



PEBBLE BEACH RIDING & TRAILS ASSOCIATION

19 March 2004

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Thom McCue, Senior Planner
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2620 First Avenue
Marina, CA 93933

Subject: Draft EIR for the Del Monte Forest Preservation and Development Plan
(State Clearinghouse No: 2002021130, Dated February 2004)

DIRECTORS

Stefano Cacace
Sherri Reid
Sandi Verbanec

Dear Thom,

The Pebble Beach Riding and Trails Association forwards to you the attached comments on the subject document. Our seven-member Board of Directors has collaborated with the Del Monte Forest Property Owners on behalf of our membership, the users of the Del Monte Forest hiking and equestrian trails and the Pebble Beach Equestrian Center, to generate these remarks focused on the trails and equestrian center. Our membership numbers over two hundred individuals concerned with the quality and accessibility of the equestrian center and the trails system. Many have been trail users for decades and are intimately familiar with the trail system that has existed for over 75 years. They understand first hand the nature of the real issues that arise in their maintenance.

Many members would prefer that the equestrian center remain in its present location, but recognize the right of Pebble Beach Company to pursue development of its property and the potential for a first class equestrian facility at the new location. We concur with the finding of the Draft EIR that all of the environmental impacts of the Plan can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The most effective and reasonable mitigations for the trails and equestrian center impacts would be determined as the exact conditions to be mitigated become apparent over the protracted construction period. Much of the impact discussed in the DEIR is potential and we should remain mindful that mitigations imposed for impacts that do not materialize draw down assets that could be used to greater effect if focused on real impacts.

We hope these comments are useful in your deliberations. We would be pleased to elaborate on any of these comments, or others, as appropriate. Contact information for further assistance is listed below.

Respectfully yours,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY:

Ray Freschi, President
Pebble Beach Riding and Trails Association

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**Pebble Beach Riding and Trails Association
Comments on the Draft EIR
Regarding Pebble Beach Company's
Del Monte Forest Preservation and Development Plan**

Page/line

Comment

Executive Summary

ES-12
lines 40-41

Under the "Wetlands" section, the Draft EIR proposes "maintenance of a 100-foot buffer for the ESHA wetland area in the lower Sawmill site for all permanent and temporary activity." The wetland in the lower Sawmill site is seasonal and a result of poor grading in prior quarry operations, rather than a natural formation. On page 3.1-22, line 20-23, it is noted that the present Del Monte Forest LUP (c. 1986) indicates that the Sawmill site is not designated as ESHA. Re-grading to restore original drainage would appear to be a more appropriate option than making the grading error permanent.

Exclusion of the lower Sawmill site (plus a large buffer) from casual recreational usage, analogous to usage of Collins Field at the present PBEC, would be a significant loss of local recreational opportunity to many Forest residents. This loss is unwarranted to preserve an accidentally created marsh. Exclusion of the upper Sawmill site impacts the quality of the new equestrian center by reducing the area available for show rings that would be used in horse competitions. This is a significant degradation of PBEC capability compared to the present.

Alternate mitigations should be devised to allow use of these man-made wetlands in the new equestrian center.

(This same comment applies to Chapter 3, page 3.3-28, lines 5-6, and lines 25-29).

ES-18
Lines 12-14

Recommend add the following sentence at the end of the "Highway 68/Highway 1 SB Interchange" section to note the positive traffic related improvements proposed under Phase 1B for this intersection and our members' desire to have this improvement implemented as soon as possible:

"In fact, the Phase 1B improvements would have significant *beneficial* impacts and should be implemented as soon as possible, independent of other elements of the plan."

Chapter 2.0 Project Description

2.0-6
lines 33-36 While trail rides would not necessarily come into contact with traffic on paved roadways, access to the coast will necessitate crossing busier streets than those near the present PBEC. Enhanced crossing safety features should be investigated and implemented.

To accommodate the increased usage of Green/Red Trail as the primary route to the ocean from the new Equestrian Center location, additional enhancements to that Trail are necessary. A safe path protected from traffic should be established at the Colton Road crossing to replace a section that currently runs along the pavement around a curve to a narrow path above a steep ravine. In addition, the section where the trail crosses Sawmill Gulch near the intersection of Mission Road and Forest Lodge Road remains virtually impassable for much of the year. Some feasible means of crossing the stream without infringing on the Monterey Peninsula Country Club Dunes Course fairway (immediately adjacent) should be established.

