



# **Poplar Beach Gateways Plan**

**Public Review Draft**

**October 2019**

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## Executive Summary

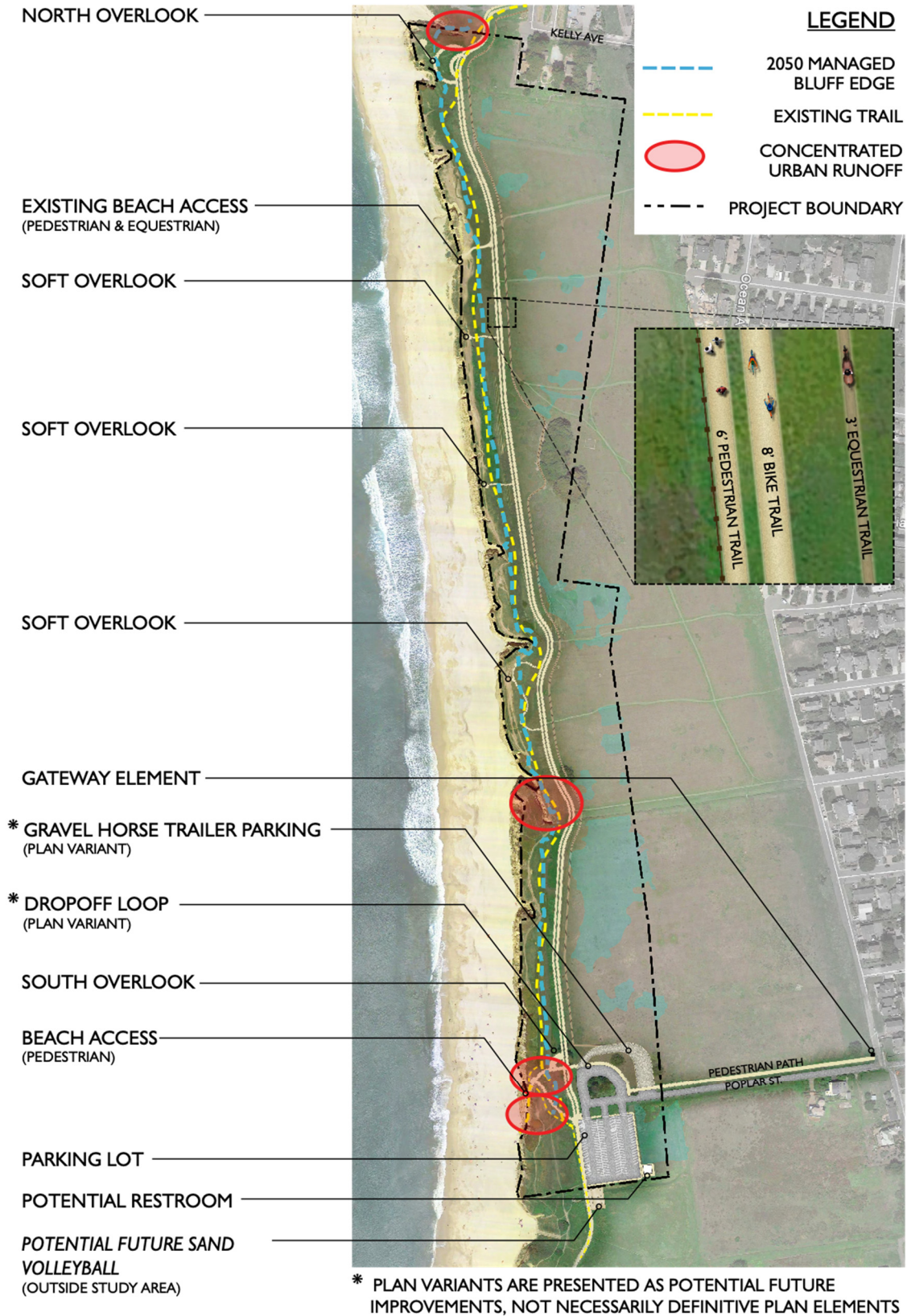
Poplar Beach Blufftop Park (Park) is a critical resource to the Half Moon Bay community and the Park's diversity of users. This Poplar Beach Gateways Plan (Plan) represents the City's investment in actively and effectively managing the Park to serve the community now and in the future. The planning boundaries include the City-owned lands between the County-owned property south of Poplar Street and Kelly Avenue that comprise the Park, as identified on the Plan Diagram shown below.

A hallmark of this plan is managed retreat of the Park's assets, including a section of the California Coastal Trail, to respond to natural bluff recession over time. Managed retreat is a coastal management strategy that allows the shoreline to move inland naturally rather than attempting to halt erosion by armoring the bluff. This approach is a best practice consistent with California Coastal Commission guidance, and it is feasible and appropriate for this Park because of the nature of the improvements and public ownership. At the same time, this Plan recognizes man-made sources of erosion in the Park that need to be proactively addressed.

The primary elements of the Plan include:

- Drainage and Erosion Control
- Managed retreat of the Coastal Trail
- Habitat Enhancement
- Beach Access
- Bluff Overlooks
- Parking and Circulation
- Park Amenities and Signage

These elements provide an integrated approach to proactively managing the Park for all users, while responding appropriately to the forces that are causing accelerated bluff recession and threatening the California Coastal Trail. The elements include Plan Variants to provide the City with full information and flexibility since the Variants involve expanding the parking footprint and potential environmental and permitting constraints for drainage control solutions; inclusion of the Variants in this Plan allows analysis and full disclosure of these potential Variants in the environmental impact report.

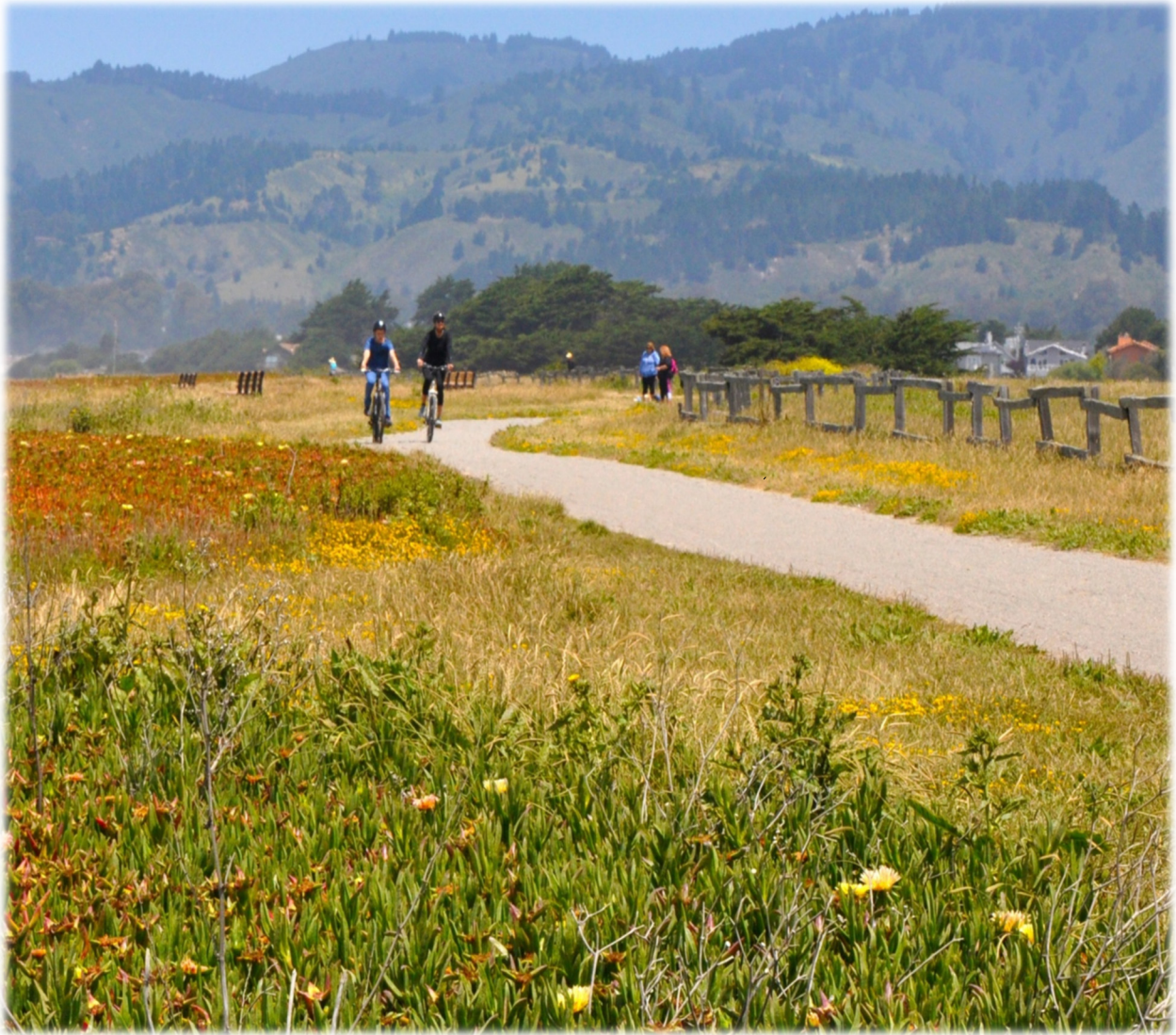


**Poplar Beach Gateways Plan Diagram**

The Plan also identifies Design Guidelines and Management Principles to establish a strategic public use and implementation plan for managed retreat of the Coastal Trail and Park amenities as the bluffs recede over time. The Plan elements redirect public access to overlooks along the bluff to control erosion and protect habitat while enhancing user experience with a new, retreated Coastal Trail and amenities appropriate to a passive use park. Operations, Maintenance, and Programming recommendations are further provided to realize the community's vision for a well-maintained Park that provides a safe, educational, and enjoyable experience for all users.

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## **1. Introduction & Context**

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# 1. Introduction & Context

## 1.1 Introduction

The City of Half Moon Bay (City), located along the northern California coast in San Mateo County, is known for its beautiful beaches, open bluffs, and forested hills. The scenic setting, historic downtown, and numerous recreational opportunities make Half Moon Bay loved by its residents, as well as an attractive destination for tourists year-round.

This document, the *Poplar Beach Gateways Plan* (Plan), functions as the City's guide for operating, maintaining and prioritizing capital investments to realize the community's vision and goals for Poplar Beach Blufftop Park (Park). The Park is located within City-owned parcels between the County-owned property south of Poplar Street and the State Parks-owned property north of Kelly Avenue, and comprises the planning boundaries of this Plan (**Figure 1**).

The Park provides important coastal open space and links along the coastline. A key feature of the Park is the California Coastal Trail (Coastal Trail), which runs north to south along the Park's coastal bluffs between the Half Moon Bay State Beach to the north and Coastside Land Trust property by Seymour Ditch to the south. The Park also provides key access to the beach and is home to special status plant species and sensitive habitats. Unfortunately, these resources are currently threatened by accelerated erosion caused by urban runoff and unmanaged access within the Park.



**Figure 1. Poplar Beach Gateways Plan Area**

### 1.2 Plan Area Context

The City acquired the 45-acre Park property from the County of San Mateo (County) in 1996 under County Resolution 60033 (approved by the Board of Supervisors on January 30, 1996) and City Resolution C-94-96 (approved by the City Council on August 22, 1996) for use in perpetuity as a



passive regional park. The Poplar Street Park Master Plan was then adopted in September 1996 as a “guide to the implementation of a ‘passive’ park which includes a neighborhood park, with hiking, picnicking, beach access, bicycling, horseback riding and playground uses, with parking provided for these activities.” Limited improvements based on that plan were implemented.

In 2003, the Coastside Multi-Use Trail was built within the Park as a section of the larger Coastal Trail network. This trail section was a cooperative effort by the City of Half Moon Bay, the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation, Coastsiders for Safe Bikeways, and the County of San Mateo (County), with funding from the State Coastal Conservancy and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. The 10-foot paved Coastal Trail remains an important resource and signature recreation asset of the region that is used heavily by the community and visitors to for recreational enjoyment as well as access to work, school, and other activities. However, recession of adjacent coastal bluffs from coastal wave and tidal action as well as erosion from local drainage channels is encroaching on the trail, creating safety concerns, impacting its structural viability, and increasing maintenance needs.

