



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report

Date: October 17, 2022
To: State Clearinghouse, Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties
Subject: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report
for the Malibu Lower-Cost Accommodations Public Works Plan

This Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to notify agencies and interested parties that the Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority (MRCA), as the Lead Agency, is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the proposed Malibu Lower-Cost Accommodations Public Works Plan (proposed Project).

The MRCA is soliciting input from reviewing agencies and the public regarding the scope and content of the EIR. In accordance with CEQA, the MRCA requests that agencies review the description of the proposed Project provided in this NOP and provide comments on environmental issues related to the statutory responsibilities of the Lead Agency. The EIR will be used by the MRCA when considering approval of the proposed Project and by other Responsible and Trustee Agencies to support their discretionary actions related to the proposed Project, as applicable. MRCA is also seeking comments from residents, property owners, community groups, and other affected agencies regarding issues that should be addressed in the EIR.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are included in the attached materials.

The Scoping Meeting will be held virtually as follows for the convenience of property owners, residents, community groups, and affected agencies in the Project area:

■ **Thursday October 27, 2022 at 6 pm**, <https://tinyurl.com/MalibuPWP>

The Scoping Meeting discussion is limited to understanding the proposed Project and any associated environmental concerns by soliciting input on the scope and content of the EIR, including potential mitigation measures and possible alternatives to the proposed Project.

The 60-day public scoping period, triggered by the issuance of this NOP, begins on **October 17, 2022**, and ends on **December 16, 2022**. Written comments may be sent any time during the 60-day public scoping period. Please focus your comments on issues related to the scope and content of the environmental analysis that will be included in the EIR. All public and agency scoping comments must be received or postmarked by **December 16, 2022**. Please submit your response at the earliest possible date but no later than December 16, 2022. Please include the name of a contact person for your agency, if applicable. Please direct all comments to:

Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority
RE: Malibu Lower-Cost Accommodations Public Works Plan
Attn: Mario Sandoval, Project Manager
26800 Mulholland Highway
Calabasas, CA 91302

Comments may also be emailed to public.comments@mrca.ca.gov.

Malibu Lower-Cost Accommodations Public Works Plan Project Description

Project Location

The proposed Project includes two sites: Malibu Bluffs and Ramirez Canyon Park (see attached Project maps).

The Malibu Bluffs site is located adjacent to Malibu Bluffs Park at 24250 Pacific Coast Highway, Malibu, south of Highway 1 in the City of Malibu. Malibu Bluffs is an 84-acre property bounded by Pacific Coast Highway to the north, City of Malibu-owned 10-acre Malibu Bluffs Park to the east, private residences and the Pacific Ocean to the south, and private residences to the west. The Malibu Bluffs site is currently owned by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) and managed by the MRCA and is open to the public as parkland.

The Ramirez Canyon Park site is located at 5350 Kanan Dume Road on unincorporated land in the County of Los Angeles; with portions owned by MRCA and the SMMC and fully managed by the MRCA. The Park is a 45-acre property spanning areas in the City of Malibu and in unincorporated Los Angeles County bounded by undeveloped land owned and managed by the MRCA, SMMC, and National Park Service to the north, Escondido Canyon Park to the east, single family development to the south, and Kanan Dume Road to the west. The existing Ramirez Canyon Park campground, permitted by the California Coastal Commission, is included within the Public Works Plan for operation and management policies and provisions.

Project Overview

The Malibu Lower-Cost Accommodations Public Works Plan serves as the facilities plan for implementing, operating, and managing a variety of park facility improvement projects, public outreach programs and operation and management at the Malibu Bluffs Open Space (Malibu Bluffs) and for operation and management of the existing campground at Ramirez Canyon Park.

Malibu Bluffs. The Malibu Bluffs site has been considered for potential improvements for decades to enhance coastal overnight opportunities in the region. In 1975, the Malibu Bluffs site was designated in the California Coastal Plan for “general recreational use and development of beach support facilities including inexpensive overnight lodgings” (California Coastal Commission, 1975). In 1991, the Malibu Bluffs site was incorporated into the City of Malibu and designated in the City’s General Plan as Public Open Space and camping was a permissible use (City of Malibu, 1995). In 2001, the City of Malibu Local Coastal Program (LCP) designated the Malibu Bluffs site as Public Open Space (OS) zoning, and again camping is permissible in this zoning.

In 2017, the California State Legislature enacted Assembly Bill 250, which created the California State Coastal Conservancy’s Explore the Coast Overnight Program, calling for the preparation of a statewide Lower-Cost Coastal Accommodations Assessment. The Coastal Conservancy’s *Explore the Coast Overnight* assessment identified a high demand but little inventory for affordable overnight coastal accommodations. The proposed Project would enhance coastal overnight accommodations in Southern California through the development of a new public campground at the Malibu Bluffs site, designed in part for use by non-profit groups and government agencies that provide programs for underserved communities including foster youth.