2.0-14
lines 1-5 Access to the Forest Trail System during construction of the proposed project is critical to the health of horses stabled on private residential lots in the Cypress Point area of the Forest. These horses need to be exercised on a routine basis. Long periods of inactivity due to potential construction blockages would be detrimental to the horses' health. Accordingly, it is recommended that continued reasonable access to the trail system during construction be ensured.

Chapter 3.3 Biological Resources

3.3-14
lines 21- 23 Under the "Impact BIO-A5" Section, the Draft EIR states that "Increased equestrian and pedestrian activity on existing and new trails in the HHNA (including SFB Morse Preserve) could result in indirect disturbance to environmentally sensitive habitat areas." The Draft EIR incorrectly attributes this potential impact solely to equestrian and pedestrian usage. In truth, most existing soil and vegetation disturbance on both marked and "social" trails is a result of illicit mountain bike and motorized trail bike usage of the trails, evidenced by tire tracks and numerous resident encounters. Equestrian use would discourage and perhaps displace bike usage, resulting in decreased damage and less hazard to hikers.

3.3-14
lines 25 & 37 The implication in these sections of the Draft EIR is that the increased equestrian traffic impact will be solely negative on trails. In fact, the single track trails presently require regular maintenance to remove overgrowth of vegetation, both laterally and vertically. The PBC Trails Coordinator conducts this trail maintenance with help from other PBC department personnel, volunteers from the Pebble Beach Riding & Trails Association and others in the community. More frequent/regular equestrian/pedestrian use may obviate the need for extensive mechanical clearing operations on these trails.

- 3.3-15
line 3 The Crawford Trail and Green/Red Trail from Congress Road to Fire Road 4 have existed and equestrians have used them for over 75 years. Extensive experience is available regarding erosion and effectiveness of present mitigations. With continued oversight and proper maintenance, the expectation should be for only slightly increased erosion due to increased equestrian usage. If illicit bicycle and motorized bike use is curtailed, the slight increase in equestrian use would be offset by elimination/reduction in damage from displaced bike usage.
- 3.3-16
line 6 Under “Mitigation Measure BIO-A5,” the Draft EIR proposes to “... close permanently and re-vegetate all informal ‘social’ trails in the HHNA”. Existing "social" trails start out as wildlife paths and have become bicycle routes, which cause the bulk of the visible damage. Closing and revegetating existing trails will have limited usefulness since wildlife will develop new paths. This process has been attempted in the past with little success and is likely to be unsuccessful again. More frequent presence of horses should discourage trail use by bicycles and motorized bikes, leaving only the natural effects of wildlife. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the existing and proposed modified Forest Trail System is for the “Dual-Use” of pedestrians and equestrians only. Use of the Forest Trail System by mountain bikes and/or motorized bikes is prohibited by the current owner(s).
- 3.3-16
line 8 & 30 Under “Mitigation Measure BIO-A5”, the Draft EIR proposes the use of “Certified Noxious Weed-Free Feed” for feed of all horses stabled at the new equestrian center. Furthermore, the proposed mitigation encourages all users to use this “Certified Feed” for at least two days prior to bringing their horses to the new equestrian center for boarding or equestrian events. This mitigation is both unreasonable and unnecessary. First, there is no known source of supply of “Certified Noxious Weed-Free Feed” in the local area. A more cost-effective solution would be to use existing Trails Maintenance Program resources to rid the Trails of noxious weeds. Second, the mitigation measure listed on line 30 of page 3.3-16 provides adequate and reasonable mitigation of noxious weeds. That mitigation requires the use of Weed Control Surveys and the clearing of noxious weeds via manual, mechanical, appropriate chemical and/or other means of control.
- 3.3-16
lines 22-29 Under “Mitigation Measure BIO-A5”, the Draft EIR proposes that the applicant monitors trails and trail crossings of drainages during the wet season, temporarily close single-track trails when monitoring identifies that a substantial erosion problem exists. Although the exact protocol for this mitigation is not stipulated in the Draft EIR, it should be noted that continued access to the Forest Trail System is vital to the health of horses stabled in the forest. Accordingly, it is recommended that any proposed temporary closure action under wet season conditions be closely coordinated with the Pebble Beach Equestrian Center and Pebble Beach Riding and Trails Association.

