San Luis Obispo Coast District
750 Hearst Castle Road
San Simeon, California 93452
Dan.Falat@parks.ca.gov

May 30, 2025

Julie Vance
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Central Region
1234 East Shaw Avenue
Fresno, CA 93710

Subject: **Response to Comments on the Department of Parks and Recreation San Luis Obispo Coast District's Piedras Blancas California Coastal Trail Project Mitigated Negative Declaration, SCH# 2024090173**

Dear Ms. Vance,

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the potential environmental effects of the Department of Parks and Recreation's (DPR) proposed Piedras Blancas California Coastal Trail Project (Project) have been analyzed in an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND), dated July 2024.

Section 15704(b) of the CEQA Guidelines states that, prior to approving the project, the lead agency must consider the proposed IS/MND together with any comments received during the public review process. The lead agency must adopt the proposed IS/MND, only if it finds on the basis of the whole record that there is no substantial evidence that the project would have a significant effect on the environment and that the IS/MND reflects the lead agency's independent judgement and analysis. We received your letter, dated October 7, 2024, during the public comment review period. We have prepared responses to your comments and others received during the comment period. We are responding individually to each commenting agency as well as posting all responses to CEQAnet.

DPR received comment letters from four (4) agencies. The California Department of Wildlife's letter was assigned A-1 as shown in Table 1, which provides an index of those comment letters, the date they were received, and corresponding numbered responses. Comment letters are organized chronologically by the date they were received. Comment letters, bracketed by comment, are reproduced in their entirety and are followed by response to each comment. A copy of your comment letter with each comment bracketed and numbered is attached for your reference to the corresponding responses that follow. Changes to the IS/MND, where deemed appropriate, are summarized in the response and refer to the applicable section in the IS/MND. Text changes are incorporated via the Errata prepared for the Final MND.

Table 1: Comment Letter Designation by Agency, Date of Correspondence, and numbered responses

Document Letter Designation	Agency and Date of	Response Designations
A-1	California Department of Fish	A-1-1 to A-1-6
A-2	Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, October 25, 2024	A-2-1 to A-2-6

A-3	California Coastal Commission, October 28, 2024	A-3-1- to A-3-3
A-4	County of San Luis Obispo Planning and Building Department, November 5, 2024	A-4-1 to A-4-13

Response to Comments from California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Response to A-1-1, Burrowing Owls:

DPR will require a qualified biologist(s) to conduct surveys for burrowing owls in accordance with the referenced "Burrowing Owl Survey Protocol and Mitigation Guidelines," the survey season immediately prior to construction. DPR will incorporate avoidance and minimization measures if burrowing owls are found within the Project site during surveys. This requirement has been added to the IS/MND (SPR BIO-5 d).

Response to A-1-2, Editorial Comments and/or Suggestions:

Comment noted. It is DPR's standard operation and intent to continue to submit special-status species and natural communities detected during surveys to the CNDDB. It is routine practice for our Natural Resources Program to submit our data to the CNDDB for every new occurrence found in our District, and we submit data annually for each species we're permitted to monitor/survey for via a CDFW Scientific Collecting Permit #10633 and a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service 10a1A permit #TE-082237, verifying their continued presence and updating the record (e.g., western snowy plover, Morro shoulderband snail).

Response to A-1-3, Lake and Streambed Alteration:

Comment noted. As noted in the Biological Resources Section of the Initial Study, portions of the Project may be subject to CDFW's regulatory authority pursuant Fish and Game Code section 1600 et seq. It is DPR's intent to conduct technical studies, including wetland delineations to identify jurisdictional areas and impacts to those areas, once the Project has secured funding. At that point, DPR will pursue consultations with regulatory permitting agencies, including CDFW. DPR also understands CDFW's requirement to verify the analysis within the CEQA document prepared for the Project as a part of your LSAA permit process.

Response to A-1-4, Nesting Birds:

The IS/MND has been updated to include a condition requiring nesting bird surveys be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than 10 days prior to the start of ground or vegetation disturbance if work occurs during the nesting season, February 1 – September 15 (SPR BIO-5 e).

Response to A-1-5, Environmental Data:

It is DPR's standard operation procedures to submit special-status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the CNDDB.

Response to A-1-6, Filing Fees:

Comment noted.

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DPR appreciates your review of and comment on the MND to assist with the environmental review of the Project, and we look forward to continuing to coordinate with your agency on this and other projects.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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DAN FALAT

District Superintendent

Attachment: Original Comment Letter with Brackets

Cc: Katie Drexhage, Environmental Scientist
Doug Barker, Senior Park and Recreation Specialist
Northern Service Center

Ec: Evelyn.Barajas-Perez@wildlife.ca.gov