The sensitive natural habitats across the Park are also threatened by unmanaged access, erosion, and bluff recession. Existing habitat identified within the Park boundary is a mosaic of native and non-native plant communities that support special status species. The Park is part of a larger contiguous open space joined to roughly 66 acres of adjacent undeveloped private, County, and Coastside Land Trust

properties to the east and south. In addition to the sensitive plant species, this land area is considered to be the most important habitat for wintering raptors in San Mateo County by the Sequoia Audubon Society.

Today the Park is primarily open space with limited infrastructure that includes a segment of the paved Coastal Trail, a parking area, dirt equestrian trails, informal access to the beach, a few benches, two picnic tables and some portable restrooms. The City continues to invest in both short term capital improvements and in operations and management programs while this comprehensive long-term Plan for the Park was under development and approval. Near-term improvements in advance of Plan adoption included an emergency drainage project to protect public beach access, improvements to waste and recycling, split rail fencing to protect the bluff, and temporary fencing along the bluff edge to address public safety at active erosion areas. Additional near-term efforts include maintenance to the vertical beach access at Poplar Street, on-going discussions with a commercial equestrian operator, a new city contract for on-going beach clean ups, additional law enforcement support for heavy summer use, and speed controls on the Poplar Street access.

### 1.2.1 Consistency with Adopted Plans

To support the recreational needs of both residents and visitors, the City adopted a new Parks Master Plan (PMP) in January 2019 to ensure that capital projects and programming are aligned with the desires and needs of the Half Moon Bay community. The Park is identified in the PMP as a Special Use Park that could be substantially improved to enhance public coastal access. The PMP acknowledges the drainage, erosion and use issues in the Park that were detailed in a *Coastal Trail Existing Conditions and Trail Planning Alternatives Report* (NCE 2017). Together, the Existing Conditions Report and PMP identified and documented the impacts of bluff recession, erosion, deteriorating infrastructure, unmanaged access, challenging beach access and the lack of facilities necessary to support park users. As a result, the City decided to pursue this comprehensive planning process for the Park to address these issues.

In addition to the PMP, the City has recently completed a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and a Green Infrastructure (GI) Plan and is in the process of updating its

General Plan and Local Coastal Land Use Plan (LUP). All of these planning efforts have included extensive community participation and have been coordinated with each other.

The policies in these documents support stabilizing erosion in the Park by managing access, restoring native vegetation and implementing drainage improvements; improving coastal access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit shuttles; minimizing stormwater flows; and providing enhanced amenities for Park users. This Plan is fully consistent with the City's existing and draft General Plan, LUP, Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, GI Plan, and PMP. The vision of the Park as a passive regional coastal resource with enhanced user facilities supporting coastal access and enjoyment remains unchanged.





## **2. Vision, Goals & Guiding Principles**

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## 2. Vision, Goals & Guiding Principles

The Parks Master Plan (PMP) involved an active stakeholder and community engagement process that the City continued in the development of this Plan. The engagement process for development of the Plan is detailed in **Appendix A**, which led to these goals and guiding principles for the Plan Elements.

### 2.1 Vision

***A passive park designed for enjoyment of nature and the views to the ocean, with access to the beach below the bluffs.***

– 2019 Half Moon Bay Parks Master Plan

In addition to the vision, the PMP provided an initial list of general recommendations for the Park:

1. Improve vertical beach access.
2. Conduct bluff restoration and create designated trails to reduce off-trail erosion and impacts.
3. Develop and implement policies to address the impacts of equestrian use with respect to erosion and waste.
4. Explore bluff stabilization options and realign bluff top trails to avoid near-term erosion areas.
5. Assess the larger area for sensitive habitat and; where appropriate, utilize native plantings and landscaping to help with erosion and to keep people on paths.
6. Establish accessible viewing areas and seating in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
7. Develop signage and interpretive information.
8. Consider the addition of picnic areas.
9. Improve the parking area and vehicle turn-around.
10. Add permanent restrooms and water station for drinking and cleaning feet.
11. Ensure adequate provision of dog waste stations with convenient receptacles.
12. Add more bike racks.

These recommendations provided the foundation for initiating the Plan and seeking further community participation in identifying goals and recommendations for the

Park. The PMP recommendations are reflected in the identified goals and supporting statements for this Plan, as outlined below.

### 2.2 Goals

The *Poplar Beach Gateways Project Vision and Goals*, published January 2019, consolidates feedback received during outreach efforts conducted by the City designed to open channels of communication with the community about future challenges, opportunities, and desires at the Park. Comments received from the community were used to distill the characteristics of the Park that community members aspire to protect, maintain, improve, change, or achieve in the future. The goals and supporting statements intended to achieve the vision in a way that reflects the community's shared values and concerns are outlined below:

#### Goal 1: Protect and enhance the natural resources and open spaces of Poplar Beach Park.

- Protect and enhance environmentally sensitive lands, wildlife habitats, and rare, threatened or endangered plant and animal communities.
- Preserve open space that protects natural resources, scenic resources, and public health and safety.
- Locate trails, access points, amenities, and other features to minimize impacts to sensitive habitats.
- Discourage the use or development of informal trails.
- Identify locations where public access is causing erosion or other impacts to sensitive habitat. Provide alternative access and restore the impacted area.
- Enact best management practices for weed abatement and invasive species control throughout the Park and along the Poplar Street path between Railroad Avenue and the Coastal Trail.
- Educate park users about sensitive habitat areas and how to protect them.

These objectives are fully consistent with the PMP's recommendations 2 and 5, above.

#### Goal 2: Consider bluff erosion and the effects of sea level rise in planning of Park improvements.

- Present a bluff stabilization strategy that provides for the protection of coastal resources.
- Provide for the preservation of public access, user serving facilities, and other park improvements by accounting for coastal bluff erosion and sea level rise in the design and siting of such improvements.



- Identify areas where accelerated erosion due to sea level rise may affect the stability of formal and informal coastal accessways and establish alternative formal accessways in less hazardous areas. Where public access becomes restricted due to hazards, restore the trail area with stabilizing vegetation.
- Maintain drainage facilities to promote erosion control, manage stormwater runoff, and protect sensitive habitat. Coordinate the needs of stormwater pollution management with habitat protection, flood management, aesthetic, and other open space needs.
- Use signage to identify areas with restricted public access or provide warning of bluff instability.

These objectives are fully consistent with the PMP's recommendations 2, 4, 5, and 7, above.

### Goal 3: Enhance access to and through the Park and the beach for all users.

- Create a connected trail and access network to and through the Park and beach in order to:
  - Provide maximum coastal access for all people consistent with public safety and the need to protect natural resource areas from overuse.
  - Provide safe and convenient access to the Park and the beach.
- Site and design trails and accessways to minimize impacts to sensitive habitats and erosion and account for topographic and site constraints, erosion, sea level rise, and the fragility of natural resources.
- Incorporate design features to discourage use or development of informal trails and accessways that may be dangerous, exacerbate erosion, or impact sensitive habitats.
- Ensure that the trail and access network provide options for all user groups, including walkers, bicyclists, equestrians, and for users of different abilities.
- Maintain a lateral access trail along the top of the bluff, generally parallel to the bluff edge.
- Improve access from the bluff to the beach. Locate and design vertical accessways to minimize erosion and improve safety.
- Improve the Poplar Street path between Railroad Avenue and the Coastal Trail to provide safe and convenient access.
- Provide ADA upgrades and accessibility improvements to the extent feasible.
- Explore and evaluate potential daytime and nighttime parking management strategies.

These objectives are fully consistent with the PMP's recommendations 1 through 6 and 9, above.

### Goal 4: Provide low-impact amenities to support passive enjoyment of the Park.

- Improve the parking area to provide additional vehicle parking and accommodate vehicle turn around, horse-trailers, and shuttles.
- Provide sufficient bike racks in parking areas, at trail junctions, and at access points.
- Provide clean and convenient facilities such as permanent restrooms, drinking fountains, showers, and rinsing stations.
- Provide and maintain benches, overlooks, and other amenities throughout the park for rest, relaxation, and enjoyment of views and natural habitat.
- Establish ADA-accessible viewing and seating areas.
- Explore amenities for users of differing ages, abilities, and interests.
- Provide sufficient, conveniently located trash receptacles and dog clean-up bag dispensers at Park entrances and throughout the Park.
- Establish a program of consistent and attractive signage for Poplar Beach Park to create a recognizable identity for the Park.

These objectives are fully consistent with the PMP's recommendations 6 through 12, above.

### Goal 5: Provide for well-maintained, safe, and secure Park and surroundings.

- Provide regular maintenance of all park amenities. Ensure that new park amenities will be properly maintained.
- Provide sufficient trash collection and beach cleanup services.
- Design and manage parking areas to enhance security and control after-hours usage.
- Address the need for enforcement of littering, beach fires, camping, noise, parking, and hours of use restrictions.
- Accommodate animal use at the Park with provisions to address impacts with respect to erosion, waste, conflicts with other users, and impacts to sensitive habitat.
- Promote programs to increase public awareness of litter and its impacts on the landscape.
- Encourage volunteer events and activities to pick up litter and clean up the Park and beach.
- Develop signage and other programs to deter littering and inform park users about use restrictions such as park hours, noise limits, and restricted activities.

These objectives are fully consistent with the PMP's recommendations 3 and 11, above.

### Other Goals Outside of the Plan Area:

- Consider providing fire rings or pits to control the use of beach fires and help manage impacts.
- Promote cooperation with the County of San Mateo regarding landfill issues and the potential to provide additional future park amenities such as sand volleyball courts on the site immediately south of the Park.

### 2.3 Guiding Principles

This section identifies the guiding design and management principles for implementing the Plan, as well as the operations and maintenance of the Park. The principles were developed based on consultation with the community and the Parks and Recreation Commission.

#### 2.3.1 Design Guidance

- DG-1: Design trails and access for use by multiple users including walkers, runners, cyclists, beachgoers, equestrians, and where feasible, provide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant access.
- DG-2: Provide controlled access to bluff-top viewpoints and amenities to support passive enjoyment of the coastline.
- DG-3: Strategically limit access west of the Coastal Trail to safe locations along the bluff to avoid active erosion sites and allow the regeneration of native vegetation.
- DG-4: Establish a system of interpretive signage that highlights the sensitive habitats and species along the bluffs, and the special history of the Ohlone peoples and the Ohlone-Portolá Heritage Trail.
- DG-5: Establish a system of wayfinding and safety signage that supports a safe and enjoyable experience for all park users.

#### 2.3.2 Operations & Management

- O&M-1: Actively maintain Poplar Beach Park to monitor and manage drainage and erosion and ensure safe trail surfaces and access.
- O&M-2: Prohibit commercial tour buses from entering the park, and design parking, circulation, and trail enhancements to encourage non-vehicular access and public transit use to reduce parking impacts on nearby residential streets.
- O&M-3: Work with the community to provide ongoing support for habitat restoration and ensuring the survival of native species and special status plants.
- O&M-4: Provide regular maintenance of all park amenities and ensure that new park amenities are properly maintained, and sufficient waste facilities/services are provided.

## 2. Vision, Goals & Guiding Principles

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- O&M-5: Manage parking areas and parking fees to enhance security and control after-hours usage.
- O&M-6: Establish a process and agreement with the equestrian community to minimize manure on trail surfaces and the beach.
- O&M-7: Enact best management practices for weed abatement and invasive species control throughout the Park and along the Poplar Street path between Railroad Avenue and the Coastal Trail.



### 3. Existing Conditions

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### 3. Existing Conditions

The existing conditions of the Park environment and its infrastructure and amenities are summarized below and are more fully described in **Appendix B**.

#### 3.1 Erosion

Erosion is significant throughout the coastal bluff area and is characterized by three types: natural bluff recession, surface erosion, and localized bluff and gully erosion. There are at least two locations (the concentrated urban drainage outfall from Myrtle Street and a large erosion feature at the north end near the concrete equestrian crossing of the Coastal Trail) where the existing trail can be compromised at any time.



The most significant source of localized runoff is caused by unmanaged access along the bluffs. The Park and Trail are heavily used by walkers, joggers, cyclists, equestrians and sightseers. This has led to numerous and large areas that are devoid of vegetation, compacted, and which create higher volumes of runoff and subsequent erosion during precipitation events.

#### 3.2 Coastal Trail Condition

The Coastal Trail meanders through the Park from Poplar Street to Kelly Avenue, stretching roughly 3,800 feet. For the majority of the Coastal Trail length, the paved trail can be considered in fair structural and surface condition.