3.3-17
line 1

Under “Mitigation Measure BIO-A5,” the Draft EIR proposes closure and placement of Horse Barriers on the single-track segments of the Crawford Trail and Green Trail that parallel drainage(s) in the HHNA. Equestrians have used these trails for over 75 years and the minimal increase in usage that is reasonable to expect from a closer PBEC does not warrant their total banishment. A regular trail maintenance program as currently exists in the Forest would be adequate to prevent excessive deterioration of the trails and identify, as necessary, any appropriate improvements.

Additional routes from the HHNA into the lower Sawmill site and Congress Road already exist to share the load, further reducing the likelihood of damage on the single track trails from overuse.

3.3-17
line 14

Under “Mitigation Measure BIO-A5,” the Draft EIR proposes trail continuity and northwesterly access to the coast via use of Fire Road 2 and a portion of Congress Road to access the Green Trail. “Use of the road” as suggested is too dangerous for equestrian use (as recognized on page 3.3-17, lines 28-29, especially after widening and with construction and feeder route traffic). Blue Trail is the appropriate equestrian route paralleling Congress Road. Accordingly, recommend delete the reference to the use of Congress Road as an “alternative” route to the coast. The northwesterly access route to the coast should read as follows:

“-direct horse traffic to utilize Fire Road #3 and/or Fire Road #5 to reach Fire Road #2, then use Fire road #2 to Congress Road, [and then the Blue Trail](#) to reach the Green Trail heading northwest to MPCC and the Coast.”

Access to the coast would be more direct for equestrians if routed through the lower Sawmill site along former quarry roads to the last 100 yards of Green/Red Trail prior to the Congress Road crossing.

3.3-28
line 5-6 &
line 25-29

Under “Wetlands Impact BIO-C1,” Wetland S-A at the new equestrian center is cited as a freshwater marsh wetland and is considered ESHA. However, as noted previously on DEIR page 3.1-22, line 20-23, the current Del Monte Forest LUP (c. 1986) indicates that the Sawmill site is not designated as ESHA. The drainage of the Sawmill sites is man-made and is the result of apparent grading errors during/after former mining operations. Re-grading to restore the original drainage would appear to be a more appropriate option than making the grading errors permanent in the form of man-made ESHA wetlands.

Exclusion of the lower Sawmill site (plus a large buffer) from casual recreational usage, analogous to usage of Collins Field at the present PBEC, would be a significant loss of local recreational opportunity to many Forest residents. This loss is unwarranted to preserve an accidentally created marsh. Exclusion of the upper Sawmill site impacts the quality of the new equestrian center by reducing the area available for show rings that would be used in horse competitions. This is a significant degradation of PBEC capability compared to the present.

Alternate mitigations should be devised to allow use of these man-made wetlands in the new equestrian center.

3.3-54
lines 20-41 Under “Special Status Species, Impact BIO-D6, the Draft EIR notes the presence of Smith Blue Butterfly (SBB) host plants in areas M and N areas of the proposed golf site and states that loss of SBB or their host plants due to the proposed construction would be a significant impact. As mitigation, the applicant is proposing to restore 33 acres of dune habitat in this area to enhance and provide protection of SBB host plants. Furthermore, Draft EIR page 3.3-54 line 23 acknowledges no SBB have ever been sighted in the Del Monte Forest. Given this fact, it appears that the proposed mitigation is not needed for “potential” SBB impact(s). However, it should be noted that restoration in the dunes area, such as removal of non-native species, may be beneficial and needed to mitigate other potential environmental impacts.

3.3-55
line 25 Under “Special Status Species, Impact BIO-D6, the Draft EIR proposes the requirement to redesign affected trails to avoid Smith Blue Butterfly (SBB) host plants should SBB presence be detected during pre-construction surveys.

The redesign of trails in the area should be contingent on evidence of SBB presence. The first and last mitigation listed under BIO-D6 should be contingent on positive findings of SBB and their host plants during the pre-construction survey.

3.3-56
line 17 Under “Rare Wildlife Species (Not Listed), the Draft EIR states that Project construction and development could result in loss or disruption to “potential” habitats for the following species: Black or Silvery Leg-less Lizards, California Horned Lizards, Southwestern Pond Turtles, Pallid Bats, Ringtails and Ornate Shrews.

