

Port San Luis



May, 2004

Revised per 2007
LCP Update

Port San Luis Harbor District **PORT MASTER PLAN**

Harbor District



FINAL DRAFT

Port San Luis Harbor District **Port Master Plan**

Final Draft

May, 2004

Revised per 2007 LCP Update

This Master Plan has been revised to reflect final Coastal Commission and County modifications from the LCP Amendment update approved by the Coastal Commission in November of 2006 and updated into the County LCP in 2007.



The 2004 Port Master Plan Update is a collaborative project of the Port San Luis Harbor District and the State Coastal Conservancy.

Document Prepared By:



RRM DESIGN GROUP

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Acknowledgements

Port San Luis Board of Harbor Commissioners

Jim Blecha
Drew Brandy
John Koepf
Brian Kreowski
Carolyn Moffat
Britt Philips
Jack Scarborough

Harbor District Staff

Jay K. Elder, Harbor Manager
Steve McGrath, Harbor Manager
Joe Barget, Facilities Manager
Casey Nielsen, Operations Manager
Loch Driezler, Estimator/Planner
Leslie Parsons, Administrative Analyst
Lisamichelle Hughes, Administrative Secretary
Mara Ziehn, Customer Support Coordinator

San Luis Obispo County Planning & Building

John Euphrat, Principal Planner
James Caruso, Avila Current Planning
Nancy Orton, Environmental Review/Coastal Team

State Coastal Conservancy

Mark Beyeler, Program Specialist
Terry Nevins, Central Coast Coordinator

California Coastal Commission

Steve Monowitz, Central Coast Supervisor
Dr. Charles Lester, Deputy Director

RRM Design Group

Jeff Ferber, Principal
Debbie Lagomarcino Rudd, Project Manager
Suzanne Drolet, Associate Planner
Lief McKay, Associate Planner



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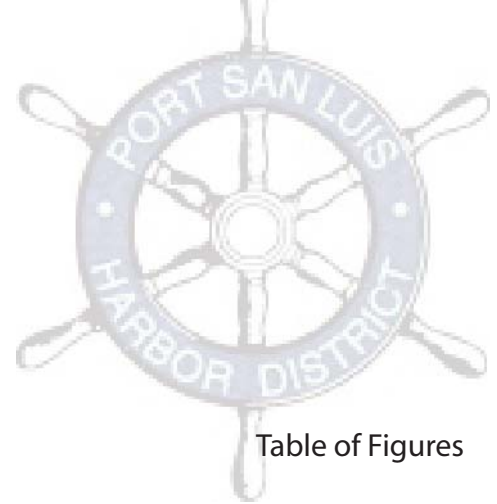


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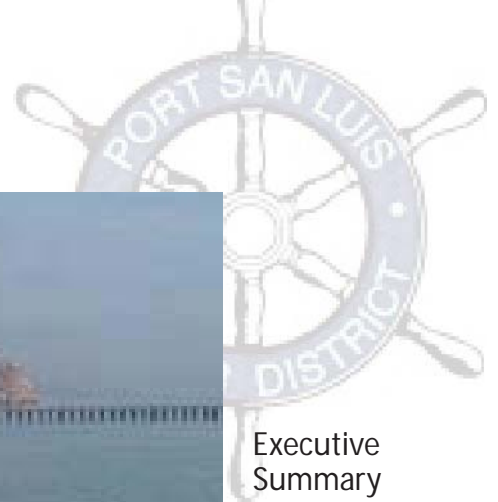
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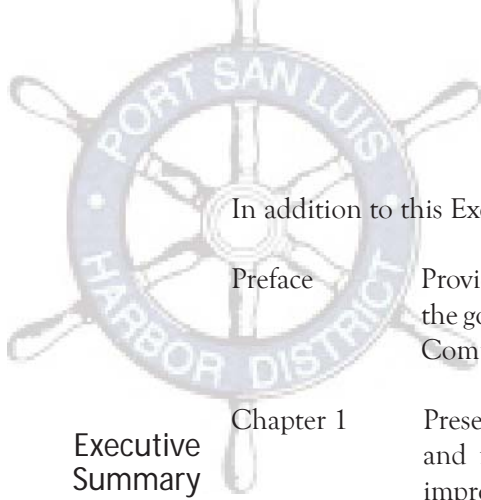
Executive Summary

Introduction

The Port San Luis Harbor District Port Master Plan was created to continue the long-standing tradition of stewardship by the Harbor District for the use and development of the land and water areas under its jurisdiction. This Master Plan meets public obligations for the administration of these areas as mandated by the State Tidelands Grant (Chapters 647 of Statutes of 1955 and as amended by Chapter 302 of Statutes of 1957, see Appendix I) and the California Coastal Act of 1976. Chapter 3 of this Plan is incorporated into the San Luis Obispo County's Local Coastal Program (LCP) for the San Luis Bay Planning Area as the governing policies for land and water uses at Port San Luis. The projected period for this Plan is ten years.