#### 3.3 Biological Resources

A total of seven vegetation habitat communities were identified in a preliminary biological evaluation conducted for the Park (*Preliminary Biological Evaluation for the Poplar Gateways Project Area*, September 2018), including wetlands and coastal

terrace prairie. The Park also provides suitable habitat for a range of special status plants and animals and is a high-value foraging area for birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Two special status plant species have been identified in the Park, namely perennial goldfields and Choris' popcornflower, and there is potential for State and federally listed wildlife species including the San Francisco garter snake and California red-legged frog to occur within and near the Park.

#### 3.4 Cultural Resources

No listed cultural resources have been identified within the Park. However, ethnographically, the area was historically occupied by the Ohlone people, and the Coastal Trail within the Park is part of Segment #16 of the regionally planned Ohlone-Portolá Heritage Trail.

#### 3.5 Amenities

The Poplar Beach parking area contains limited amenities, including portable toilets, bike racks, picnic benches, a "Mutt Mitt" dispenser for dog waste bags, memorial benches, waste bins, and a bike repair station.

#### 3.6 Access

Vehicular access is provided via Poplar Street, a 20-foot-wide access road extending westerly of Railroad Avenue, ending in a parking lot for cars and horse trailers. Beach access is currently provided near the parking area at the south end of the Park, at the north end of the Park at Kelly Avenue, and at a location approximately 0.50 miles north of the Poplar parking lot which is primarily used by equestrians. The primary beach access near the Poplar Street parking area is very steep and in need of repair and maintenance. The City was designing improvements for this beach access in advance of Plan adoption.

The **Poplar Parallel Trail** is an approximately 7-foot-wide, multi-use, asphalt access trail running parallel to Poplar Street along its northern edge between Railroad Avenue and the Coastal Trail. This trail is in poor condition and planned for reconstruction following Plan adoption.



#### **3.7 San Mateo County Landfill Site**

The County-owned property of approximately 35 acres south of the Park area and parking lot contains a closed landfill. Little is known about why this site was originally chosen as a dump site. The County has capped the landfill, monitors the site, and intends to study options for remediation and managed retreat. Concerns exist regarding the potential for exposure of the landfill due to bluff erosion.

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## 4. Plan Elements

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## 4. Plan Elements

### 4.1 Introduction

Based on existing conditions and input from the community, the City has identified phased plan improvements and operations, maintenance and programming needed to achieve the vision for the Park.

The primary elements of the Plan include:

- Drainage and Erosion Control
- Managed retreat of the Coastal Trail
- Habitat Enhancement
- Beach Access
- Bluff Overlooks
- Parking and Circulation Enhancements
- Park Amenities and Signage

**Figure 2** illustrates the primary elements of this Plan.

Plan improvements include an upgraded and relocated Coastal Trail, access to five overlooks with habitat preservation and restoration between the bluff edge and the new trail, improved parking and circulation at Poplar Street, improved vertical access to the beach, and amenities such as restrooms with wash stations, bike repair stations and bike racks, picnic areas, dog waste stations, and trash receptacles. All identified Plan improvements have been sited and designed at this Plan level to carefully avoid existing wetlands and sensitive habitat areas.

The drainage and erosion controls provide the foundation for protecting the Park and its resources from erosion resulting from human activities. The Coastal Trail, overlooks, parking and circulation improvements, and amenities are designed to improve access and the user's enjoyment and experience of the Park while managing and adapting to bluff recession. Habitat enhancement is also a critical component of this Plan and programming and is used as an access-management tool as well as a means to restoring the natural beauty and ecological health of the Park.

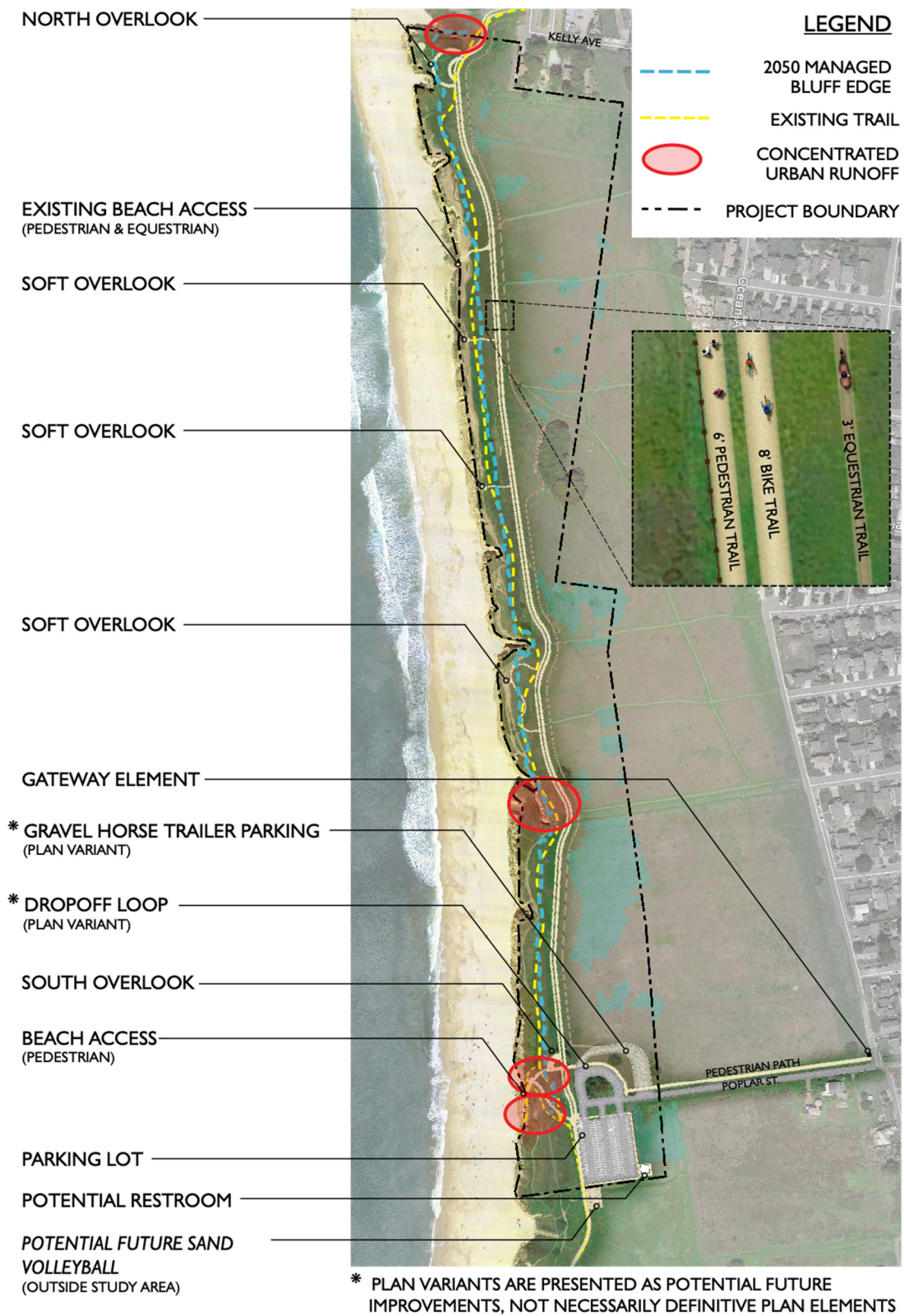


Figure 2. Poplar Beach Gateways Plan



## 4.2 Plan Element Details

### 4.2.1 Erosion Control and Drainage Improvements

Mitigating erosion caused by onsite and offsite drainage is the most critical issue in the Park as it impacts all natural and built resources and involves the most substantial investment required by this Plan. As mentioned in the Existing Conditions section, unmanaged or poorly functioning drainage from onsite and offsite sources is currently driving the majority of erosion in the Park. Unchecked with increasing sea levels and wave run-up, the rate of erosion is likely to accelerate.

Recognizing that bluff recession is a natural process, planning for retreat over time while considering sea level rise is the best management approach. However, bluff erosion from localized and concentrated urban runoff can be controlled, which would significantly extend the life of the Park and the Coastal Trail.

Proposed treatments are divided into two categories: a) localized drainage erosion sites; and b) concentrated urban runoff erosion sites caused by runoff from formal offsite drainage systems. The City will prioritize addressing the localized drainage erosion sites first while continuing to evaluate and plan for solutions at the concentrated urban runoff sites.

#### *Localized Drainage Erosion Improvements*

In order to protect the top of the bluff, a priority is placed on addressing the numerous bare compacted areas, user created trails, and inadequate onsite drainages. As shown in Figure B-1 in Appendix B, there are approximately 24 localized drainage erosion sites in the Plan area.

Given the existing level of disturbance across the top of the bluff, the approach will be to protect small pockets of remaining sensitive habitat while regrading, re-sloping and revegetating the remaining area between the bluff edge and the new trail. Once the new trail is constructed and opened to maintain trail access, the old trail will be removed. All areas with non-native vegetation and bare ground will be graded away from the bluff or the elevation will be raised to redirect surface flows into a vegetated bioswale between the new pedestrian and bike paths and back towards the interior of the Park. Native replanting will occur, and selective sensitive habitat restoration will be conducted as feasible.

### *Concentrated Urban Runoff Erosion*

#### Green Infrastructure Focus

The four sites noted as Concentrated Urban Runoff Erosion sites on **Figure 2** above (and on Figure B-1 in Appendix B) are characterized by large erosion features, sizable outfalls and large contributing drainages. Stabilization measures to address these sites, in their current condition, will require thoughtful design and may involve difficult permitting processes. As a result, the City will focus ongoing efforts to reduce upland stormwater flows entering the Park's drainages prior to addressing the drainage outfalls along the bluff.



These include options outlined in the City's Green Infrastructure (GI) Plan and the LUP update. These plans describe how the City will change processes and practices over time to convert existing gray infrastructure that directs runoff directly into storm drains and receiving waters into green infrastructure, which treats stormwater runoff by dispersing it to vegetated areas, harvests and uses

runoff, promotes infiltration and evapotranspiration, and utilizes bioretention. The City is actively pursuing opportunity areas outside the Park for GI improvements. Other measures include a potential lot retirement program to provide land for upland GI improvements and habitat restoration options.

#### Engineered Stabilization Variant

Given the design and regulatory challenges associated with the concentrated urban runoff sites, the City will continue to monitor the sites and communicate with regulatory agencies about potential options for stabilizing the outfalls. Use of engineered stabilization solutions such as pipes or various types of armoring is the last course of action that the City may pursue if there is no other feasible alternative. In order to support the conversations with regulatory agencies, this Plan includes



three Plan Variants (or options) to address the four concentrated stormwater runoff (CSR) sites. These Variants are intended to convey remaining flows to the elevation of the beach in a stable facility that does not impact the bluff, Park resources, or visual/aesthetics from the bluff top or beach. It is recognized that any of these Variants would be challenging to design, costly to construct, difficult to permit, and may have visual impacts from the beach. They also would require more active management, capital investment, and long-term operations/maintenance resources. All Variants will require discussions with the California Coastal Commission and other regulatory agencies to identify the improvements that would have the least impact while addressing the problem.

Variant CSR-1: Storm Drains. Variant CSR-1 would construct storm drains that pipe drainage to the beach elevation at each of the four outfalls. The benefits of a storm drain are that they can be predominantly hidden below the surface, different colors are available for above-grade portions to ensure they blend in with the natural setting, they can be removed in increments as the bluff recedes, and they can typically be maintained with existing staff and equipment. The drawbacks are that they require excavation or boring and maintain a concentrated discharge point that requires a headwall at the top of bluff with energy dissipation at the outlet. It is unclear whether permits for this variant would be supported by the California Coastal Commission and other regulatory agencies.

