

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY  
BOARD AGENDA LETTER**



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

**Agenda Number:**  
**Prepared on:** 2/17/05  
**Department Name:** Planning & Development  
**Department No.:** 053  
**Agenda Date:** 3/22/05  
**Placement:** Administrative  
**Estimate Time:**  
**Continued Item:** NO  
**If Yes, date from:**

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Valentin Alexeeff, Director  
Planning & Development

**STAFF** Dave Ward, Supervising Planner x2072  
**CONTACT:** Rosie Dyste, Planner II x3532

**SUBJECT:** Comment Letter on the Federal Consistency Determination for Vandenberg Air Force Base's Five-Year Beach Management Plan

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**Recommendation(s):**

That the Board of Supervisors receive the comment letter from the County Administrator previously submitted to the California Coastal Commission regarding federal consistency determination for Vandenberg Air Force Base's Five-Year Beach Management Plan.

**Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:**

The recommendation(s) are primarily aligned with Goal No. 1. An Efficient Government Able to Respond Effectively to the Needs of the Community.

**Executive Summary:**

Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB) recently submitted a consistency determination request to the California Coastal Commission for a five-year (2005 – 2009) Beach Management Plan, including restrictions to beach access on VAFB in order to protect the snowy plover. Planning & Development (P&D) received notice of the consistency determination and a copy of the Coastal Commission's staff report just a week before the February 17, 2005 Coastal Commission hearing on the matter. In response, the County Administrator submitted the attached comment letter to the Commission on February 15. Included in the comment letter were suggested measures VAFB should consider to protect the nesting and wintering populations of the western snowy plover and to restore and maintain public beach access to the county's beaches. This is an informational report on the previously submitted letter to the Coastal Commission.

On February 17<sup>th</sup>, the Coastal Commission voted to approve the consistency determination. At the hearing, Commissioner Mike Reilly asked staff to address a suggestion in the County's letter regarding the use of

fencing along the wet/dry sand interface and around nests (exclosures) to restore the full five-mile beach access as stipulated in the agreement between the County and VAFB. According to Coastal Commission staff, VAFB responded that the suggestion was not feasible because the current program of 1/2 mile beach access allowed during the plover breeding season achieved higher plover breeding success rates. Coastal Commission staff supported VAFB's position.

## **Background**

The western snowy plover is a Federally listed threatened species with critical habitat designations within Santa Barbara County. The Pacific Coast population of the snowy plover breeds mainly on coastal beaches and their preferred habitat consists of sand spits, dune backed beaches, unvegetated beach strands, open areas around estuaries and beaches at river mouths. Following the snowy plover listing, VAFB evaluated the effects of base activities on the plover population in part because Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act requires Federal agencies to conserve listed species on Federal land, ensure that their actions do not jeopardize listed species, and preserve critical habitat. These evaluations led to linear access restrictions and seasonal beach closures at Ocean Beach County Park and Surf Station during March to September snowy plover nesting season. This has been a source of conflict between the affected public and regulatory authorities since it is one of only three public coastal access points for more than 100,000 people along this 66-mile section of county coastline.

The County is committed to species protection and habitat conservation and to the protection and preservation of access to beaches and coastal areas for its residents. Implementing these goals requires a comprehensive approach to ensure species protection and coastal access throughout the County. Consequently, P&D applied for State and local grants to develop plover management and implementation strategies in accordance with County policies to protect and enhance coastal resources and support recreational access to the beach. Since 2000, P&D received funding for the plover program from the Coastal Resources Grant Program, Coastal Resources Enhancement Fund and Coastal Impact Assistance Program. These funds have been used to:

- Support the Surf Beach docent program during the March to September plover breeding season in 2002, 2003 and 2004.
- Develop interpretive sign panels at Surf Station, Ocean and Jalama Beach County Parks.
- Install a lock box and purchase interpretive materials for docents.
- Install pest-proof trash lids at Ocean Beach County Park and Surf Station.
- Prepare grant implementation strategies, a report outlining plover ecology, recovery goals for the County and identifying site specific action projects.
- Prepare an alternative access feasibility study to review different vertical coastal access points from Ocean Beach County Park.

In addition to the tasks listed above P&D, and where appropriate other county departments, review and comment on plover management activities or plans that affect County beaches or beach access locations to ensure accordance with County policies.

**Mandates and Service Levels:**

The County is not mandated to respond to Vandenberg's Five-Year Beach Management Plan; however, a coordinated approach to species protection and recovery will be the most effective way to preserve public access while supporting species recovery.

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

Costs associated with report review and the preparation of the comment letter is funded by grants in P&D's recommended FY 2005/2006 budget and will not result in a fiscal impact. In addition, facilities will not be impacted

**Special Instructions:**

N/A

**Concurrence:**

Parks Department