A comprehensive update of the 1984 Port Master Plan (revised 1994) was necessary to provide current information about the issues surrounding the use and development at the Port. Several challenging issues including the District's financial security, the weakening commercial fishing industry, and development interest in the Harbor Terrace site required the District to evaluate resource allocations and consider alternative strategies for the future treatment of Port facilities. This revised Master Plan supports District operations, guides new development with sensitivity to natural resources and the unique character of the Port, and creates a waterfront environment enjoyable to all.

The Harbor Commission's preparation of this Master Plan involved extensive public outreach to create a policy framework broadly supported by the boating and fishing public, adjacent communities, and regulatory agencies.



Executive
Summary

In addition to this Executive Summary, the Master Plan has six sections:

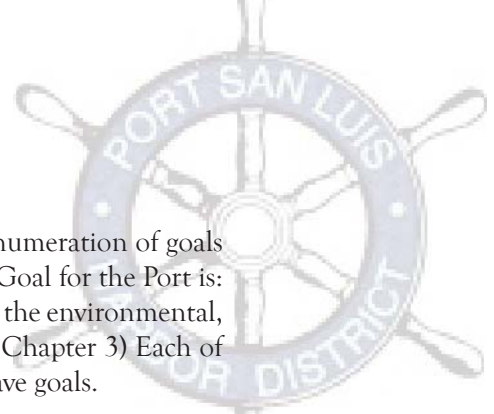
- Preface Provides a general introduction and overview of the Master Plan and discusses the governance of Port San Luis Harbor District including the California Coastal Commission and the County of San Luis Obispo land use requirements.
- Chapter 1 Presents the objectives of the Master Plan, introduces the Planning Sub-Areas, and reviews the planning challenges addressed by the policies and physical improvements of this Plan.
- Chapter 2 Tells the history of Port San Luis, from its inception in 1868 to today, and sets the planning context for each of the seven geographical Planning Sub-Areas, including existing conditions and the Harbor Commission's vision.
- Chapter 3 The heart of the Master Plan, which sets forth the governing policies for the use and development of areas under Port control. Policies are organized according to the extent of their application, i.e., either Districtwide or by individual sub-areas.
- Chapter 4 Outlines the Master Plan Implementation Plan, which explains the Development Review and Approval Process, recommended physical improvements and supportive actions, potential funding sources, and project phasing.
- Appendix Provides supporting information for the Master Plan including a comprehensive glossary, Coastal Access Plan, Coastal Act Consistency Matrix, Allowable Uses from the County's Framework for Planning, Harford Pier Design Guidelines, Permitting Boundary Maps, State Tidelands Grant legislative text and map, and EIR Mitigation Measures/Conditions of Approval.

Background

The Harbor District owns and controls both land and tideland properties at San Luis Obispo Bay, bounded by Point San Luis on the west, the Irish Hills to the north, Sunset Palisades on the east, and the southerly ocean area three miles seaward. The Study Area encompasses roughly 2,500 acres of water and 125 acres of land, and is divided into seven planning sub-areas: Open Water, Harford Pier, Harford Landing, Beach and Bluffs, Harbor Terrace, Lightstation, and Avila Beach.

The Tidelands Grant (see Appendix I) to the Harbor District by the State of California mandates specific functions that the District must guarantee for public use including the development of a public harbor to meet the needs of the people of the State and the provision of recreational and visitor-serving uses within the granted lands.

The California Coastal Act of 1976 also mandates that the District accommodate certain priority uses in its administration of the waterfront areas under its control. Harbor District policies and programs that carry out the administrative mandates of the State are encompassed in this Master Plan, and established in the San Luis Obispo County LCP for the San Luis Bay Planning Area.



Master Plan Process

The master planning process was initiated with the Harbor Commission's enumeration of goals for the use and development of Harbor District properties. The overarching Goal for the Port is: "A Harbor with protected, maintained, and enhanced resources that balances the environmental, social, and economic needs of the various user groups." (District-wide Goal, Chapter 3) Each of the seven planning sub-areas has an associated goal and certain issues also have goals.

