

## Trail/Multi-Use Path Examples Within Sensitive Habitat Areas

The following is a list of trail and multi-use pathway projects that have been previously approved by the California Coastal Commission where the project involved some form of potential impact to sensitive natural resources. These approvals occurred over the course of more than ten years (1996-2010) and represent the Commission's on-going precedent of approving such projects when there are both public access and resource goals to be achieved. In many of the approvals, the Commission determined that the public access benefits provided by the project were dependent on their location within the natural habitat. Additionally, they found that the formalization of certain paths improved resource values by controlling and directing public use in a manner that reduced adverse impacts from uncontrolled use. Where projects offer a direct link between existing trail sections, impacts from "volunteer" trails are eliminated. As was the case in many of the following examples, interpretive signage and resource management plans are imperative to successfully protecting and enhancing sensitive habitats, while also improving public access in the Coastal Zone.

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**Permit No.:** 3-05-071 (Morro Bay Harborwalk)  
**Applicant:** City of Morro Bay  
**Approval Date:** February 10, 2006  
**Project Description:** Installation of a pedestrian boardwalk and Class I bike trail along waterfront; phased restoration of approximately 20 acres of degraded coastal dunes; and relocation/realignment of Coleman Drive and a portion of Embarcadero Road at Morro Bay waterfront, San Luis Obispo County.  
**Similarity:** Commission allowed paved road and bike trail through dune habitat.

**Relevant Quotes:** *“Currently, vehicular access exists to these areas, though there are few opportunities for safe pedestrian and bicycle access to the beach access and parking area at Morro Rock. As a result, people opt for a safer and shorter route to the beach through the dunes. As previously mentioned, this unmanaged access is a primary source of habitat degradation. Implementation of the project is expected to increase the quantity and quality of native coastal dune habitat by redirecting human activity away from sensitive areas.”* P.14

*“Accordingly, the proposed project is the only alternative that addresses public safety concerns, maximizes and manages public access, and results in effective protection and restoration of the coastal dunes.”* P.15

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**Permit No.:** 1-07-005 (Crescent City Harbor Trail North Segment)  
**Applicant:** City of Crescent City  
**Approval Date:** October 12, 2007  
**Project Description:** Harbor Trail – North Segment Project entailing construction of: (1) a Class I multipurpose trail from the Cultural Center in Beach Front Park to Sunset Circle/RV Park Road, including a 110-foot

freespan pedestrian/bicycle bridge crossing of Elk Creek; (2) a pedestrian harbor/creek vista overlook;(3) 24-space asphalt surface parking lot with bioswale/ drainage retention basin; (4) couplet restroom facilities; (5) various concrete walkways, bench and seat wall installations and directional & interpretive signage; and (6) a Class III roadside bike route along Sunset Circle to the intersection of Highway 101 and Elk Valley Road, Crescent City, Del Norte County.

**Similarity:** Commission allowed paved Class I and Class III multiuse trails involving some wetland fill.

**Relevant Quotes:** *“Trails are utilized for a variety of utilitarian and aesthetic reasons. Although the use of trails does not in every case entail nature study, the proposed facilities certainly support such a pursuit.”* P. 21

*“Thus, trails through riparian corridors and shoreline areas such as the project site may similarly be considered a form of “nature study... or similar resource-dependent activities,” as they are: (1) a development type integral to the appreciation and comprehension of biophysical elements that comprise riparian areas; and (2) dependent upon the presence of the natural area resource through which they pass to provide a nature study experience...Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed placement of fill within coastal waters and wetlands for purposes of constructing the Harbor Trail North Segment is for one of the allowable uses for dredging, diking, and filling of coastal waters pursuant to Section 30233(a)(7) of the Coastal Act.”* P. 22

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**Permit No.:** 3-97-062 (Sand City Bike Path)  
**Applicant:** City of Sand City  
**Approval Date:** October 10, 1997  
**Project Description:** Construction of 12’ wide 4,845’ long bike path and 5 acres dune revegetation in Seaside/Sand City, Monterey County. This is a portion of larger project to connect Monterey Regional Trail with Ford Ord Recreation and Bike Trail.  
**Similarity:** Commission allowed paved path through dune habitat. Project represents “missing link” in the 21.5 mile regional bikeway.