3.3-57
lines 13, 24

3.3-58
Lines 5,22 Since the Draft EIR has merely noted potential habitat areas for the above listed species and not specific wildlife presence, the proposed mitigation measures under BIO-D8-2 and BIO-D8-3 should be made conditional upon specie presence established during appropriate pre-construction surveys.

Chapter 3.4 Hydrology and Water Quality

3.4-17
lines 8- 13 “Impact HWQ-C3” notes that horse waste at the New Equestrian Center could degrade water quality in downstream wetlands and drainage(s). The first proposed mitigation listed under the BMP requires manure to be stored under cover at a dedicated bunker area and transported at least twice weekly to a landfill *or other approved facility*. Recommend change “approved” to read “appropriate” to reflect the current practice of transporting horse manure to local organic farmers for use as natural fertilizer.

H-11
Lines 11-13 The comment/recommendation made above (Page 3.4-17, Lines 8-13) also applies to Appendix H.1 – Summary of Applicant’s Resource Management Plan.

Chapter 3.5 Public Services and Utilities

3.5-8 The intersection of Alva Lane and Ondulado Road becomes a significant intersection on "feeder" or "collector" roads with the implementation of this plan, changing their previous "country lane" character. For the safety of pedestrians and equestrians living in the Alva, Sombria, Portola, Ondulado Roads area, we strongly support the proposed four-way stop signs at the intersection of Alva and Ondulado roads, not mentioned in the Draft EIR. Additionally, we support the development of an off-road trail for dual use of pedestrians and equestrians as shown on Figure 2.0-32.

Chapter 3.6 Aesthetics

3.6-5
Lines 11-14 Area K contains a proposed “*subdivision*” of two parcels. The southwest portion of this area would be subdivided from Spyglass Hill Golf Course into *one* approximately 2.95 acre residential lot. The remaining 3.94 acre part of Area K along Stevenson Drive would be placed in a conservation easement. The Draft EIR on Page 3.6-13 Lines 23-24, notes that this area is not visible along any designated scenic corridors or from any designated scenic vistas. Thus, this determination implies that the proposed development of one large estate size home is compatible with surrounding spaces and does not impact the aesthetics of the area.

Although the area of Stevenson Road affected by the proposed development is not a designated scenic corridor, the area is characterized by golf course and forest vistas. Development of a single home in this area would be out of character and not compatible with the surrounding land use. Nor does the development of an isolated, single residential lot foster a sense of community within the Forest. Development on Area K would significantly impact the aesthetics of the current forest and open recreational setting. Accordingly, it is recommended that both parcels within Area K be placed in Conservation Easements.

It should be recognized that Area K contains an important portion of the trail system that should remain available whether the Area is developed or not. No mention of the trail in Area K exists in the Draft EIR.

Chapter 3.7 Transportation and Circulation

- 3.7-32
lines 22-26
- The Draft EIR states that the left hand turn lane from Hwy 68 onto SFB Morse Drive is of sufficient length to mitigate additional traffic (Page 3.7-28, lines 17-35) generated by the New Equestrian Center. We understand from the applicant's submitted plans that there is a 120 foot stacking lane for the new left turn lane on SFB Morse Drive as it enters the New Equestrian Center We support this improvement, and note that the Draft EIR should indicate inclusion of this stacking lane at the entrance to the New Equestrian Center.
- 3.7-41
line 32
- Improvements to the Congress Road corridor from Lopez to the new equestrian center should be in place prior to the bulk of the construction traffic emanating from other locations to minimize noise, dust, etc., to residences adjacent to Congress Road. Newer, smoother pavement will reduce noise of trucks bouncing through potholes and rough pavement. Congress Road equestrian crossing (Red Trail) safety enhancements should be accomplished at the same time as the road improvement.

Chapter 4.4 Cumulative Impacts

- 4.4-24
line 44
- Impact BIO-D6-C notes that cumulative development could result in increased recreational use of trails through remnant dune habitat that may contain host plants and Smith Blue Butterflies. Even with enhancement of the present Green Trail through the dune area, relocation of the PBEC to the Sawmill site should be expected to result in a net *decrease* in recreational use of this portion of the trail compared to the present.