After extensive consideration of the numerous issues affecting development at the Port (see summary of Planning Challenges below and Chapter 1) including existing uses, changing market conditions, public obligations, and community desires, policies were drafted to provide guidance to future Harbor Commissions. Additionally, in an effort to provide a plan of action that will implement policies and achieve Harbor District Master Plan Goals, physical improvements and supportive programs were developed and recommended.

Planning Challenges Summary

Numerous planning issues and challenges affecting achievement of the master plan goals were studied and addressed through policy formulation and improvement planning. The primary issue areas are briefly summarized here:

District Priorities and Fiscal Considerations

The Harbor District is obligated to the people of the State of California under Harbor and Navigation Code (§6000 et. seq), the original Tidelands Grant Statutes, and the California Coastal Act to meet the administrative mandates for the use and development of the land and water areas under its control. Over the past two decades, the means to pay for related facilities and functions has diminished substantially and there is no longer sufficient income to pay for essential harbor services and facilities without augmenting financing sources. Providing opportunities to accommodate revenue-producing uses may mediate tightening budgets. It is the Harbor District's intent to create a mix of uses that are compatible with recreational opportunities and the surrounding area in a way that is mutually-beneficial to the District, the Avila community, and the people that come to enjoy the waterfront. In conformance with the Coastal Act, the District must continue to accommodate low-cost visitor-serving amenities (PRC§ 30213). In the end, the Harbor District must provide a balanced range of uses to meet its public obligations and financial needs.

Harbor Users

Port facilities including the Harford and Avila Piers, open water area, beaches, and upland areas at Harford Landing and Harbor Terrace predominantly support coastal dependent uses, which depend upon adequate access and proximate locations to water and the shoreline.

While not requiring direct waterfront locations, coastal related uses may complement coastal dependent uses and support waterfront visitors and workers. The major coastal related uses at the Port include restaurants, boat storage, and seafood processing. The greatest potential to accommodate new visitor uses is at Harbor Terrace; visitor amenities may also be added at the bluff overlooks, on the periphery of Harford Landing, and at the Avila Pier and Parking Lot.



Environment

The Master Plan evaluates and addresses several natural resource issues classified according to the areas they affect, i.e., offshore and onshore locations. San Luis Obispo County Coastal Policies, development standards, and land use ordinances govern the development of upland resources at Port San Luis and provide safeguard measures for their protection. In addition, numerous agencies regulate the use and development of land and water areas to ensure improvements and activities show consideration for sensitive environmental resources. Environmental subject areas reviewed include:

Offshore Resources

- The marine environment including the diverse and active marine ecosystem, complete with abundant fishes, invertebrates, mammals, and birds of San Luis Obispo Bay.
- Water quality in San Luis Obispo Bay as affected by development and use of coastal waters at Port San Luis and upstream in the San Luis Obispo Creek watershed.

Onshore Resources

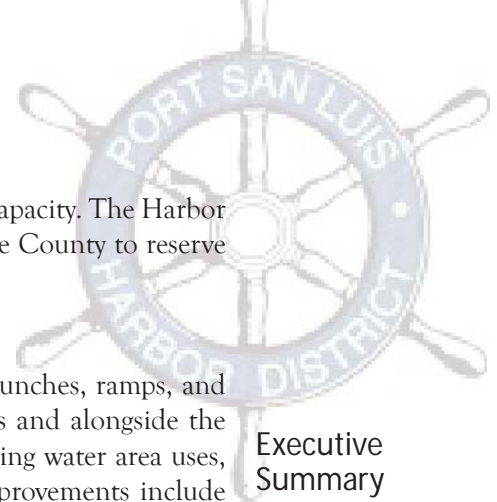
- Cultural Resources including the historic facilities on or adjacent to Port property such as Harford Pier and the Lightstation, the San Luis Yacht Club in Avila, and the Chumash Indian sites in the area.
- Geology / Bluff Erosion affect land areas on both sides of Avila Beach Drive (seaside bluffs and Harbor Terrace hillsides). The shoreline bluffs, which support the primary access route to Port San Luis, are vulnerable to the effects of persistent wave action. Geologic instability and erosion at Harbor Terrace are associated with the presence of several landslides partially caused by previous grading work, subsurface seeps, and the San Luis Bay Fault (inactive).
- Scenic Resources refer to the visual landscape of the rural waterfront at Port San Luis and the Avila area. The coastal bluffs and scenic integrity of the waterfront requires sensitive site and design planning to preserve the aesthetically pleasing land and seascape.

