

4.6 RECREATION

Introduction

This section addresses the impacts of the project on recreational facilities and services. Information in this section is based primarily on the following plans, reports, and studies:

- *Broadway-Brommer Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Connection Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment*, prepared for the City of Santa Cruz in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration and California Department of Transportation by Brady/LSA, November 1999; and
- City of Santa Cruz, *City of Santa Cruz General Plan and Local Coastal Program, 1990-2005* (adopted October 27, 1992, last amended October 28, 2003);

Environmental Setting

On-Site Recreational Use. The 67.7-acre project site is owned and maintained by the City of Santa Cruz and is currently used for “passive” recreation such as walking, bird watching, and dog walking. Access is limited to pedestrians and bicycles, no vehicle access is allowed. The City of Santa Cruz maintains designated trails (see Figure 3-2), which include a north-south bicycle/pedestrian trail and a pedestrian loop trail along the perimeter of the meadow area.

The City of Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation Department conducts patrols of the site. Park ranger staffing levels have varied over the years, based on City budget conditions. The City Parks and Recreation Department also provides maintenance services to the site. These services are currently limited to annual fuel break and trail mowing, emptying of trash containers, clean-up of refuse and illegal campsites, and routine repairs (typically involving minor trail maintenance and repair of entrance and regulatory signs damaged by vandalism).

The City of Santa Cruz Police Department responds to specific requests for assistance and coordination (e.g., in response to illegal camping and other illegal activity) (see Section 4.13, Public Services, of this EIR for further discussion of police services).

The City of Santa Cruz General Plan/Local Coastal Program (Policy 2.2.7 of the Land Use Element) currently provides for a possible community facility, including a school and neighborhood park of at least 10 developable acres at the north end of the project site. As part of the proposed project, this designation of “Community Facilities” would be changed to “Natural Area” in the City’s General Plan, and no neighborhood park would be built.

Other City of Santa Cruz Parks and Recreational Facilities. The City of Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation Department manages 21 neighborhood parks, three community parks, four regional parks, open space, municipal beaches, a city museum, a community center, a civic auditorium, and a municipal golf course. Through reciprocal use agreements, the department also has access to facilities owned by the Santa Cruz City School District.

The City limits also encompass natural areas (similar to the Arana Gulch project site) and coastal recreation areas such as the Moore Creek Preserve (approximately 246 acres) and Pogonip (approximately 640 acres).

The City-owned parks closest to the project site are the following neighborhood parks: (1) the 4.0-acre Frederick Street Park, located on the east side of Frederick Street approximately 500 feet south of the southern end of the project site; (2) the 2.1-acre Star of the Sea Park, located on the east side of Darwin Street approximately 1,000 feet west of the western boundary of the project site; and (3) the 0.3-acre John Franks Park, located on the north side of Fairmount Avenue approximately 2,000 feet northwest of the site's northern boundary.

The City's neighborhood parks are usually three acres or less in area and have facilities such as children's play areas, picnic areas, athletic fields, and outdoor basketball courts. Community parks serve recreation needs beyond those served by neighborhood parks; they are usually larger than neighborhood parks and have major recreational facilities such as large picnic areas, swimming pools, ballfields, tennis courts, and recreation centers. Regional parks range from 150 to 500 acres in size and serve the recreational needs of a regional population; they generally contain amenities not found in neighborhood or community parks, such as open space, horse trails, large picnic facilities, golf courses, lake boating, and/or hiking trails (City of Santa Cruz, 1992).

County of Santa Cruz Parks and Recreational Facilities. The County of Santa Cruz maintains over 30 parks and recreational facilities totaling approximately 1,400 acres. The County of Santa Cruz Department of Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services oversees these parks and facilities and offers recreational, cultural, and community programs (Santa Cruz County, 2005).