Variant CSR-2: Bluff Stabilization. Variant CSR-2 would involve reinforcing existing surface drainage features or existing culverts near the bluff edge with slope armor or geoblock stabilization to minimize the potential for water to escape around the drain and cause erosion, or potential structural failure of the stormwater pipes. The design of these features would be site specific and each would go through a thorough alternatives analysis. Constructing stabilizing armor at the drainage outfalls may



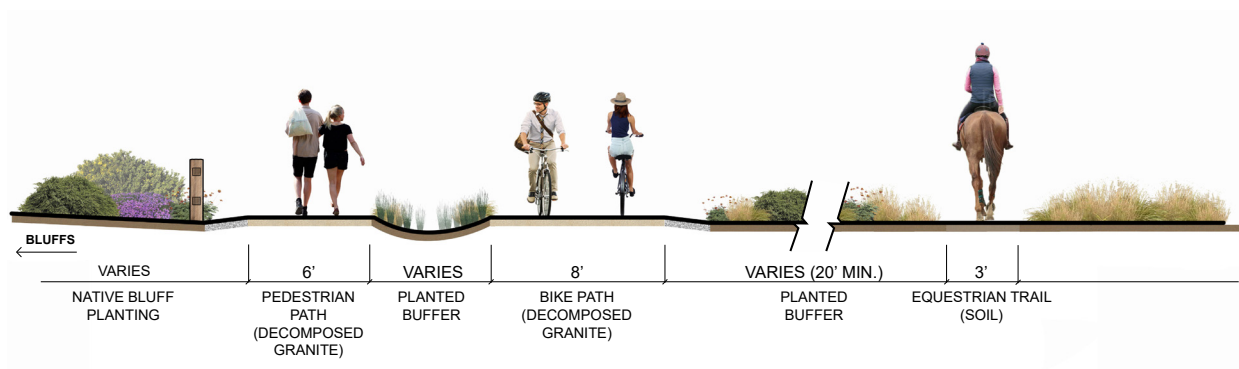
require less excavation, can use boulders or cobble instead of pipe, and may be easier to construct than piping flows to the beach elevation. However, it is unclear how effective this approach is without substantial excavation and the use of geotextiles to stabilize soils. It is also unclear whether permits for this variant would be supported by the California Coastal Commission and other regulatory agencies.

Variant CSR-3: Consolidated Storm Drain. Variant CSR-3 would capture and convey stormwater runoff from the neighborhood area east of the Park in a drainage system (type to be determined during design) with a single exit point at the Kelly Avenue outfall, where the bluff elevation is the lowest. The existing outfall could remain unchanged or potentially modified as in CSR-1 or CSR-2 above. This could have similar benefits and drawbacks as Variants CSR-1 and CSR-2 but would allow restoration and elimination of rapid erosion of at least two of the current outfalls. This Variant would likely have the highest initial capital investment but the least visual impacts and regulatory constraints.

### 4.2.2 Coastal Trail Managed Retreat

The Coastal Trail segment within the Plan area will be retreated inland 25 to 100 feet such that it will meander between 10 and 25 feet away from the projected 2050 bluff edge. **Figure 2** above identifies the projected 2050 bluff edge and the new trail alignment.

The new multi-use trail is proposed to have a decomposed granite surface and to be split to provide a 6-foot path for pedestrians and strollers separated from an 8-foot bike path by a planted buffer that varies in width (shown as an average 5.5 feet) that will serve as a bioswale to collect surface drainage away from the bluffs. Another vegetated buffer that varies in width (average shown as 20 feet) will separate cyclists from a dirt equestrian trail to the east, which in one area veers to the east to avoid an area of sensitive habitat (**Figure 3**). Existing memorial benches are to be relocated to areas along the east side of the Coastal Trail to provide resting areas while limiting further bluff impacts.



**Figure 3. Trail View Showing Buffers**

Construction will need to over-excavate to provide additional base or loamy soil fill in an effort to minimize the impact of the expansive soils on the surface. The preliminary cost estimate included in this Plan assumes using in-place recycling of the existing soils and treating with lime to stabilize the material before placing the decomposed granite on top. Access to the bluff edges is to be restricted to overlook areas by a split rail fence in order to limit access, control erosion, and allow the Coastal Terrace Prairie habitat to recover.



**Photo Simulation 1. New Split Coastal Trail**

### [4.2.3 Habitat Enhancement](#)

The Park contains areas of coastal terrace prairie habitat and coastal freshwater marsh with special status plant species and suitable habitat for several special status animal and bird species. However, much of the blufftop habitat has been replaced by non-native grasses or has been worn bare by users. These areas are to be replanted with native plants during regrading for erosion control. It is unclear whether it will be feasible to restore lost coastal terrace prairie habitat along the bluffs, especially given future climatic and ecological conditions for coastal communities. Habitat demonstration gardens can be developed to determine if successful regeneration is feasible. As habitat restoration requires a significant investment of time and care, it will be important that the Park Programming develops a strong volunteer corps to participate in supporting and monitoring the survival of new plantings across the bluffs.

### [4.2.4 Bluff Overlooks](#)

Overlooks are to be provided at the Poplar and Kelly access points, and at three locations in between, as identified in **Figure 2** above. The overlooks will be constructed with a decomposed granite surface with split-rail fencing that can allow close access to the bluff edge and be easily moved back over time to accommodate bluff recession. Amenities at the overlooks may include benches, waste receptacles, bike racks, bike repair stations, and/or dog waste bag stations. The overlooks at Poplar and Kelly are anticipated to include picnic areas, with the overlook at Kelly utilizing the existing half-moon seat-wall in its design as shown in **Figure 4**.

A photo simulation of the view from the northern overlook at Kelly is provided as **Photo Simulation 2**.

### [4.2.5 Parking and Circulation](#)

The Plan includes parking and circulation (PC) improvements at the western terminus of Poplar Street for both the short and long term. Long-term improvements are included as Plan Variant PC-1, as shown in detail in **Figure 5**, below, to allow full environmental review of all potential long-term infrastructure. In the short-term, the Poplar Parallel Trail from Railroad to the Coastal Trail will be reconstructed with a decomposed granite surface in its present alignment.



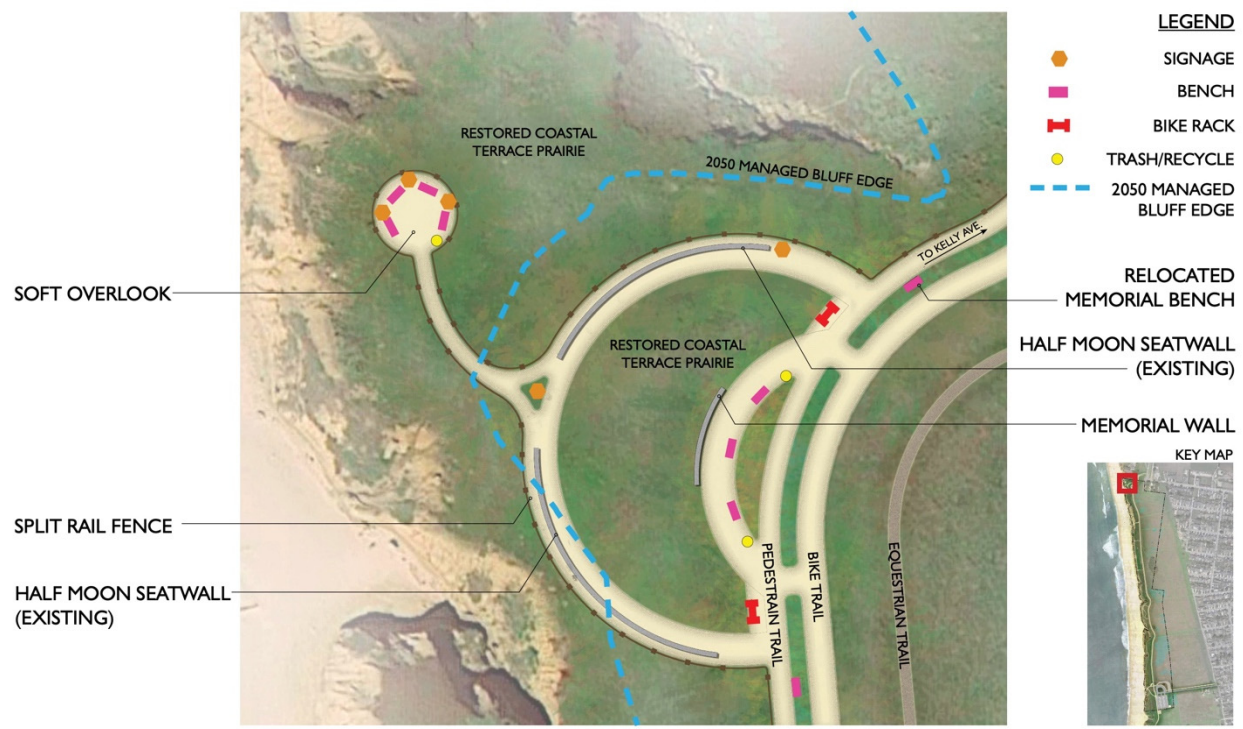


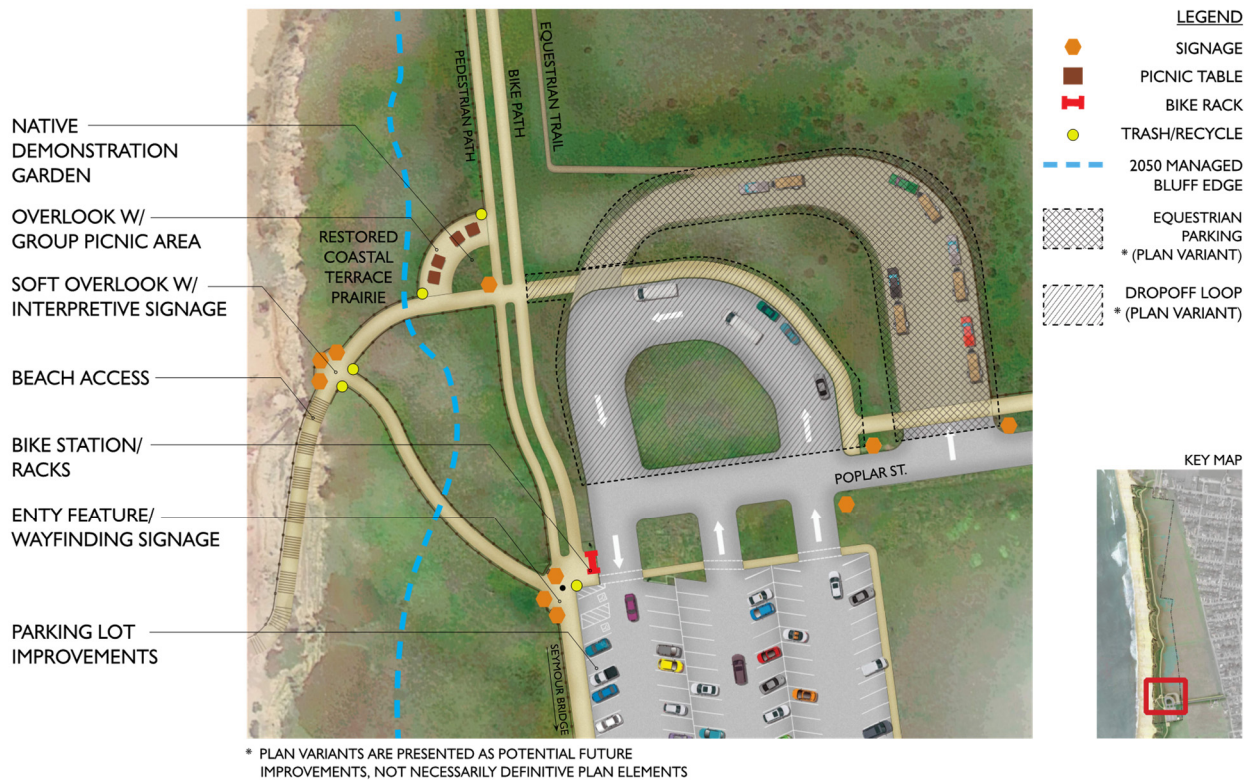
Figure 4. North Park Entrance

Photo Simulation 2. Northern Access Overlook



### Variant PC-1

In order to alleviate visitor parking in the neighborhoods, Variant PC-1 would expand the existing parking lot south of Poplar Street to add additional parking spaces where the gravel equestrian parking is currently located (**Figure 5**). Equestrian parking would be shifted north, and a shuttle turn-around and passenger drop off area would be added to help reduce parking in local neighborhoods on busy days and provide improved ADA access. Commercial tour buses would continue to be prohibited, but local transit shuttles and/or trolleys could be accommodated. An additional parking pay station would need to be added.



**Figure 5. Southern Access**



### *Poplar Parallel Trail*

The pedestrian path connecting Railroad Avenue and the Coastal Trail will remain in its current location but will be reconstructed with decomposed granite and widened to 8 feet (**Photo Simulation 3**). In Variant PC-1 as shown in **Figure 5**, above, the path is to loop around the drop-off area to connect with the Coastal Trail, the overlook and group picnic area, and the vertical beach access.