**Relevant Quote:** *“In addition, the fencing and interpretive signs that will be provided will minimize impacts of unmanaged access that would persist under the status quo and, as discussed below, will increase public understanding and appreciation of the unique and sensitive resources of the Monterey Bay dune system.”*  
P. 11

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**Permit No.:** 3-00-092 (Monterey Dune Recreation Trail and Parking Lot)  
**Applicants:** CA Dept. of Parks and Recreation & City of Monterey  
**Approval Date:** January, 10, 2000  
**Project Description:** Construction of 4,000’ long trail, removal of asphalt, construction of parking lot and restoration of dunes.  
**Similarity:** Commission allowed paved multiuse path through dune habitat. Project provides direct link to existing trail system.

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**Permit No.:** 5 -03-091 Bayview Landing Park, Newport Beach  
**Applicants:** City of Newport Beach and The Related Companies  
**Approval Date:** November 5, 2003  
**Project Description:** 120-unit senior affordable housing project with 146 parking spaces, pool & patio, Wetlands Restoration & Detention Basin & Pond area (on lower part), and public passive park (on upper part), on 15-acre site, at northwest corner of Coast Highway & Jamboree Road, Newport Beach, Orange County.  
**Similarity:** Commission allowed paved bike path in ESHA buffer.

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**Permit No.** 80-P-046-A1 (Humboldt County Public Works Subdivision)  
**Applicant:** Humboldt County Public Works Department  
**Approval Date:** June 15, 2007  
**Project Description:** Construction of a pedestrian-only interpretive trail within an open-space easement placed over the riparian habitat and adjoining lands. Proposed trail would link existing segments of the Hammond Coastal Trail to the north and south and would affect approximately 2,000 square feet of the open space easement (200-ft long by 10-ft wide) along Widow White Creek on the north side of Pacific Sunset Subdivision, off of Fortune Street, McKinleyville, Humboldt County.  
**Similarity:** Commission allowed compacted gravel trail through riparian habitat. Project provides missing trail linkage.

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**Permit No.** 2-07-018 (Sonoma Regional Park, Bodega Bay)  
**Applicant:** Sonoma County Regional Parks  
**Approval Date:** September 6, 2007  
**Project Description:** Installation of bridge over Cheney Creek to connect Birdwalk Coastal Access Trail with Doran Beach Regional Park Trail and widen and upgrade 1,370 foot long Doran Marsh Trail to multiuse, pedestrian and bicycle trail that is 8 feet wide with a crushed rock surface between 355 Highway 1 (Bird Walk Coastal Access Park) and 201 Doran Park Road (Doran Beach Regional Park), Bodega Bay, Sonoma County.  
**Similarity:** Commission allowed bridge and multi-use nature trail with crushed rock surface in ESHA.

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**Relevant Quote:** *“Although development activities will occur outside wetland and tideland areas, the proposed project construction occurs in environmentally sensitive habitat areas and could result in significant resource impacts. Because the project is a resource-dependent use (nature trail), it may be allowed within ESHA.”* P. 3

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**Permit No.** A-1-MEN-06-052 (Redwood Coast Public Access Improvements)  
**Applicant:** Redwood Coast Land Conservancy

**Approval Date:** April 13, 2007  
**Project Description:** Develop public access facilities by (1) improving two existing trails, (2) paving a new encroachment onto Highway One and constructing a four-car parking area, and (3) installing informational signage and symbolic fencing. The project also includes restoring areas of erosion caused by past vehicle use.

**Similarity:** Commission allowed unpaved paths through rare plant habitat and riparian habitat.

**Relevant Quote:** *“The proposed project would consolidate the current indiscriminate public use of the property by formalizing the existing trails for pedestrian use only and by preventing unauthorized vehicle use on the site.... Precluding public use of sensitive areas in this manner would minimize erosion and allow these areas to revegetate naturally and prevent trampling of rare plant habitat.”*  
P. 4-5

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**Permit No.:** 6-09-043 (Otay River Valley Trail Improvements)  
**Applicant:** County of San Diego Department of Parks & Recreation  
**Approval Date:** Feb. 11, 2010  
**Project Description:** Construction of a 1,500-foot long, 8-foot wide trail segment connecting Otay Valley River Park (OVRP) trail system to the Bayshore Bikeway.

