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Department Directors, Executive
Officers of Boards and Commissions

Shoreline Erosion Protection Policy

POLICY FOR SHORELINE EROSION PROTECTION



Introduction

California's shorelines are subject to the natural, continuously changing effects of erosion and accretion caused by waves, current and wind. In some instances development has taken place, or is being proposed, in unstable erosion prone areas which eventually may require remedial protection or even abandonment. Because the natural processes and human activities causing shoreline erosion do not respect political jurisdictional boundaries, State guidance and coordinated agency policies are required.

Remedial projects have been used along California shorelines with varying degrees of success. In some instances, breakwaters, groins, seawalls and revetments have created new problems because they were placed without a full understanding of the natural process of shoreline erosion. Remedial projects require large capital investments and may significantly alter the configuration, appearance and recreation potential of the shoreline. Projects designed to restore natural beach conditions by artificially supplying sand may be a more desirable alternative. This type of remedial action, however, requires periodic renourishment and a continuing supply of sand.

The cost to public and private property owners, the tragedy of homes lost by erosion, and the need for government relief and expensive remedial actions can be avoided if development is not allowed in geologically unsuitable areas, or in areas subject to sand depletion without natural replenishment, or to excessive rates. Additionally, erosion problems might be forestalled or avoided by effective land use policies, especially in currently undeveloped areas and by not upsetting the delicate and natural balance of nature. Protecting coastal property values,

maximizing the recreational potential of our shoreline by maintaining sandy beaches, protecting wildlife habitats, and protecting options for revenue producing activities are objectives of primary importance to the State of California.

The 1976 amendments to the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act require that coastal management programs include a planning process to assess the effects of shoreline erosion, to study and evaluate ways to control or lessen the impact of erosion, and to restore areas adversely affected. The California Coastal Act of 1976 assigns primary responsibility for carrying out this program to the California Coastal Commission. The State Harbors and Navigation Code assigns the responsibility for studying shoreline erosion, for protection works, and for administering State funds for the local share of Federal projects to the Department of Navigation and Ocean Development. The Public Resources Code assigns responsibility to the State Lands Commission for managing and protecting State-owned mineral resources and mineral rights. Although these laws form the heart of California's shoreline erosion control program, many other agencies play key roles and must exercise their mandates and advisory functions in a consistent manner.

This statement establishes the basic shoreline erosion control policies for all departments, boards, and commissions within the Resources Agency to use when developing projects, authorizing private or public projects, or commenting on permit actions taken by other authorities including Federal, State, and Local agencies.

These policies should be applied by State agencies when taking the following actions:

- (1) Commenting on Environmental Impact Reports pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Coast Guard public notices;
- (2) Issuing California Department of Fish and Game stream or Lake bed alteration agreements, and State Lands Commission mineral extraction and tideland leases;
- (3) Planning, designing, and carrying out Department of Water Resources projects, Department of Navigation and Ocean Development projects, State Water Resources Control Board projects, and in planning, purchasing and improving State parks and beaches;

- (4) Considering coastal development and San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission permits, and certifications of consistency with the California Coastal Management Program under provision of Section 307 of the Coastal Zone Management Act;
- (5) Preparing and certifying Local Coastal Programs required by the California Coastal Act;
- (6) Granting Coastal Conservancy funds for mitigating shoreline problems; and
- (7) Reviewing mined-land reclamation plans, and classifying and designating significant mineral resources.

The effectiveness of these policies depends on the steps each department, board, and commission takes to carry them out. Agencies with administrative regulations affecting shoreline erosion should amend those regulations to incorporate these policies. Because the Local Coastal Programs (LCP) required by the California Coastal Act offer a unique opportunity for local agencies to deal with shoreline erosion in an effective, coordinated, and far-sighted way, each agency within the Resources Agency is directed to cooperate with the Coastal Commission and local governments by reviewing LCP work programs, offering technical assistance to identify issues, and suggesting ways to address these issues in carrying out the California Shoreline Protection Policies.

CALIFORNIA SHORELINE EROSION PROTECTION POLICY

I. General

Development of the lands adjacent to large bodies of water carries with it an element of danger from wave action, which can threaten the safety of public and private property and recreational values.

It is the policy of the Resources Agency that the use of these lands avoid hazardous and costly situations caused by erosion and minimize or resolve existing problems. Only in those situations where structures or areas of public use are threatened should the State resort to funding or approving remedial projects. When necessary, projects should restore natural processes, retain shoreline characteristics, and provide recreational benefits to the extent possible.