Park Standards. Park standards are goals for the amount of parkland provided per number of residents. For neighborhood parks, the City of Santa Cruz has adopted a standard of 2.0 acres per 1,000 people, with each park serving an area within three-eighths of a mile or five blocks. For community parks, the City has adopted a standard of 2.5 acres per 1,000 people, with each park serving an area within one-and-a-half miles. While the City has not adopted regional park standards, the City's General Plan notes that the national standard for regional parks is 20 acres per 1,000 people (City of Santa Cruz, 1992). The City has 93.4 acres of developed neighborhood parks and has identified a need for an additional 3.8 acres of developed parks.

The County of Santa Cruz has adopted park standards of 3.0 acres of neighborhood parkland per 1,000 people, 2.0 to 3.0 acres of community parkland per 1,000 people, and 5 to 6 acres of rural parkland per 1,000 people. The County does not have adopted population-based standards for regional parks. The County currently maintains its acreage-per-resident standards with its total of 1,400 acres of parkland. While overall acreage is adequate, there are shortages of facilities in some parts of the County (Skewes-Cox, 2003).

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Significance Criteria. For the purposes of this Draft EIR, development of the project site would present a significant impact on parks and recreational services if the project would:

- Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated; or
- Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse effect on the environment.

Less-Than-Significant Impacts. The project would be likely to increase use of the Arana Gulch area, but the increase in visitors is not expected to be large enough to cause substantial physical deterioration of the area. The project also includes provisions for trail improvements and maintenance measures to maintain and improve the Arana Gulch area over time.

Arana Gulch serves as a local recreational resource for pedestrians and bicyclists. Implementation of the Arana Gulch Master Plan would result in an increase in trail maintenance and trail use monitoring due to the expanded trail system. However, the new trails would be constructed in a manner that would minimize trail maintenance needs and address existing erosion problems. New trail markers and interpretive displays would also require additional maintenance. Most of the maintenance activities would be performed by maintenance workers in the City of Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation Department. These maintenance provisions would help prevent substantial deterioration of the area. Since the project would not cause substantial physical deterioration of the Arana Gulch area, the impact would be less-than-significant and no mitigation measures are necessary.

The project would also include: (1) a City of Santa Cruz General Plan/Local Coastal Program amendment that would expand the Natural Area designation to cover the entire project site; and (2) an amendment to the Zoning Map/Local Coastal Program to rezone the site from R-1-5 (Single Family Residential) to PK (Parks). The project would also amend the City of Santa Cruz General Plan/Local Coastal Program to delete the provision (in Policy 2.2.7 of the Land Use Element) that provides for a possible community facility, including a school and neighborhood park of at least 10 developable acres, on the project site.

Since the project would not require additional recreational facilities beyond those proposed and its effect on the City's inventory of recreational resources would be beneficial, the impact would be less-than-significant and no mitigation measures are necessary.

Potentially Significant Impacts. The project would have the following potentially significant impact.

Impact REC-1: The Master Plan includes trail improvements and other changes within Arana Gulch that could potentially impact vegetation and wildlife, geology, hydrology, and other environmental conditions. These impacts are addressed throughout this EIR. (PS)

Mitigation Measure REC-1: The City Parks and Recreation Department and Public Works Department shall carry out mitigation measures identified in other sections of this EIR to reduce the environmental impacts of the proposed trail improvements and other project provisions for Arana Gulch. (LTS)

Cumulative Impacts. Development projects elsewhere in Santa Cruz and in the unincorporated area would be likely to increase demand for parks and recreational facilities, potentially causing substantial deterioration of existing facilities. Cumulative development could also require construction of new parks and recreational facilities in order to meet City and County standards for parks. These new facilities could in turn have environmental impacts. Since the Arana Gulch Master Plan project would help to offset the need for recreational resources in Santa Cruz, however, the project would not contribute substantially to cumulative impacts on parks and recreational facilities.

References

Amy Skewes-Cox, 2003. *Emergency Response Center Project Draft Environmental Impact Report*, prepared for the University of California, Santa Cruz November, page 4.14-2.

City of Santa Cruz, *City of Santa Cruz General Plan and Local Coastal Program, 1990-2005* (adopted October 27, 1992, last amended October 28, 2003), Parks and Recreation Element, pages 2, 7 and 10.

Santa Cruz County, 2005. Website on parks: www.scparks.com reviewed September 2005.