Access

Both the Coastal Act and the California Constitution guarantee the rights of all citizens to access and use State tidelands. Port San Luis Harbor District provides harbor functions; therefore, providing boaters access to the water and to their vessels is essential. Within the study area, all waterfront access depends upon road capacity on the primary route to the Port, Avila Beach Drive, which is controlled by the County of San Luis Obispo and sufficient parking. Access was examined from the following perspectives:

- **Road Capacity**

One of the chief priorities of the 1976 Coastal Act concerns the protection of public access to the waterfront (PRC §30224). One of the methods provided in the Coastal Act to carry out this priority is to require that service capacities are reserved to serve priority uses (PRC §30254). Avila Beach Drive provides the only vehicle connection to Port San Luis from Avila Beach, Avila Valley, and beyond. However, road capacity is limited and non-priority land uses occurring in areas outside of Harbor District jurisdiction may consume available road capacity and limit the District's ability to accommodate higher priority uses. Nearly all uses and functions that occur at the Port are coastal dependent (boating, fishing, and waterfront recreation) yet the Harbor District cannot ensure that



development outside its jurisdiction does not absorb essential road capacity. The Harbor District supports the Coastal Commission's recommendation to the County to reserve road capacity to serve priority uses (LCP Review, 2001).

- Access to Vessels

Vessel access occurs by means of getting boats into the water via launches, ramps, and hoists, and enabling individuals to reach their vessels on moorings and alongside the pier. Planning challenges facing water access issues include conflicting water area uses, insufficient access facilities, and sand shoaling. Recommended improvements include additional landings, skiff storage space, and a long-term dredging solution.

- Vertical Access

Port San Luis Harbor District's jurisdiction embraces the tidelands of San Luis Obispo Bay, with much of the property immediately along the waterfront. Vertical access enables the public to reach the shoreline from public roadways through stairways, ADA ramps, and trails. Numerous vertical accessways are provided and maintained to serve the public along the water and additional facilities will be needed to increase access with the development of visitor uses at Harbor Terrace and as other recreational demands warrant.

- Lateral Access

Connectivity among Port properties occurs by boat, walking, driving, taking the Avila trolley, or bicycling. The challenge is to facilitate adequate connections between properties and provide pedestrian amenities and other facilities to enhance the utility of existing facilities and the experience of the user. The State is coordinating the development of the California Coastal Trail (CCT) along the 1,200-mile California coastline from Oregon to the Mexican border. Lateral access improvements at Port San Luis will support other County efforts to develop the CCT in this area.

- Parking

Waterfront access is heavily influenced by the availability of an adequate supply of parking for visitors, residents, employees, and harbor users. The arrangement and management of parking facilities affects smooth traffic flow within the harbor and the community. Locating and providing an adequate and convenient parking supply is a continuous challenge for the District.

Services

Proposed developments at the Port must be within resource and system capacities available to the Harbor District. The most recent Resource Capacity Study studied improvements proposed in the 1984 Master Plan was completed in 1997. The Harbor District's available capacity of water and wastewater resources are estimated to be sufficient to serve proposed improvements in this Plan. The amount of resources necessary to serve new development on Harbor Terrace is undetermined; therefore before approving new development proposed in the 2004 Master Plan the Resource Capacity Study should be updated to verify an accurate amount of available capacity.



Safety

Three safety issues merit Master Plan consideration:

- Improving available water pressure so that it meets fire authority standards is necessary to improve Harbor District fire safety on the land and piers. New development on the piers should incorporate additional fire prevention improvements.
- Public safety could be enhanced by the development of an emergency response plan that addresses emergency evacuation of Port facilities due to radiation release, earthquake, tsunamis, fire, war, storms, etc.
- Safety along Avila Beach Drive needs improvement with walkways, crosswalks, and other safety measures to protect pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

Physical Improvements Summary

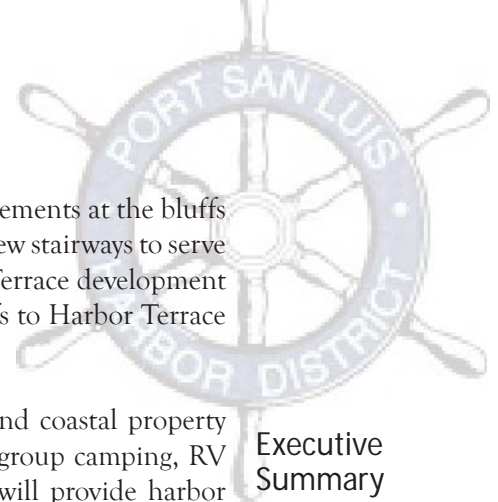
In light of the planning challenges described above, and in an effort to achieve the goals and policies set forth in Chapter 3, the Master Plan recommends numerous physical improvements and supportive programs (non-mandatory actions). Most physical improvements are access-related or pertain to facilitating development of Harbor Terrace.

