



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING

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TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Airlin M. Singewald, Senior Planner

DATE: April 14, 2016

SUBJECT: Report on Emergency Permit (ZON2015-00385) authorizing emergency flood control activity adjacent to and within the Arroyo Grande Lagoon, within the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area. District 4.

Per Section 23.03.045b(8) of the Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance (CZLUO), when the Planning Director issues an emergency permit, it must be reported to the Planning Commission. On January 28, 2016, the Planning Director issued an emergency permit to the San Luis Obispo County Department of Public Works authorizing emergency flood control activity adjacent to and within the Arroyo Grande Lagoon, within the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area. The activity was proposed to minimize public safety risks, significant losses of property, and economic hardship that could have result from a series of storms that affected the area during the end of January 2016.

Specifically, the emergency permit authorized the San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works to breach a sandbar berm to lower the water level in the Arroyo Grande lagoon and avert flooding of the adjacent residential neighborhood and wastewater treatment plant. The action was consistent with the recommendations found in the Arroyo Grande Lagoon Interim Sandbar Management Plan, which states sandbar management should be considered when the following conditions exist:

1. Water levels exceeded 7.5 feet in the lagoons – flood elevation is approximately 10 feet;
2. The sandbar beach berm exceeds 9 feet; and/or
3. When a significant precipitation event is in the forecast.

The day before the emergency permit was issued the lagoon was at an elevation of 9.1 feet, just 1.3 feet below the lowest floor elevation in the adjacent “island” neighborhood, and the sandbar was approximately 9 feet high. The pending storm was anticipated to produce moderate to heavy rain, which could have resulted in flooding of the homes and wastewater treatment plants near the lagoon.

Public Works breached the sandbar on January 29, 2016 (the day after the emergency permit was issued) and achieved the County’s objective of lowering the lagoon level by 4 inches to avoid flooding of adjacent properties.

Per Section 15269(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines, actions taken to prevent an emergency are exempt from CEQA.

Attachments:

1. Emergency Permit ZON2015-00385
2. Arroyo Grande Creek Lagoon Emergency CDP Justification