**Photo Simulation 3. Poplar Pedestrian Trail at Railroad Avenue**

### *Vertical Beach Access*

The primary access to the beach at Poplar is anticipated to be improved to create a stairway access to and from the beach using natural materials. Short-term maintenance and improvements are designed and will be constructed to incorporate a few natural stairs and landings to minimize erosion and dangerous



**Image 1. Vertical Access**

slopes, and this long-term solution may enhance or completely replace that improvement. Safety and drainage improvements have also been designed, including a handrail and drainage wale.

### 4.2.6 Park Amenities

The Park will be enhanced by a comprehensive signage program and a range of amenities including bike racks and repair stations, dog waste bag stations, waste/recycling/compost receptacles, restrooms, and water for drinking and rinsing stations.



**Image 2. Amenities**

### *Restrooms/Utilities*

Permanent restrooms are recommended at the Poplar Beach parking lot, and the final location will be determined during design development. The restrooms are intended to include running water for the sinks and toilets, water fountains, and a rinse station, which will require the installation of potable water and gravity sewer lines from the mains on Railroad



**Image 3. Prototype Restroom**

Avenue. These utilities will connect at Railroad Avenue below Poplar Street or below the reconstructed pedestrian trail.

### *Outside the Plan Area – Future Considerations*

**Sand Volleyball.** The community and Parks and Recreation Commissioners indicated strong interest in providing sand volleyball courts in Half Moon Bay. While **Figure 2** above does show the potential for sand volleyball on the County-owned property south of the parking lot, this general area has been long intended for more passive open space land uses. This amenity will rely on future study of the landfill and negotiations between the City and the County, in addition to addressing land use policy concerns, to allow this use adjacent to the Park. The City is also evaluating alternative locations and options for sand volleyball which include negotiation with State Parks.

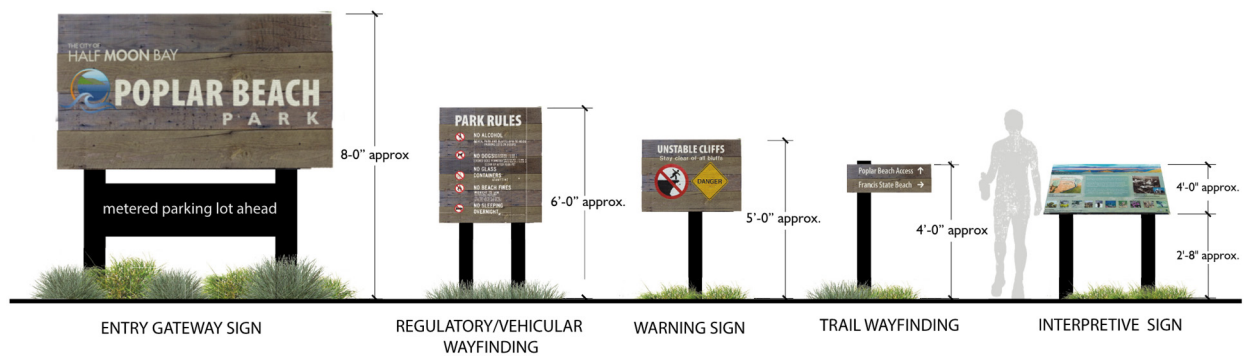
**Beach Amenities.** The community and Parks and Recreation Commissioners also indicated interest in providing beach fire pits and waste receptacles on the beach. The focus and boundary of this Plan include the City-owned Park property from the bluff edge eastwards, except for the primary beach access at Poplar. Therefore, this plan does not address amenities on the beach itself or properties outside the Park boundaries. The City recognizes fire pits and trash on the beach are critical issues and important to the community. These issues will be considered and addressed by the City as part of a separate operations and maintenance effort.

### 4.2.7 Signage Program

A consistent and attractive signage program for the Park is included in this Plan to establish a recognizable identity for the Park (**Image 4**). There are three primary elements to this program, as discussed below.

#### *Wayfinding/Directional*

Arrival at Poplar Beach will be marked by an Entry Gateway sign located at the northeast corner of Poplar Street and Railroad Avenue (see **Photo Simulation 3** above). A second Entry Gateway sign may be located at the end of Kelly Avenue, southwest of the trail entry (opposite the Half Moon Bay State Beach sign).



**Image 4. Signage Program**

Wayfinding signage is to be provided at decision points for vehicles approaching the parking and drop off areas to direct vehicles to these areas, and to direct equestrian trailers to their parking location. Wayfinding signage is also to be provided at decision points along the Poplar Parallel Trail and the Coastal Trail, to direct trail users to beach access points, overlooks, and restroom, as well as to provide information as to nearby destinations along the trail (for example, Half Moon Bay State Beach/Francis Beach, Wavecrest Open Space, and Smith Field Park/Half Moon Bay Dog Park). These wayfinding signs would typically be located at the intersections of trail segments, such as the Poplar Parallel Trail intersection with Coastal Trail and at beach access points and can include information on mileage or mileage markers.

#### *Site Safety and Management*

The Park provides access to coastal bluffs with unstable edges and an area of the Pacific Ocean subject to riptides. Blufftop warning signage is to be placed immediately west of the Coastal Trail fence at all overlooks to warn site users of the potential danger of bluff erosion and discourage inappropriate access to the bluffs. Signage is also to be placed at each vertical beach access points to, at minimum, warn the public of the dangerous surf conditions and absence of lifeguards.

Regulatory signage is to be provided at pedestrian entry points from the parking lot and drop off area, and at the intersections of the Coastal Trail with the Poplar Parallel Trail and the Kelly Avenue entry point. Regulatory signage would identify areas with restricted public access, deter littering, identify proper animal waste management,



and announce Park use restrictions such as leash laws, park hours, noise limits, and access.

### *Educational/Interpretive*

An interpretive signage program will be designed to engage and inform the public about various aspects of the Park. Topics may include the Park's sensitive habitats and special status species and how to protect them, the erosion processes that are the basis of bluff access restrictions, and the



**Image 5. Interpretative Signage**

history and background of the Ohlone people, the Ohlone-Portolá Heritage Trail, and Half Moon Bay. The signs will be no higher than 4 feet at the topmost point, and will be located near other amenities, such as overlooks, so as not to unduly clutter or obstruct views (**Image 5**).

### 4.2.8 Plan Phasing

While the ultimate phasing of this Plan's improvements will depend on funding availability, the following phasing of improvements is intended to meet the most urgent needs of the Park, the priorities of the community, and follow a rational approach to implementation.

#### *Phase 0 Projects*

The City is proceeding with the following activities and projects that do not require CEQA review or approval of the Plan in advance of Plan adoption:

- Signage: Gateway Signage at intersection of Poplar Street and Railroad Avenue, and at intersection of Kelly Avenue and the Coastal Trail
- Beach Access Safety and Drainage Improvements
- Traffic Calming for the Parking Lot and Access Drive

#### *Phase 1 – Near Term Projects*

The following projects are anticipated to be implemented upon Plan adoption and EIR certification:

- Poplar Parallel Trail reconstruction
- Near-term erosion management including:

- Split Rail Fencing west of existing Coastal Trail
- Temporary California Coastal Trail realignments
- Memorial Bench Relocation(s)
- On-site green infrastructure

### *Phase 2 – Managed Retreat and Restoration Projects*

The following projects, based on funding availability, are anticipated to be implemented following Plan adoption, EIR certification, and approval of required permits:

- New California Coastal Trail
- Wayfinding & Interpretive Signage
- Relocation of Split Rail Fencing to new trail alignment
- Bluff Erosion Control/Drainage Improvements including:
  - Removal of old trail
  - Regrading bluff edge
  - Revegetation, habitat restoration and/or protection
- Overlooks with amenities as appropriate
- Additional Amenities: Benches, Picnic Tables, Memorial Items, Bike Racks

### *Phase 3 - Park Improvements*

Phase 3 projects are longer term projects expected to be considered after funding is identified and design, environmental compliance and permitting is completed:

- Permanent Restrooms/Water and sewer utility connections
- Enhanced Vertical Beach Access
- Poplar Parking Lot Improvements
  - Project Option, Variant PC-1: Equestrian Parking Lot/Poplar Turn Around
- Project Option, Variant CSR-1, CSR-2, or CSR-3: limited engineered stabilization improvements if no feasible alternative

Design and implementation of the City's GI projects outside the Park are separate projects that will be on-going throughout the life of this Plan. These may include low impact development (LID) measures such as green roofs, bioswales, bioretention areas, permeable pavement, and infiltration trenches; regional stormwater capture projects; and green street projects that include permeable pavement, bioretention



areas, and stormwater curb extensions that will help reduce upstream and off-site stormwater flows from entering the Park.

#### 4.2.9 Costs and Financing

A preliminary planning level cost estimate has been prepared for the plan elements detailed in this section. At the time of Plan development, several of these items had already been identified and funded in the City's Capital Improvement Plan. Other funding opportunities will be pursued to complete the Plan with Variants.

Estimated Design and Construction Costs		
PHASE 1-Near Term Projects		
Work Item	Description	Cost
Poplar Parallel Trail	Replace degraded asphalt trail with decomposed granite path between Railroad Ave and the Coastal Trail	\$370,000
Near Term Erosion Management	Various short-term urgency measures for public protection: split rail fencing west of existing coastal trail, temporary California Coastal Trail realignments, memorial bench relocation(s), on-site green infrastructure	Previously funded in CIP and Operating Budget
Phase 1 subtotal: \$370,000		
PHASE 2- Managed Retreat and Restoration Projects		
New Coastal Trail – Amenities as appropriate	Construct new split ped/bike path with intervening bioswale, dirt equestrian trail, split rail fencing to west, benches, dog & bike stations, waste receptacles.	\$1,955,000
Wayfinding & Interpretive Signage	Design and install wayfinding and interpretive signage for climate change issues, habitat, and Ohlone history in the area	\$35,000
Bluff Erosion Control/Drainage Improvements (including removal of old trail)/Overlooks/Habitat Restoration or protection/Benches/Picnic Tables/Memorial Items/Bike Racks/Amenities as appropriate	Demolish old trail, protect special status plants, grade away from bluff towards new Coastal Trail to eliminate localized erosion, stabilize 4 concentrated urban runoff sites, revegetation/habitat restoration, fencing/access barriers, construction of the overlooks and site amenities such as benches, picnic tables, memorial items, bike racks, waste receptacles, and other amenities as appropriate.	\$2,760,000
Phase 2 subtotal: \$4,750,000		
PHASE 3- Park Improvements		
Permanent Restrooms/ Water and sewer utility connections	Construct water and sewer line along Poplar (in trail or street), prefabricated restroom with wash station, drinking fountains	\$845,000
Gateway Signage at Kelley Avenue	Design and install wooden entry sign designating entrance to Poplar Beach Park	\$20,000
Gateway Signage at Poplar and Railroad	Design and install wooden entry sign designating entrance to Poplar Beach Park.	\$20,000

Poplar Parking Lot & Poplar Traffic Calming	Expand asphalt parking lot to city ownership boundary to the south and pave area currently used for equestrian parking	\$875,000
Equestrian Parking Lot/Poplar Trolley Turn Around/Dropoff	Construct vehicle turnaround north of Poplar for trolleys and passenger drop-off, construct new equestrian parking with direct access to equestrian trail	\$465,000
Vertical Beach Access	Construct informal wooden steps and railing at south entry to beach.	\$170,000
<b>Phase 3 subtotal: \$2,395,000</b>		
<b>Total Cost: \$7,515,000</b>		

### 4.2.10 Planning and Permit Requirements

Planning, permitting, and technical studies will be required for many of the actions associated with the Coastal Trail and Park capital improvements. Prior to initiating any planning or permit work, the City will identify if federal funds would be used and contact the resource agencies early to discuss planning and permit requirements. The timing of surveys can be a critical path for construction of these projects since they have to be completed during the appropriate season to be valid and meet agency requirements.

An Environmental Impact Report will be prepared for adoption of this Plan. The EIR will review the Phase I projects at a project level, and the remainder of the Plan at a program level in as much detail as available. Approval of the final Plan and EIR are anticipated in mid 2020.

