



NOTICE OF PREPARATION of an Environmental Impact Report for the El Cápitan, Refugio, and Gaviota General Plan Update

Date: December 2, 2024
To: State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, and Interested Individuals and Organizations
Subject: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the El Cápitan, Refugio, and Gaviota General Plan Update
Lead Agency: California Department of Parks and Recreation
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Contact: James Newland

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks), as the lead agency, is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed El Cápitan, Refugio, and Gaviota (ECRG) General Plan Update (proposed project). State Parks has prepared this Notice of Preparation (NOP) pursuant to Section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. This NOP informs agencies and the public that an EIR is being prepared to address potential impacts resulting from approval and implementation of the proposed project. Publication of this NOP provides an opportunity for public comment on the environmental impacts to be addressed in the ECRG General Plan Update EIR. Additional information about the ECRG General Plan Update process is available at the project website: <https://ecrgplanupdate.com/>.

Due to the holidays and limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than the close of the 60-day NOP review period at **5:00 PM on Thursday, January 30, 2025**. If you submit comments on the scope of the EIR, you will automatically be added to the distribution list for future notices about the proposed project. Please include **"ECRG General Plan Update EIR"** as the subject and submit comments via the mailing address listed above or email james.newland@parks.ca.gov.

SCOPING MEETING

State Parks will hold a **virtual** scoping meeting at **6:00 PM on Thursday, January 9, 2025**, to provide additional information about the ECRG General Plan Update and EIR process and give interested parties an opportunity to comment on the scope and potential environmental effects of the project to be analyzed in the EIR. The meeting can be attended remotely via the Zoom platform at the following link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89026698223?pwd=HrAlmywwMdlTxeqyRoOXRnbMVGRXVI.1>

Meeting ID: 890 2669 8223

Passcode: 571176

PROJECT LOCATION

The El Cápitan State Beach, Refugio State Beach, and Gaviota State Park (project site) are overseen by the Channel Coast District of State Parks. State Parks also manages an underwater park at Refugio State Beach through a lease from the State Lands Commission. The boundaries of the project site are shown on Figure 1, *El Cápitan State Beach, Refugio State Beach, and Gaviota State Park Boundaries*. The project site is in Santa Barbara County, within the Chumash Indians' homeland and the Cañada De Santa Anita, Cañada de la Gaviota, and Tajiguas Creek watersheds. The project site is located off U.S. Highway 101, approximately 5 to 20 miles west of the city of Goleta and 5 to 15 miles south of the cities of Solvang and Buellton. With approximately 14 miles of coastal access, developed day use, and overnight camping facilities, the El Cápitan State Beach, Refugio State Beach, and Gaviota State Park provide recreational access to this stretch of California coastline.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A General Plan is the primary management document for each park unit within the State Park System and establishes the park unit's primary purpose and management direction. El Cápitan State Beach, Refugio State Beach, and Gaviota State Park currently have three separate General Plans that were approved in 1979. These General Plans do not meet the current General



Plan requirements. Updating these General Plans has become a priority due to significant damage from recent severe winter storms, effects of sea-level-rise, long-standing infrastructure challenges, acquisition of new property at El Cápitan State Beach in 2002, high-recreation demand, and the need to protect natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

State Parks is preparing a consolidated General Plan for El Cápitan State Beach, Refugio State Beach, and Gaviota State Park to update the long-term management framework set in the 1979 General Plans and establish the foundation for future park improvements. The General Plan Update will be based on extensive resource and user information developed during the prior planning effort and through ongoing management and operations. The General Plan Update will document existing conditions and establish goals and guidelines that guide El Cápitan State Beach, Refugio State Beach, and Gaviota State Park management and provide long-term direction for the development of future facilities. Where appropriate, the location and extent of potential future facilities will be disclosed, and associated impacts analyzed in the EIR. If approved by the State Parks and Recreation Commission, the General Plan Update will supersede the 1979 General Plans and guide long-term and day-to-day management at El Cápitan State Beach, Refugio State Beach, and Gaviota State Park.