II. Planning and Regulation

- A. In planning for the use of land adjacent to the shoreline, State agencies shall assure the following:
1. Effective land use plans and regulations to prevent existing and future developments from being endangered by erosion of sand beaches or the base of bluffs;
 2. Measures to reduce surface runoff, groundwater effects, and other activities that create bluff stability problems;
 3. Measures for the orderly demolition or relocation of damaged or threatened structures and facilities and for the disposition of parcels of land that cannot be safely developed.
- B. Projects constructed within the coastal watersheds can increase the natural shoreline erosion rates by blocking the flow of sediment to the shoreline. It is therefore the policy of the Resources Agency that developments planned, developed, or authorized by State agencies shall meet at least one of the following conditions:
1. The development, together with other adjacent developments allowed under local land use regulations, will not reduce the natural sediment beyond that needed to adequately supply the shoreline;
 2. Mitigation measures to include providing an adequate sediment supply are included as a part of the project; or
 3. A regional plan exists that would provide an adequate supply of sand to protect the shoreline, even if the development is permitted.
- C. Beach and dune sand, and similar sediment lying in river beds, estuaries or in harbor channels is a valuable resource that should be used for shoreline protection. It is, therefore, the

policy of the Resources Agency that all such dredge or excavation material removed within the coastal zone or near-shore waters, which is suitable in quantity, size, distribution, and chemical constituency, be discharged as follows:

1. Directly onto a natural beach in an appropriate manner for effective beach nourishment and in a manner to protect significant natural resources and the public use of such resources at those locations; or
 2. When beach nourishment is not needed or appropriate at the time of dredging, the sand should be deposited at locations for eventual use for beach nourishment, provided that suitable locations are available and steps are taken to protect both significant natural resources and the public use of such resources at those locations; or
 3. In those instances where quantity, distribution, or chemical constituency of dredge or excavation material limit its use as described in paragraphs one and two, the material should be used to optimize its mineral values or its utility as construction material;
- D. Under California law, artificially induced shoreline accretions do not affect property boundaries. To preserve evidence of the position of reconstruction boundaries, it shall be the policy of the Resources Agency that before approving any shoreline erosion control measure, a Record of Survey map shall be filed with the State Lands Commission to preserve and protect public and private boundaries showing at least the following:
1. An accurate positioning of the present, preconstruction, high-water line;
 2. Sufficient ties to at least two existing record monuments, which will not be disturbed by proposed construction;

3. The accurate position of any monument shown on a map filed in an office of public record, and which will be disturbed by the proposed construction, together with a plan to replace the monument in its original position or to nearby record monuments.
- E. The planning and improvement of parks and beaches should be done in a way consistent with protection against the potential erosion of the affected segment of the coastline, and any structures located in areas subject to erosion damage should be expendable or movable.

III. SHORELINE PROTECTION PROJECTS

Shoreline protection projects are proposed by both private parties and public agencies. It is the policy of the Resources Agency that the following policies should be followed when evaluating project applications:

- A. Nourishment of beaches to protect against erosion shall be encouraged where the following conditions are met:
1. This does not conflict with significant living marine resources;
 2. This will not result in adverse effects elsewhere on the coast; and
 3. Measures are included in the project to maintain the affected beaches in a nourished state.
- B. Construction of seawalls, revetments, breakwaters, or other artificial structure for coastal erosion control shall be discouraged unless each of the following criteria is met:
1. No other non-structural alternative is practical or preferable;
 2. The condition causing the problem is site specific and not attributable to a general erosion trend, or the project reduces the

need for a number of individual projects and solves a regional erosion problem;

3. It can be shown that a structure(s) will successfully mitigate the effects of shoreline erosion and will not adversely affect adjacent or other sections of the shoreline;
4. There will be no reduction in public access, use, and enjoyment of the natural shoreline environment, and construction of a structure will preserve or provide access to related public recreational lands or facilities;
5. Any project-caused impacts on fish and wildlife resources will be offset by adequate fish and wildlife preservation measures; and
6. The project is to protect existing development, public beaches or a coastal-dependent use.

- C. No project shall be approved that will cause loss or destruction of State mineral resources, or that will subject State mineral rights to trespass. All royalty considerations shall be determined by the State Lands Commission and implemented pursuant to the terms of a permit or lease granted by the Commission.

IV. PROJECT FINANCING

- A. It shall be the policy of the Resources Agency to recommend State financial participation in shoreline erosion protection projects only when all of the following conditions are met:
 1. The protection project considers the long term effects of erosion on all adjacent coastline sections subjected to similar or related erosional mechanisms and takes into consideration the needs of the entire region;
 2. Any project-caused impacts on fish and wildlife will be offset by adequate fish and wildlife preservation measures;

3. The public benefits including the long term environmental, social, and economic effect of the project are found to be greater than the public costs. The coastal section to be protected should contain substantial and valuable public-owned lands or facilities of greater value than the cost of the proposed project, or the protection scheme should provide, maintain, or improve the public use and enjoyment of the beach or shoreline;
 4. The project plan should use non-structural solutions such as beach nourishment as the recommended alternative or as a part of the recommended alternative, unless it is not feasible.
 5. Public access is provided to the shoreline areas where the protection project is to be carried out unless the area is unsafe.
- B. In an emergency situation when erosion is threatening structures, State agencies should respond immediately by offering technical assistance for temporary protective actions. Assistance should first be directed to emergency situations involving public assets.