#### *Planning Documents*

- California Environmental Quality Act Environmental Impact Report
- National Environmental Policy Act Analysis (only if federally funded/permitted)

#### *Potential Permits & Agency Consultation*

- Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit
- Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification
- Local Coastal Development Permit
- Section 1602 CDFW Streambed Alteration Agreement and/or Incidental Take Permit
- Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Consultation
- Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation

- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit and Waste Discharge Requirements
- Coastal Commission determination of consistency with the California Coastal Zone Management Program

### *Technical Studies*

- Botanical Surveys for Choris' Popcorn Flower and Perennial Goldfields
- Waters of the United States Delineation
- Biological Assessments for Western Snowy Plover, California Red-legged Frog, and San Francisco Garter Snake
- Cultural Resource Report

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## 5. Operations, Maintenance & Programming

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## 5. Operations, Maintenance & Programming

### 5.1 Operations and Maintenance

The policies outlined for the Plan identify a range of operations and management approaches to be used to protect and maintain the Park. The City is committed to meeting the community's desire for a high standard of maintenance for the Park, now and in the future. Inspection and maintenance of infrastructure and site resources is important to the City and the long-term sustainability of the Park. Regular inspection and maintenance will be a part of Park operations with specific details provided with the design and construction of each Park element.

#### 5.1.1 Weed Abatement and Invasive Species Control

While native species will be replanted during construction of the various Park improvements, the site's location near residential development and the large number of park users will constantly reintroduce non-native weeds into the Park. Coastal terrace prairie habitat restoration is a maintenance-intensive activity that will require careful consideration of the most viable locations and the resources available to ensure plantings survive. Post-construction measures will need to identify a maintenance schedule for watering because there is no irrigation system along the bluff, as well as weeding and replanting until the plants are well established. The City recognizes the need to "maintain the investment"—both in financial and labor costs—in restoring plant communities, to avoid the loss that can occur due to neglect and invasive competition. The most successful maintenance efforts on public lands include a program for volunteers to regularly assist with weed abatement and invasive species control, which has been recommended in the programming section of this Plan.

#### 5.1.2 Trail and Overlook Maintenance

The trails and overlooks have been intentionally designed with a decomposed granite surface to increase flexibility and adaptability, based upon existing soil conditions and in the face of climate change and bluff recession during the anticipated 30-year life of the relocated Coastal Trail. When installed correctly, this surface is considered ADA-compliant. However, wear and tear on this material includes material loss (weathering) and erosion, ruts from bikes or wheelchairs that are exacerbated during

rain events, water collection or puddles in low spots, and weed abatement. Maintenance of the trail surfaces will require regular monitoring to assess for hazards related to the conditions noted above. Maintenance may include filling in and recompacting the identified voids in the surface and include spot repairs to the surface or full removal and replacement of the decomposed granite section.

The City also will need to monitor and respond to bluff recession to assess the need to relocate overlooks and adjust bluff and habitat barriers, signage, and overlook amenities such as benches, bike racks, trash receptacles, and dog waste stations.

### 5.1.3 Drainage and Erosion

Drainage improvements should be inspected and maintained annually as part of the City's storm drain infrastructure maintenance program. Due to sensitive habitats and aesthetics of the bluff and beach, special attention should be given to inlet and outlet structures during inspections.

Erosion control efforts in the Park will need to be inspected regularly to identify any vegetation disturbance, creation of bare compacted soil areas, development of new user trails or walking paths and the generation of any rill or gully erosion. Maintenance, repair, or replacement should be scheduled in a timely manner.

### *Waste Management*



There are three primary sources of waste in the Park – human waste, dog waste, and horse manure. Trash receptacles will be placed at each overlook, with larger bins at the north and south entrances. The City should monitor frequently until enough data is collected to establish a pattern of usage and the

appropriate pickup schedule to avoid trash overflows. Dog waste bags will be provided at along the trails and need to be refilled regularly. Horse waste has been an ongoing issue for non-equestrian park users and can be managed either through mandatory rider collection or horse diapers to collect waste.



### *Parking Management and Security*

The City recognizes that overflow parking in adjacent neighborhoods is a concern. The Plan includes Variant PC-1 that would provide additional parking and a turnaround/passenger drop-off area to encourage trolley/shuttle access to minimize parking demand. The City can install a second parking fee station or consider an online reservation system for parking. Traffic calming on Poplar Street will help reduce evening racing, and the City will coordinate with local law enforcement for effective security and management of after-hours usage. Additional parking lot design features to reduce inappropriate after-hours activities will be considered during design.

## **5.2 Programming**

Programming for the Park is designed to provide visual tools for Park users, and ways for users to participate in protecting the natural resources along the bluffs. This programming includes a comprehensive signage program that guides, protects and educates users, a habitat protection program that ensures the long-term viability of habitat improvements along the bluffs, and memorial options that will provide ways for the community to contribute to the Park in the name of their loved ones.

### 5.2.1 Poplar Beach Park Volunteer Habitat Stewards

Volunteers can sustain and transform the Park by planting seeds and plants, maintaining trails, caring for memorial gardens, and performing a range of other



*Photo Credit: Maria Durana*

stewardship activities. Habitat restoration is a proactive, hands-on way for community volunteers to revitalize the Park's damaged ecosystems and promote environmental health. The City can benefit the Park by promoting volunteering as a way to learn

about the plants and animals found in the Park's natural landscapes, with activities such as planting, watering, weeding, spreading mulch, and more. No experience is

necessary, and training and tools would be provided. These efforts could also serve as a mechanism for “light touch” enforcement and management via docents.

### 5.2.2 Memorial Opportunities

The community has a significant interest in supporting the Park through memorials, exemplified by the number of memorial benches located currently throughout the Park. The City has recently adopted a program to restore and replace existing deteriorating memorial benches and plaques along the Coastal Trail and to move the



benches east of the Coastal Trail. As this program winds down, new kinds of memorial opportunities will be developed for the Park that can better withstand coastal environmental conditions and vandalism. Based on the lack of hardscaping used in the Park and the interest in habitat restoration, other options such as memorial gardens, picnic benches, or fence railings provide better opportunities for remembering loved ones in a way that preserve and contribute to the Park. With the existing seat wall in the northern part of the park, a memorial wall may also be feasible in this location.



## Appendices

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## Appendix A

### Community Outreach & Engagement

The PMP involved an active stakeholder and community engagement process that the City has continued for developing this Plan.

There have been four primary venues for community and stakeholder engagement that are detailed in the sections below.

- Visioning Outreach Toolkit
- Community Pop-up Open House Event
- Parks and Recreation Commission Workshops
- Web page noticing and commenting

#### Visioning Outreach Toolkit

In order to engage those who do not otherwise come to public workshops, 'visioning postcards' were developed. The postcards asked the participant to imagine themselves 20 years in the future (the year 2038), and that they just spent the day at the Park and were writing a postcard to someone explaining the things they would most like to see, do, or experience that made it special. 'Vision postcards' were made available at City offices and distributed by City staff to groups while conducting project briefings to different community groups. The postcards were available in English and Spanish beginning mid-August 2018.

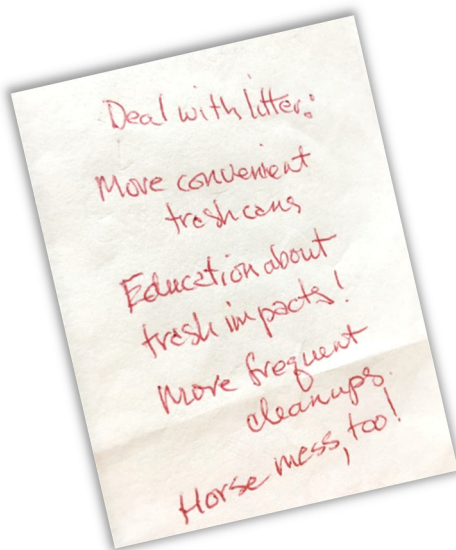


## Community Event at Poplar Beach Park

On September 17, 2018, the City hosted an interactive pop-up open house event at the Park. The well-attended workshop was structured to generate feedback on community members' visions for the future of Poplar Beach Park, and to understand what aspects the Plan should address in order to reach those visions. Participants were asked to visit three 'stations' and give their input on a range of questions, issues, and possibilities for the Park.

Common themes that emerged through the City's various outreach efforts are summarized below. The community input received informed and served as a guide for the Vision and Goals portion of the Plan.

- **Keep It Open and Undeveloped.** Numerous participants identified Poplar's natural, open spaces as the features they valued the most and would like to protect.
- **Enhance Trails and Access to the Beach.** Participants supported improvements to the existing Poplar Street path, beach access, and California Coastal Trail.
- **Allowances for Animals.** Most participants enjoyed the presence of dogs and horses at the Park, while acknowledging the need to better address animal waste.
- **Provide Amenities to Support Enjoyment of the Park.** Participants suggested the addition of restrooms, benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, and educational signage in order to enhance the user experience of the Park.
- **Manage Parking and Traffic Impacts in the Neighborhood.** Participants expressed concern about the speed of drivers and neighborhood parking, suggesting several enforcement options.
- **Provide Ongoing Maintenance.** Participants desired ongoing maintenance to address garbage, animal waste, restroom cleanliness, and drainage control.
- **Address Nuisances Through Enforcement.** Participants called for greater police enforcement and surveillance to address issues such as littering, drinking, speeding, and after-hour use of the beach.



## **Parks and Recreation Commission Workshops**

The Parks and Recreation Commission oversees matters related to the City's parks and recreation programs and facilities and played a crucial role in the development of the PMP. They have also been consulted at every step of this Park-planning process.

### [Parks and Recreation Commission Workshop #1: Vision and Goals - October 24, 2018](#)

At the regular Commission meeting on October 24, 2018, City staff presented the Plan, informing Commissioners of the project goals and process to date. The presentation introduced project goals and reported on all outreach efforts to date. The presentation included a discussion of the community input gathered at the Open House and subsequent comment period, and identified recurring themes found throughout the public comments. The Commission, reacting to the community input, listed their priorities for Poplar Beach Park on a whiteboard, organizing priorities into the following six categories:

#### *"Must-Do"*

The Parks and Recreation Commission's top priorities included stabilizing the bluff and retreating the Coastal Trail while protecting the existing habitat. Providing ADA-compliant access for all was also seen as a crucial part of the Park's future. Commissioners did not call out any one type of amenity as being the most important, but instead supported all "visitor-serving" aspects of the Park as a top priority.

#### *Amenities*

One Commissioner identified the need for clean restrooms, trash receptacles, and dog clean-up stations near the access points. Running water and showers were also desired.

#### *Enforcement and Controls*

The Commission supported a more robust enforcement program to manage parking and beach fires, to reduce neighborhood impacts but also as a potential revenue opportunity. The Commissioners suggested considering adjustments to parking pricing based on demand and were in favor of installing a "Parking Lot Full" sign to put up when use has exceeded parking capacity.

### *Access*

The Commission identified access, specifically ADA compliance, as a top priority. Providing vertical and horizontal access for all was seen as a challenge. One Commissioner expressed a preference for improved beach access to include concrete steps and a handrail, while acknowledging that such an improvement would require constant maintenance. Also mentioned was the need to improve parking lot access, especially to accommodate horse trailers and shuttles.

### *Education*

The Commission suggested establishing greater community support and awareness, either through educational signage or non-profit sponsors such as “Adopt-a-Beach” or “Friends of the Coastal Trail.” Interpretative signage could be installed to educate visitors on habitat, erosion, and sea level rise. One Commissioner commented on uniformly branded signage as a way to garner more attention and visitors to the location.

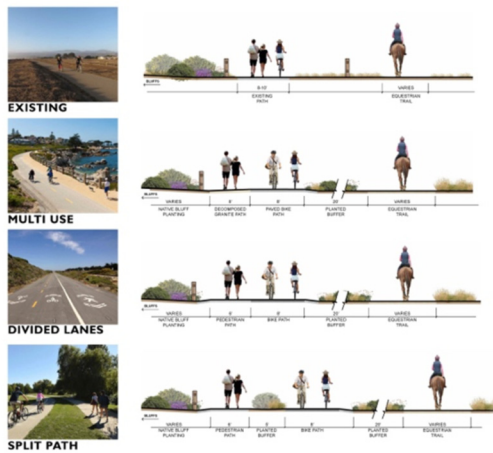
### *Revenue*

The Commission discussed limited options for increasing revenue opportunities for the City at the Park. Some suggestions included changes to the parking pricing, and increased enforcement for visitors parked illegally at the parking lot or throughout the adjacent neighborhood.