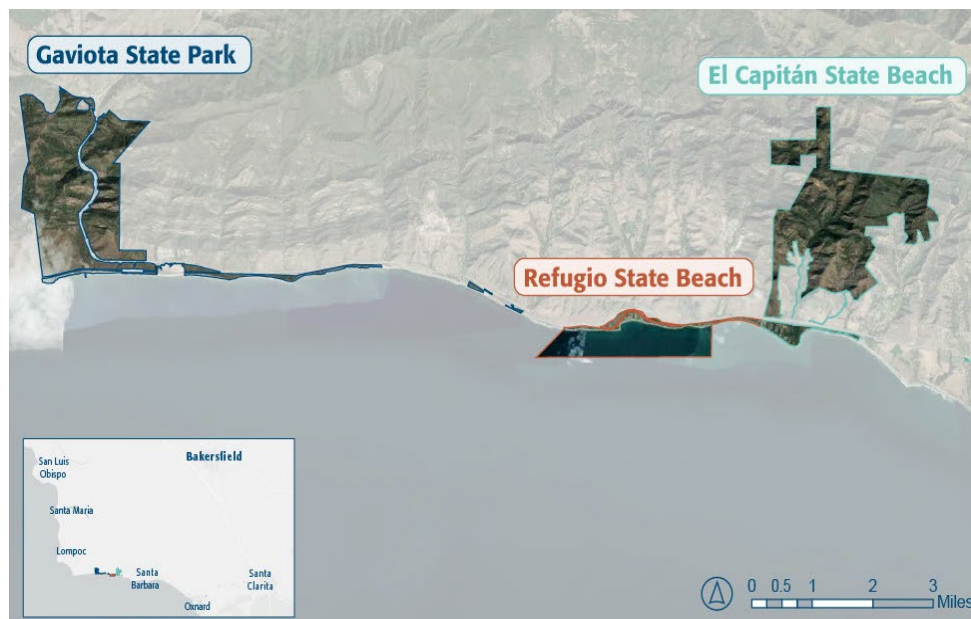
POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The EIR will determine whether implementation of the proposed project may result in environmental impacts that require mitigation measures to offset potential impacts. CEQA requires that an EIR evaluate alternatives to a project that could reasonably attain the project objectives while reducing any significant impact of the project, as well as considering the “No Project” Alternative (i.e., what could happen if the project were not approved). The potential environmental effects that will be addressed in the ECRG General Plan Update EIR include impacts on the following resource areas:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

Implementation of the proposed project is not expected to result in impacts on agriculture and forestry or mineral resources, population and housing, and public services (see Attachment: *Environmental Factors Not Affected*, for reasons for dismissal from detailed analysis).

FIGURE 1 EL CÁPITAN STATE BEACH, REFUGIO STATE BEACH, AND GAVIOTA STATE PARK BOUNDARIES



Attachment: *Environmental Factors Not Affected*

Attachment: Environmental Factors Not Affected

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15378(a), the California Department of Parks and Recreation’s (State Parks) El Capitan, Refugio, and Gaviota (ECRG) General Plan Update at El Capitan State Beach, Refugio State Beach, and Gaviota State Park (project site) is a “project” under CEQA. The implementation of the ECRG General Plan Update (proposed project) is “an action [undertaken by a public agency] which has the potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.” The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed project will determine whether the implementation of the ECRG General Plan Update may result in environmental impacts that require mitigation measures to offset potential impacts. As briefly described below, the proposed project would have no impact on the following criteria, listed by environmental topic area, pursuant to Appendix G of the 2024 CEQA Guidelines and these issues will not be addressed in the EIR.

I. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant	No Impact
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forestland (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The California Department of Conservation manages the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), which supports agriculture throughout California by developing maps and statistical data for analyzing land use impacts to farmland. The FMMP has designated the project site as grazing land, other land, or urban and built-up land and none of the lands in the park boundaries are under a Williamson Act Contract.^{1, 2} The Santa Barbara County General Plan and Zoning Map does not contain a land use designation or zoning district for forest land or timberland production. The Santa Barbara County land use and zoning maps designate the project site as Recreation and Open Space.³ While the project site shares a border with forested land, the project site does not include any State or

¹ California Department of Conservation, 2022, California Important Farmland Finer, <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/DLRP/CIFF/>, accessed April 29, 2024.

² Santa Barbara County, September 28, 2020, *Agricultural Preserve Advisory Committee Reports: 2020 Contract List*, <https://content.civicplus.com/api/assets/e9a81444-0317-4c1f-ad64-0a67692f2d03>, accessed April 29, 2024.

³ Santa Barbara County, modified February 26, 2024, Santa Barbara County Land Use and Zoning Map, <https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=fa3545a29dac49aeacc81669b956e3e5&extent=-120.9142,34.093,-118.9408,35.4355>, accessed April 29, 2024.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS NOT AFFECTED

national forest lands in its boundaries. Consequently, there would be *no impact* with regard to agriculture and forestry resources and this issue will not be discussed in the EIR.

II. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant	No Impact
a) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

There are no adopted Habitat Conservation Plans or Natural Community Conservation Plans applicable to the project site. Therefore, there would be *no impact* and this standard will not be addressed in the EIR.

III. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant	No Impact
a) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The nearest airports to the project site are the Santa Barbara Airport, located over eight miles to the east of the project site’s eastern border (El Capitan State Beach), and the Santa Ynez Airport/Kunkle Field, over nine miles to the north of the project site’s northern border at Gaviota State Park. The project site is not within the boundaries of the Airport Land Use Plan for the Santa Barbara Airport or the Santa Ynez Airport/Kunkle Field. Therefore, there would be *no impact* and this standard will not be addressed in the EIR.

IV. MINERAL RESOURCES

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant	No Impact
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be a value to the region and the residents of the state?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The California Department of Conservation, Geological Survey classifies lands into Aggregate and Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs) based on guidelines adopted by the California State Mining and Geology Board, as mandated by the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975.⁴ According to the California Department of Conservation, much of the project site is classified as MRZ-1, areas of no mineral resource significance, and MRZ-3, areas of undetermined

⁴ Public Resources Code, Division 2, *Geology, Mines and Mining*, Chapter 9, *Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975*, Article 4, *State Policy for the Reclamation of Mined Lands*, Section 2762(a)(1).

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS NOT AFFECTED

mineral resource significance.⁵ There are no known significant mineral resources at the project site; therefore, there would be *no impact* with regard to mineral resources and this topic will not be addressed in the EIR.

V. NOISE

Would the proposed project result in:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant	No Impact
a) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

As discussed in Section III, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, the project site is not within the boundaries of an Airport Land Use Plan. There are also no private airstrips within two miles of any of the units. Therefore, there would be *no impact* and this standard will not be addressed in the EIR.

VI. POPULATION AND HOUSING

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant	No Impact
a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

In general, a project would be considered growth inducing if its implementation would result in substantial population increases and/or new development that might not occur if the project were not implemented. The proposed ECRG General Plan Update is a high-level policy document that will replace the existing 1979 General Plans as the overarching policy document that defines a vision for future change and sets the land use and policy framework for the project site. The proposed project would not displace any existing housing and would not add permanent housing at the Gaviota State Park or Refugio State Beach units. While the proposed project considers adding and/or updating infrastructure, efficiencies, and units of departmental housing at El Capitan State Beach, the increase in population would be planned for as part of the proposed project. The proposed project also includes recommendations for future roadway and infrastructure extension, as required by State law. However, potential future roadway or infrastructure extensions under the proposed project would serve park visitors and would not introduce permanent population to the project site. Therefore, there would be *no impact* with regard to population and housing and this topic will not be addressed in the EIR.

⁵ California Geological Survey, 2011, *Update of Mineral Land Classification: Concrete Aggregate in the San Luis Obispo-Santa Barbara Production-Consumption Region, California*, <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/informationwarehouse/index.html?map=mlc>, accessed April 29, 2024.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS NOT AFFECTED

VII. PUBLIC SERVICES

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant	No Impact
a) Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services:			
i) Fire protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ii) Police protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iii) Schools?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iv) Libraries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The primary purpose of a public services impact analysis is to examine the impacts associated with physical improvements to public service facilities required to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives. Public service facilities may need improvements (i.e., construction, renovation, or expansion) as demand for services increase. Increased demand is typically driven by increases in population. The proposed project would have a significant environmental impact if it would exceed the ability of public service providers to adequately serve residents, thereby requiring construction of new facilities or modification of existing facilities. Fire protection services at the project site are provided by CAL FIRE and Santa Barbara County. State Parks provides primary police protection services and receives assistance from the California Highway Patrol and Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Department under concurrent jurisdiction. The nearest public schools and libraries include those in the cities of Goleta, Solvang, and Buellton. As discussed in Section VI, *Population and Housing*, the proposed project would not add permanent housing at the Gaviota State Park or Refugio State Beach units and the increase in population due to future additions or upgrades to units of departmental housing at El Capitan State Beach would not generate a substantial number of families with children such that a new school or library or physical improvements to a school or library would be warranted. As such, the proposed project would not require the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, including fire and police services, nor schools or libraries, in order for these agencies to maintain performance objectives. Therefore, there would be *no impact* with regard to public services and this topic will not be addressed in the EIR.