**Similarity:** Commission allowed unpaved trail and staging area improvements within wetland buffer.

**Relevant Quote:** *“The proposed trail will establish a clear, distinct accessway, with log fencing, that will discourage off-trail wandering, and allow the ad hoc trails to revegetate, reducing erosion.”* P. 6

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**Permit No.:** A-3-SLO-04-035 (PG&E Spent Fuel Storage)  
**Approval Date:** December 2004 (Revised Findings January 2005)  
**Applicant:** Pacific Gas and Electric Company  
**Project Description:** Construct and operate a radioactive waste storage facility known as an Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation (ISFSI) within the high security area of the Diablo Canyon power plant complex approximately 6 miles north of Avila Beach), San Luis Obispo County.

**Similarity:** Commission allowed unpaved paths through coastal terrace prairie habitat.

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**Permit No.:** 3-06-069 (Fort Ord Dunes State Park Improvements)  
**Applicants:** CA Dept. of Parks and Recreation  
**Approval Date:** March 14, 2007  
**Project Description:** Opening of Fort Ord Dunes State Park for initial public use. Project includes pedestrian and vehicle access at the 8th Street overpass; re-paving and striping of an existing parking lot; use of

an unsurfaced access service road as a pedestrian beach access trail; creation of a temporary observation area west of the parking area; installation of entrance and directional gates and interpretive, directional, and regulatory signage; and fencing of known snowy plover nesting sites.

**Similarity:** Commission allowed unpaved path through dune habitat.

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**Permit No.:** 3-98-095 and 3-98-095-A1 (Elfin Forest Boardwalk)

**Applicant:** Department of General Services, San Luis Obispo County

**Approval Date:** January 13, 1998 and May 2009

**Project Description:** Construct a 5,300' long boardwalk loop trail with two viewing platforms for public access and recreation in the Los Osos area of San Luis Obispo County. Amendment allowed extension of boardwalk.

**Similarity:** Commission allowed boardwalk through terrestrial habitat ESHA.

**Relevant Quote:** *“Trail access within the Elfin Forest is currently provided by a system of sand trails that have been created through many years of unauthorized use by pedestrians and off-road vehicles. Continued use has resulted in the erosion of the sandy soil, and trampling of sensitive vegetation and habitat. By providing a boardwalk, the project will consolidate trails, reduce erosion and the overall degradation of the forest habitat, and facilitate effective revegetation and environmental enhancement.”* P. 7

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**Permit No.** 3-01-003 and 3-01-003-A1

**Approval Date:** March 7, 2002

**Applicants:** City of Grover Beach & CA Dept. of Parks and Recreation

**Project Description:** Development of a 0.5 mile recreational path along coastal backdunes of Grover Beach, San Luis Obispo County. Amendment added at-grade boardwalk w/ restoration component to enhance habitat qualities.

**Similarity:** Commission allowed boardwalk through dune habitat.

**Relevant Quote:** *“By abandoning the existing trail and adding the amended at-grade boardwalk, the project has the potential to further disrupt the backdune habitat by dispersing foot-traffic along multiple routes causing further disruption to sensitive habitat...As conditioned, it is likely the abandoned path will quickly grow over with dune vegetation.”* P. 10 of 3-01-003-A1 staff report

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**Permit No.:** 3-01-101

**Approval Date:** April 11, 2002

**Applicants:** B&K Monterey, Inc., City of Monterey & Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District

**Project Description:** Re-subdivision and merger of 60 existing legal lots of record into 14 legal lots of record and 3 open space/habitat preserve parcels.

Project included public access improvements, as well as dune restoration and maintenance for the open space/habitat preserve portions of the project at Beach Way (south end of Del Monte Beach), Monterey, Monterey County.

**Similarity:** Commission allowed boardwalk through dune habitat.

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**Permit No.** 3-87-258-3 (Asilomar State Beach Boardwalk)

**Approval Date:** March 14, 1996

**Applicants:** CA Dept. Parks & Recreation & City of Pacific Grove

**Project Description:** Amendment to allow continuation of Asilomar Dunes Restoration Project including eradication of exotic plant species, revegetation with indigenous plants, extension of existing trails & fencing at Rocky Shores, Asilomar State Beach, City of Pacific Grove, Monterey County.

**Similarity:** Commission allowed boardwalk through dune habitat.

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