is potential for the river inlet to migrate and cut across the dune exposing the cobble but it is also placed with the other protective projects in mind and shaped with a rounded edge as a way to reduce this. One participant suggested narrowing down to one to two experimental design plots using evidence from other locations and focus on those rather than four separate ones. Participants raised the concern that the dunes may be trampled by beach users if there was no barrier given how highly used the beach is and wondered if a fence or ropes were being considered to protect them. Dunes can be trampled and in most cases do rebound. Sand fencing or roping is still being discussed but will most likely be part of the final design. Another concern was the loss of beach space for beachgoers and another participant thought it might not be a loss but a change as a community resource or different kind of recreation experience.

Do you feel like inclusion of dunes would influence recreation on the beach in a positive or negative way?

Participants were very interested in how dunes could impact recreation and public access on Main Beach. Most of the participants thought the inclusion of dunes would influence recreation on the beach in a positive way and improve a sense of place. They all liked the idea of having interpretive signage and walkways, prompting the public to explore the dunes, native vegetation, and learn about their role in erosion reduction. Two participants highlighted the reduction of space for beach goers as a negative impact especially because Main Beach is highly used. However, some thought that the potential for the dunes to preserve beach width was better than building or relying on gray infrastructure in the future. One participant raised the idea of one dune section being open to the public so kids could play on them. The project team mentioned that this idea is already being considered.

Other comments

One participant wanted to see more findings on the effectiveness of dunes maintaining beach width and the flood and erosion mitigation benefits. Because erosion and wave runup modeling has been done, they recommended the project team shares more results.

At the end of the discussion, the focus group participants were asked to answer the question “How do you like the draft dune design now?” The poll responses are shown below.