Physical improvements are projected to be phased over ten years and are divided into three phases: Short (0 – 2years), Medium (3 – 5 years), and Medium to Long range (6 – 10 years). Accomplishing the recommended improvements depends upon a strategy of project priorities matched to the Harbor District’s ability to provide resources to achieve them. The implementation strategy focuses on improvement projects, supporting programs, financing and phasing strategies, and design guidelines. In brief, physical improvements consist of:

Open Water Area: No physical improvements are recommended for this area; however, a study of the sand migration at the boat launching areas is needed.

Harford Pier: Public access will be enhanced through pier restoration along the pier drive and walkways including interpretive exhibits, bike racks, and supporting amenities. Boating access will be improved by the addition of skiff storage (both wet and dry) and a new fixed visitor landing. Available lease space will be used more efficiently with redevelopment of Pod 1, promotion of lease area under the canopy, and reuse of the Harbor Offices at the pier terminus. Complete rehabilitation of the historic pier is a long-term objective of this Master Plan.

Harford Landing. Reorganization of the parking lot will offer more efficient circulation and distribution of parking space, and will add a flexible parking area in the East Parking Lot. Use of a trolley will be a more attractive and comfortable transport option with formalized trolley stops at centralized convenient locations. Additional bike racks in strategic locations will better serve recreational and commuting cyclists. Pedestrian movement will be both safer and more enjoyable with new walkways through the parking lot and enhanced paths at the water’s edge. Long-term goals for this area include: the relocation and consolidation of Harbor Offices and Maintenance facilities to Harbor Terrace and the reuse of these areas as lease space; the increase of the west parking lot elevation to reduce wave overtopping and increase parking lot safety; and, reconstruction of the trailer boat wash down area concurrent with the incorporation of water quality measures.



Beach and Bluffs. Public access will be improved in this location by enhancements at the bluffs to provide pedestrian and vehicle oriented overlooks and by the addition of new stairways to serve the beaches. Improvements in these areas will be coordinated with Harbor Terrace development including the transition of recreational vehicle (RV) camping from the bluffs to Harbor Terrace and development of other visitor serving uses.

Harbor Terrace. Harbor and visitor-serving uses are planned for the upland coastal property known as Harbor Terrace. A mix of overnight accommodations including group camping, RV camping, and yurts or bungalows/cabins with complementary retail uses will provide harbor visitors with a destination in proximity to dozens of recreational opportunities. Other harbor users will continue to be able to use the site for storage of boat trailers and gear. The Harbor District will consolidate facilities to this site, freeing up scarce waterfront space for other coastal dependent uses.

Lightstation. Improvements to the Lightstation will concentrate on facilitating access to the Lightstation through several means, such as shuttle, trail, kayak, and boat. Creating supportive facilities like parking and staging areas, a rebuilt pier, and connections to the Lightstation at other Port Planning Sub-Areas (e.g., a new landing at Avila Pier, trail connections from the Beach and Bluffs, informative brochures and signage at Harford Landing) will increase public access and public enjoyment of this historical site.

Avila Beach Properties. Boating and pedestrian access will be improved with the addition of supportive amenities to these user groups. A new boat landing and skiff storage (wet and dry) will increase the recreational use of the pier for boaters. At the east end of the beach, the old existing stairway will be replaced and upgraded to better serve beachgoers. The parking lot may support development of commercial, visitor-serving transient units, or affordable work force housing as a revenue generator to offset the costs of the beach and pier expenses.

Funding and Phasing

Paying for proposed improvements will require the Harbor District to carry out a combination of strategies including grant and loan funding, entering public-private partnerships, and creating innovative projects that are attractive to available funding sources. Due to the multiple benefits that many projects have, the District may combine funds from several potential “benefit groups” with primary project funding sources.

Priorities may change because of evolving environmental and political conditions. Additionally, the timing of available funding for specific projects may also affect changes in priorities, as may occur with bond measures or tax increases, for example. Project phasing should remain fluid.