### [Parks and Recreation Commission Workshop #2: Alternatives - April 24, 2019](#)

The Alternatives Workshop was conducted as a part of the Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting of April 24, 2019, at 6:00 pm, at the Half Moon Bay Library. The purpose of the meeting was to present the Plan to the Commission and the community, to describe alternative options for elements of the Plan and to receive input and feedback. Community members were invited to “vote” on various alternative elements such as trail design and overlook locations. The City also hosted additional online input from the community for a two-week period through May 8.

## TRAIL LAYOUT OPTIONS - WHICH DO YOU PREFER?



## TRAIL MATERIAL OPTIONS - WHICH DO YOU PREFER?

SURFACING	INITIAL COST	MAINTENANCE COSTS	AESTHETICS
<b>ASPHALT</b> GOOD FOR BIKES & STROLLERS	\$	Requires surface treatment every 5-10 years	Most closely resembles the current trail
<b>DECOMPOSED GRANITE</b> GOOD FOR RUNNERS	\$\$	Requires surface treatment & rehabilitation	Blends in with natural surroundings
<b>CONCRETE</b> GOOD FOR BIKES AND STROLLERS	\$\$\$\$	Very little maintenance costs	Significant visual impact due to light color

POTENTIAL OVERLOOK SITES - WHERE WOULD YOU PLACE AN OVERLOOK?  
GROUPED? NEAR ENTRIES? DISPERSED? PLEASE CHOOSE TWO ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS

The following preferences were identified from the workshop presentation boards that provided participants with the opportunity to comment and vote on their preferences.

- **Coastal Trail Layout:** Split path between pedestrians (8') and bicycles (6').
- **Coastal Trail Surface:** Decomposed granite surface.
- **Overlook Locations/Character:** Outlooks should be spread along the Coastal Trail and they should have an informal character. The preference was for sites 3, 4 and 5, in addition to the mail overlooks at Kelly and Poplar.
- **Access Management:** Fencing should be in keeping with the existing fencing, and revegetation also used to control access.
- **Gateway Feature/Material:** Basic low-profile entry built with natural materials.
- **Additional Features:** Support for adding a sand volleyball court. Concern expressed over vehicle turnaround and relocated equestrian parking.

After the workshop, the public was given time to voice their concerns and comments about the Plan to the commission. Overall, the public expressed their appreciation of the City's efforts in trying to update Poplar Beach and identified the following key priorities:

- Solution to drainage and erosion should be the top priority before the realignment of the trail.
- Traffic calming is needed on Poplar between the bluffs and Railroad Avenue.
- Safety signage is needed regarding bluff edge and the danger of being in the water with the riptide and surf; recent accidents have heightened this concern.
- Horse Management is required to ensure cleanup of the equestrian trail and beach.
- Safe vertical beach access should be a priority.
- Trash Management is a major concern.
- Donor opportunities such as a donor boardwalk, planks, or a garden should be considered. However, donor benches along the trail were seen as increasing congestion.
- Beach volleyball received strong opinions on both sides; many expressed concerns about the location of the courts being near the parking lot.

## Web Page

A Poplar Beach Gateways Plan web page was established at <http://www.half-moon-bay.ca.us/556/Poplar-Gateways-Plan> to provide information on the planning process, and to give the public opportunities to learn more about the effort and share their ideas. The project scope and schedule, public participation opportunities, milestone documents, and other information are available on the website. Visitors to the webpage are also invited to submit comments to staff via email.





## Appendix B

### Existing Conditions

The existing conditions of the Park environment and its infrastructure and amenities are described in the sections below.

#### Erosion

Erosion is significant throughout the coastal bluff area and is characterized by three types: natural bluff recession, surface erosion, and localized bluff and gully erosion. There are at least two locations (the concentrated urban drainage outfall from Myrtle Street and a large erosion feature at the north end near the concrete equestrian crossing of the Coastal Trail) where the Coastal Trail can be compromised at any time. In addition, there are another several other locations that likely will pose significant public safety issues within the next 5 years.



#### Natural Bluff Recession

Bluff recession is occurring in the Park and throughout the region. There is significant evidence of active bluff recession through several large slump features. Average annual bluff recession rates are largely controlled by wave action and storm surges and will be influenced by sea level rise. There is little that can be done to address the landward migration

of the bluff face over time, which is an ongoing natural process along this entire coastline. Using the best available coastal erosion rate data, including the *Plan Half Moon Bay 2018 Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment* (San Mateo County 2018), bluff recession will continue to occur at an average rate of approximately 2 feet per year.

### Surface Erosion

There are also a number of surface erosion features in the Park. These include user-created trails, equestrian trails, and large, compacted areas that are devoid of vegetation. These areas are prone to erosion during strong wind events and when surface runoff occurs.



### Localized Bluff and Gully Erosion

Localized bluff and gully erosion can be broken into two categories: a) localized drainage erosion sites, caused by runoff generated from small onsite contributing drainage areas (bare compacted soil areas, the Coastal Trail, user-created trails, and

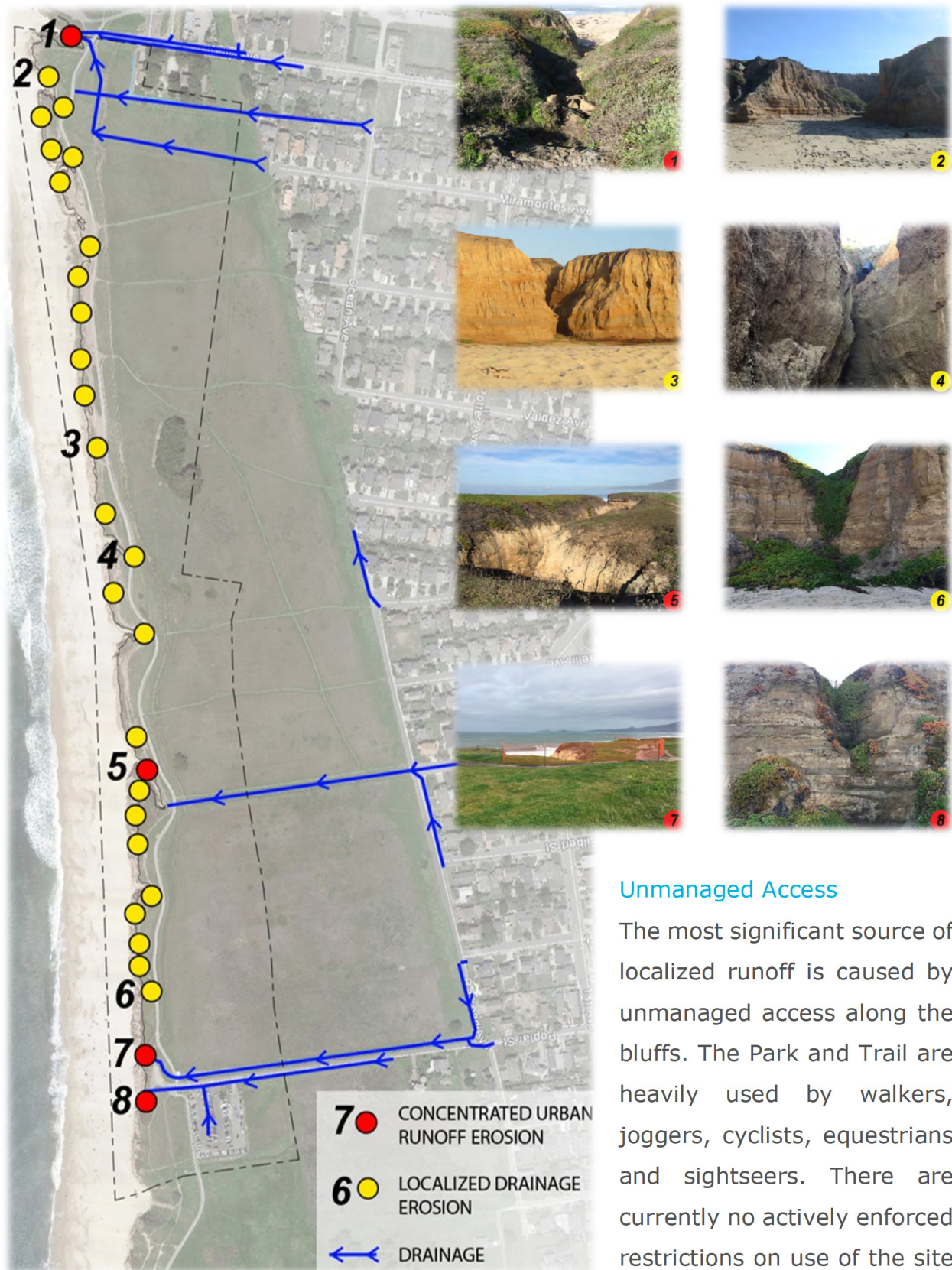


the high-runoff soils in the adjacent meadow; see **Figure B-1**), and b) concentrated urban runoff erosion sites caused by runoff from formal offsite drainage systems.

#### *Localized Drainage Erosion Sites*

Localized drainage erosion sites caused by unmanaged access are the most prevalent erosion feature in the Park with some of the features as large in size as those associated with the concentrated urban runoff erosion sites. There are approximately 24 localized drainage erosion sites which vary in age, size, and complexity (**Figure B-1**). They are associated with small, onsite contributing drainage areas and often receive surface runoff from the Trail and adjacent meadow. Several of these sites are significant in size and have the potential to erode quickly during runoff events.





**Figure B-1. Drainage Erosion Sites**

a result, users access the site from a variety of locations, move onto and off the Trail (along its entire length in the Park), frequently create user-defined trails and gathering spots (particularly near benches), and finally, cut trails in the bluff face to access the beach. This has led to numerous and large areas that are devoid of vegetation, compacted, and which create higher volumes of runoff during precipitation events.

#### *Concentrated Urban Runoff Erosion*

The concentrated urban runoff erosion sites are significant in size and are primarily influenced by offsite runoff with large contributing drainage areas. There are four concentrated urban runoff sites associated with storm drain system outfalls. These outfalls carry stormwater from the adjacent residential areas to the east and are characterized by large gully formations at the coastal bluff edges that are actively down cutting and widening.



#### *Bluff Recession and Erosion Feature Rates*

As mentioned earlier, bluff recession rates for the coast are approximately 2 feet per year. As outlined in the Existing Conditions Report (NCE, 2017), a preliminary assessment of erosion at the concentrated urban runoff erosion sites identified higher rates (approximately 2-2.5 times faster) than adjacent locations on the bluff face. The analysis led to the conclusion that continued unmanaged access within the Park will erode portions of the bluff up to 3 feet per year (**Figure B-2**).



This rate was selected due to the assumed 2 feet per year natural bluff recession rate noted above and consideration for the higher rate of erosion likely to continue given past trends. Alternatively, in the case where active management and erosion control measures are deployed in the Park as proposed, the Plan assumes that as natural bluff recession occurs over time it will catch up with and smooth out the erosion sites caused by the current unmanaged access.



**Figure B-2. Bluff Recession 2050 Projections**

## Coastal Trail Condition

The Coastal Trail meanders through the Park from Poplar Street to Kelly Avenue, stretching roughly 3,800 feet. The two primary entrances to the Coastal Trail are along Poplar Street, where the parking lot is located, and Kelly Avenue, where the Half Moon Bay State Beach begins. There is one paved trail from Railroad Avenue that runs parallel to Poplar Street and at least six well-defined informal non-paved paths that provide access to the Coastal Trail (cutting across the meadow from the adjacent neighborhood) and numerous less-defined paths crossing the Coastal Trail. The Coastal Trail is composed of three elements: 1) the primary 10-foot-wide, paved shared-use path with unimproved shoulders; 2) a wooden split-rail fence 10 to 12 feet away from the Coastal Trail that separates the paved trail from the meadow to the east; and 3) an un-paved equestrian trail that runs roughly 10 to 20 feet to the east of the wooden fence.

The trail currently varies in its proximity to the coastline from 40 to 60 feet from the edge of the bluff. However, at locations where the bluff has eroded sharply inland, the Coastal Trail's western edge may be less than 5 feet away from the bluff edge. The Coastal Trail is on mostly flat terrain without any abrupt changes in grade and is generally ADA-compliant.



