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Monday, June 28, 2010

Janet Wolf, honorable chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Goleta Beach 2.0 Plan – Board of Supervisors July 6, 2010 Agenda Item

Dear Chair Wolf and Honorable Supervisors:

Heal the Ocean, a non-profit citizens action group dedicated to ending ocean pollution in Santa Barbara County, submits the following comments on the Goleta Beach 2.0 erosion control plan, which the Board of Supervisors will be hearing during its July 6, 2010 meeting.

We are 100 percent in favor of this plan, and urge you voting in favor of it, for the following reasons:

1) Moving infrastructure – including a sewer line – back from the erosion zone is critical. That the California coastline – including Santa Barbara's – is facing increasing intrusion of a rising ocean is no longer an open question. The problem of sewer lines built long ago near the shoreline or on top of eroding bluffs (i.e. Carpinteria) are now having to be moved back to solid ground, and HTO supports these moves as a measure of protecting beaches from accidental sewage spills such as recently occurred in Goleta as a result of sewer line failure. Since the Goleta Beach 2.0 plan includes moving the sewer line inland to Highway 217, Heal the Ocean supports the plan simply for this reason alone.

As a member of the County's Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) steering committee, HTO has participated in a selection process for projects eligible for funding under Proposition 84 (Round 1). The moving of sewer lines to safer, higher ground qualifies for State funding under guidelines for Proposition 84, and HTO looks forward to communicating with County staff to explore the prospect and about timing of the project (it is uncertain when Round 2 of Proposition 84 funding will begin).

2) The ocean is advancing. Removing rock and asphalt from the immediate coastal zone is beneficial to the beach, conversely, installation of hard devices to capture sand is harmful. The U.S. EPA estimated some years ago that the world's sea levels will have risen from four to seven feet by the year 2100. A sea-level rise of this magnitude means that the Maldiv Islands in the Indian Ocean, now about six feet above sea level, will disappear. A sea level rise of four feet will submerge marshes, sounds and bays, push into river mouths, and shove coastlines inland. In his book, *The End of Nature*, the author Bill McKibben points out that constructing barrier islands, dikes, levees, and rock walls to protect oceanfront properties prohibits the reformation of

a natural coastline, which will flood eventually anyway, and that as the ocean moves inland it should “meet the land with ease and grace,” rather than bumping into “an endless cement wall.”

While it is regrettable that there is a (very popular!) restaurant in the Goleta Beach area, obviously threatened by the ocean moving inland, any hard-scrabble, sand-capturing plan is an expensive Band Aid that will work for a relatively short period of time. This knowledge is most certainly behind the California Coastal Commission recommendation of “managed retreat” rather than an installation of rock revetment, seawall and/or pier piling arrangement for the purpose of capturing sand. In the recommended reconfiguration of the park, 150 parking spaces would be removed – and HTO encourages the public to appreciate the beach more highly than as a place to park cars.

3) Fighting the Coastal Commission is a costly exercise that would take funds that could be used for an actual project. The California Coastal Commission voted 9-1 against Santa Barbara County’s previous erosion protection plan for Goleta Beach, and made recommendations that are now incorporated into the new Goleta 2.0 Plan with focus on “managed retreat.” Heal the Ocean agrees with Santa Barbara County Deputy Parks Director Erik Axelson, who has stated that the County has been told by its legal staff that fighting a decision from a 9-1 vote would be “throwing money into the wind.” Heal the Ocean feels it would be a shame to use funds in a courtroom instead of creating a better beach that takes into account what Nature will do anyway.

Heal the Ocean asks the Board of Supervisors to approve the Goleta Beach 2.0 plan, and we look forward to communicating with County staff as to funding possibilities. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Hillary Hauser". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hillary Hauser, executive director