For the majority of the Coastal Trail length, the structural condition of the paved trail can be considered in fair condition. This Coastal Trail segment was constructed sometime in 2003, and shows signs of aging through weathering and raveling, longitudinal edge-cracking, and in places more severe “alligator” cracking in the pavement likely from

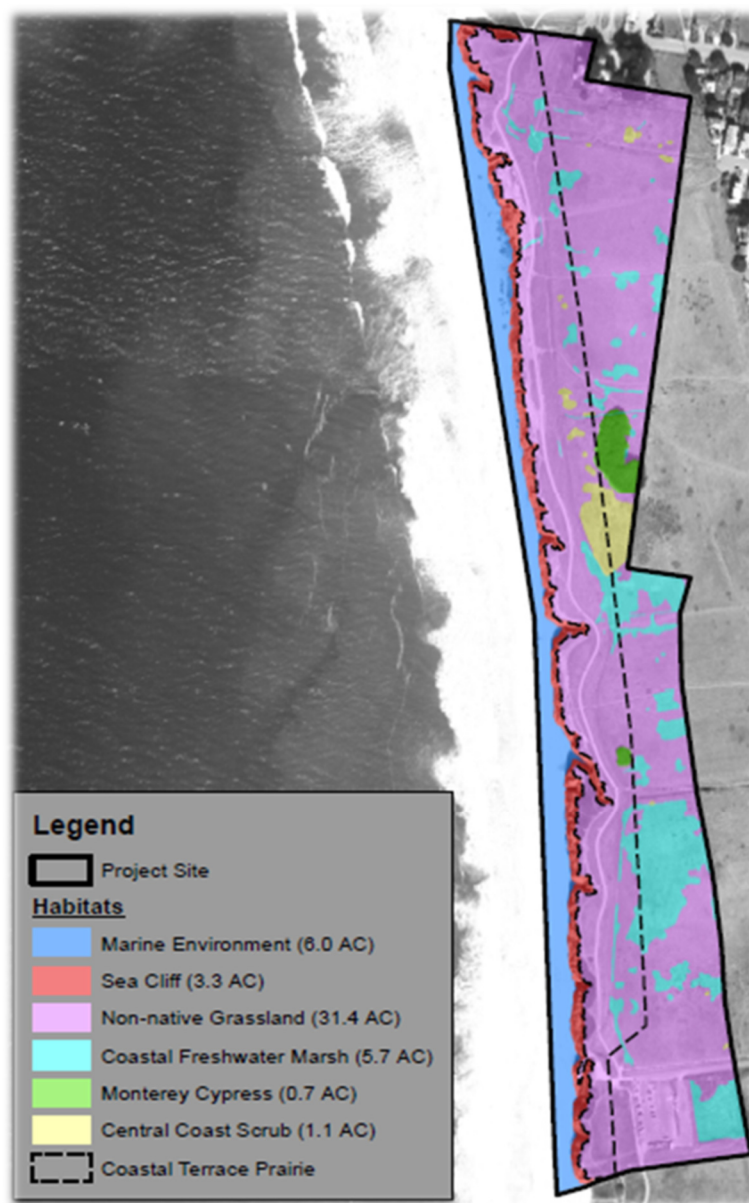
shrink/swell action from underlying expansive fat clays and poor edge confinement. Some edges of the Coastal Trail are breaking off due to drainage problems with the surrounding soil.



## Biological Resources

### Habitats

A total of seven vegetation habitat communities were identified in a preliminary biological evaluation conducted for the Park (*Preliminary Biological Evaluation for the Poplar Gateways Project Area, Half Moon Bay, California*). These include (from smallest to largest acreage): Monterey cypress forest (0.7 acres), central coast scrub (1.1 acres), sea cliffs (3.3 acres), coastal freshwater marsh (5.7 acres), marine environment (6.0 acres), non-native annual grassland (31.4 acres), and coastal



**Figure B-3. Habitat Types in Plan Area**

terrace prairie, designated by the dotted line, which is a mix of wetlands, scrub, and grassland in an area close to the bluff edge (**Figure B-3**).

Two of these identified plant communities qualify as Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA) under the California Coastal Act: coastal terrace prairie and the wetland community of coastal freshwater marsh. An ESHA is any area in which plant or animal life or their habitats are either rare or especially valuable because of their special nature or role in an ecosystem and which could be easily disturbed or degraded by human activities and developments. The coastal terrace prairie habitat grows on the immediate coastal bluff tops

throughout the Park covering a width of up 300 feet from the bluff edge. This habitat is a good candidate for revegetation and restoration efforts.

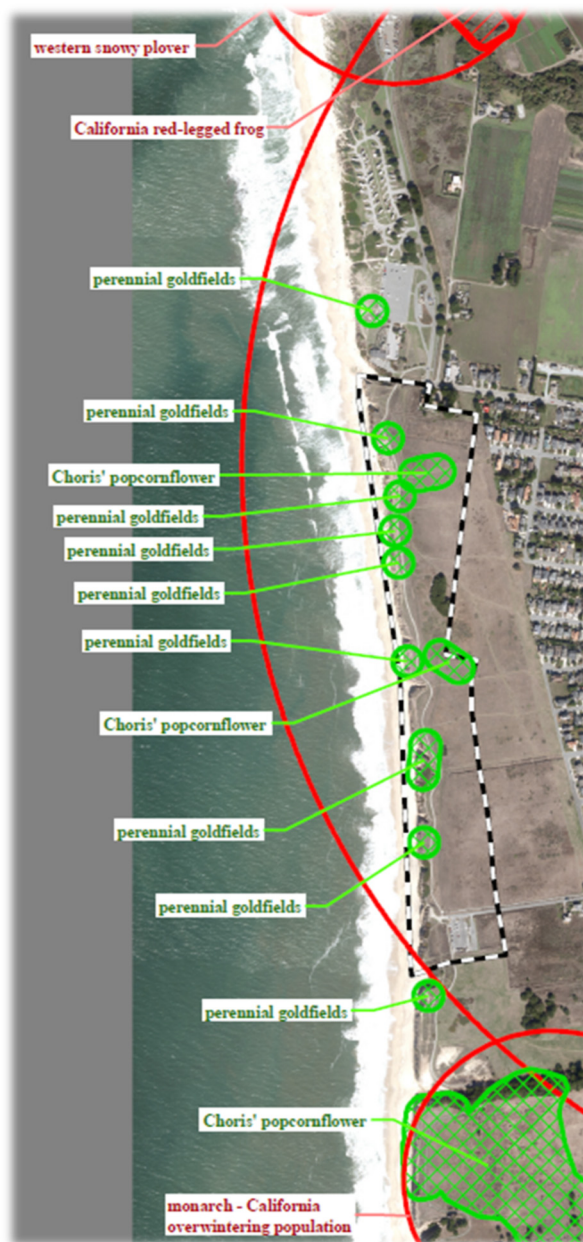
### Waters of the United States and Waters of the State

The Plan area was preliminarily examined for the presence of potential federal and State of California jurisdictional waters. The Park includes four drainage ditches constructed in uplands to convey urban stormwater runoff, per the City's Storm Drain Master Plan. Stormwater drainage ditches constructed in uplands are not considered jurisdictional by the US Army Corps of Engineers; however, drainage ditches may be considered Waters of the State.

A total of 5.7 acres of vegetated wetlands and drainages were found within the Park as shown in **Figure B-3** above that would be classified as palustrine emergent seasonal wetlands under both the California Coastal Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). Wetlands were found in drainage ditches that cross the Plan area at five locations and were also found in low-elevation areas throughout the park east of the Coastal Trail between Poplar Street and Kelly Avenue.

### Special Status Species

The Park provides suitable habitat for a range of special status plants and animals and is a high-value foraging area for birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Special status species in and near the Park are identified on **Figure B-4**.



**Figure B-4. Special Status Species**

### Plants

Two special status plant species have been identified in the Park: perennial goldfields (*Lasthenia californica* ssp. *macrantha*) and Choris' popcornflower (*Plagiobothrys chorisianus* var. *chorisianus*). The perennial goldfields are located primarily along the bluff edge in the northern part of the Park.

The Choris' popcornflower was observed in 2019 by NCE biologists near the coyote brush south of the cypress stand. This native herb is included in the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants (Rank 1B.2). Rare plants require special consideration under the California Environmental Quality Act, and a botanical survey that meets California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and



CNPS protocols would likely need to be completed during the May-July blooming period for any future proposed actions in the Park.

Other unique vegetation features exist onsite. These include a stand of approximately 12 mature Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) trees located just east of the existing Coastal Trail midway through the Park.

In addition, remnants of a coastal scrub community consisting of coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*) exist in a cluster of dense mats south of the Monterey cypress stand and are punctuated throughout the site including a larger stand near Poplar and Railroad Ave.

### Wildlife

There is a potential for state and federally listed wildlife species to occur within and near the Park, including special status birds of prey. The San Francisco garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis tetrataenia*) is both state and federally listed and has been observed north of the Park along Pilarcitos Creek. Habitat features suitable for



basking exist onsite, though limited aquatic habitat exists for preferred prey species. The California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) (CRLF) has also been observed near Pilarcitos Creek and to the south of the Park in North



Wavecrest. The Park is considered suitable dispersal habitat for CRLF. In 2016, a western snowy plover nest was observed approximately 3,000 feet north of Kelly Avenue outside the Plan area. The western snowy plover breeds primarily on coastal beach dunes and creek/river mouths on beaches.



The ocean bluffs and open fields in this part of Half Moon Bay are also an important habitat for wintering species of raptors (birds of prey), such as Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*), Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), and American Kestrel (*Falco*

*sparverius*). The habitat includes grasslands and wetlands for foraging, shrubs for cover, trees for roosting, and a large population of California voles (*Microtus californicus*) that vary in numbers in several-year cycles that provide ample prey for the large variety of birds of prey that winter in this area.

## Cultural Resources

A records search was conducted at the Northwest Information Center on June 25, 2019, which found no listed cultural resources within the Park. However, there is a unique half-moon structure in the north end of the Park that has been partially lost to bluff recession. According to California State Parks, the concrete arc was part of a 1930s



restaurant/hotel that was located at approximately the current location of the Half Moon Bay ranger station.

Ethnographically, the area was historically occupied by the Ohlone people. The Chiguan Village Site is located in Half Moon Bay State Beach, to the north of the Park. The San Mateo Parks Department is collaborating with County, State and federal agencies and tribal representatives to develop a trail system that will recognize 10,000 years of the Ohlone peoples in San Mateo County, follow the footsteps of the Portolá expedition into Alta California, and document the discovery of the San Francisco Bay by the Spanish. The Coastal Trail within the Park is part of Segment #16 of this planned Ohlone-Portolá Heritage Trail.

## Amenities

The Poplar Beach parking area contains limited amenities, including:

**Restrooms.** Four port-a-lets are provided near the parking lot; one is ADA-accessible.

**Bike Racks.** There are two decorative fish-shaped bike racks adjacent to parking lot.

**Picnic Benches.** A picnic bench is located near the main entrance and the Poplar Parking lot.

**Dog Waste Bags.** One “Mutt Mitt” dispenser for dog waste bags is located near the parking lot.



**Benches.** Memorial benches are located at various locations along the bluff for ocean viewing. These areas often attract heavy foot traffic.

**Trash Receptacles.** The primary access area near the parking lot has six solar compacting trash cans. There are no trash receptacles located on the beach or anywhere else in the Park.

**Bike Repair Station.** There is one bike repair station near the parking lot.

### **Access**

**Poplar Street** is a 20-foot-wide access road west of Railroad Avenue. The road is in good/fair condition, and there are drainage ditches on both sides of the roadway.

**Parking.** Separated parking for cars and for horse trailers is provided at the end of Poplar Street. There is a ticket machine for payment when required and the parking lot has been recently resurfaced. There are 79 regular and 4 ADA stalls, plus a gravel lot that can accommodate about 6 equestrian trailers. No parking is allowed on Poplar Street west of Railroad Avenue.

**Beach Access** is currently provided near the parking area at the south end of the Park, at the north end of the Park at Kelly Avenue, and at a location in between primarily used by equestrians. The primary beach access near the Poplar Street parking area is very steep and in need of repair and maintenance.

**Poplar Parallel Access.** This multi-use access trail is an approximately 7-foot-wide asphalt access trail running parallel to Poplar Street along its northern edge between Railroad Avenue and the Coastal Trail. This trail is in poor condition.



### **San Mateo County Landfill Site**

The County-owned property of approximately 35 acres south of the Park area and parking lot contains a closed landfill. Little is known about why this site was originally chosen as a dump site. The County has capped the landfill and monitors the site and intends to study options for remediation and managed retreat. Concerns exist regarding the potential for exposure of the landfill due to bluff erosion.