- **Project Elements.** The majority of the Project improvements would be located within the northwestern portion of the site to avoid encroaching into Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA), culturally sensitive areas, and fuel modification zones (see attached Project maps). Project elements would include flame-less facilities (yurts, tent cabins, and tent pad

sites); day use facilities (parking, restrooms, landscaping, picnic areas, amphitheater, paths, management and interpretive signage, and coastal overlook areas); trail improvements and signage on Beach to Bluffs Trail; support facilities (ranger residence, medical building, office, and kitchen); fuel modification and vegetation management to reduce wildfire hazards; pedestrian and vehicle bridges to provide access over site drainage and streams; water storage tanks; and fire protection systems (fire hydrants and fire extinguishers). The Project would require utility trenching and grading to install utility lines and improve existing trails.

- **Site Layout and Alternatives.** The proposed Project site layout would include 8-12 yurts (10-12 people per yurt), 16-20 tent cabins (6-8 people per cabin), and 18-22 tent pad sites (6-8 people per site) with flame-less amenities. Parking areas with 30-40 spots would be provided. Additional site layout alternatives will be developed and analyzed in further detail in the EIR as a means of lessening or avoiding any potentially significant environmental impacts of the proposed Project.
- **Trail Improvements.** The Malibu Bluffs site includes an existing network of trails east of the proposed Project site. New trail improvements would be included as part of the proposed Project, with improvements to the existing trail alignments to the beach and Malibu Bluffs Park (Beach to Bluffs Trails).

Ramirez Canyon Park. The Ramirez Canyon Park has been considered for additional overnight and visitor-serving improvements as part of the proposed Project. As part of the Public Works Plan, the existing campground, permitted by the California Coastal Commission, is included for operation and management policies and provisions. A permit for future parking improvements at Ramirez Canyon Park is under review by the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Department. Public access to the existing campground is from the portion of the Park on Kanan Dume Road, approximately 0.5 miles from the existing campground; alternative access is over Ramirez Canyon Road, a private road that allows pedestrians, bicycles, or vehicles displaying a valid disabled placard to use the road to the Ramirez Canyon Park campground. Under the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Department permit (pending), the Kanan Dume Road portion of the Park is expected to soon be improved with curbside parking spaces on the existing paved road, picnic tables, and public informational signage to support the existing campground and day-use of the site as a coastal overlook. These interim improvements under review by the County are not part of this proposed Public Works Plan.

- **Project Elements.** Sensitive Environmental Resource Areas (SERA) and fuel modification zones were identified and considered in planning the improvements on the Ramirez Canyon Park site. All proposed Project improvements would be located on the previously disturbed and graded building pads within the western portion of the site to minimize impacts in these areas (see attached Project maps). Project elements include flame-less facilities (tent pad sites); day use facilities (parking, restrooms, landscaping, picnic areas, paths, management and interpretive signage); fuel modification and vegetation management to reduce wildfire hazards; and fire protection systems (fire hydrants and fire extinguishers). The Project would require utility trenching and grading to install utility lines and improve existing trails.
- **Site Layout and Alternatives.** The proposed Project site layout includes 7-10 tent pad sites (6-8 people per site) including at least 2 ADA accessible tent pad sites. Parking areas with 36-42 spots would be provided. Additional site layout alternatives will be developed and studied in further detail in the EIR as a means of lessening or avoiding any potentially significant environmental impacts of the proposed Project.

Management and Operation. The proposed Public Works Plan will detail MRCA's overall management plan for existing and proposed public coastal overnight accommodations. The plan includes policies and implementation measures for the operation and management and best practices of the existing campground facilities at Ramirez Canyon Park and proposed new facilities at both Malibu Bluffs and Ramirez Canyon Park. This plan will also provide managed public access through the MRCA online reservation system to enhance the public's ability to utilize the existing campground at Ramirez Canyon Park and the proposed campground at Malibu Bluffs. Additionally, this section of the Public Works Plan will include an Emergency Response and Evacuation Plan.

Potential Environmental Impacts

In accordance with 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15126 ("CEQA Guidelines"), the EIR will assess the physical changes to the environment that would likely result from construction and operation of the Malibu Lower-Cost Accommodations Public Works Plan, including direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts, as well as growth-inducing effects, if any.

The MRCA has determined that an EIR will be required to satisfy environmental review for the Malibu Lower-Cost Accommodations Public Works Plan. Therefore, as allowed under CEQA Guidelines Sections 15063(a), the MRCA has not prepared an Initial Study and will instead begin work directly on the EIR, as provided under CEQA Guidelines Section 15081. The EIR will focus on the potentially significant effects of the Project. In addition, the EIR will provide a discussion of any effects found not to be significant pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15128.

At this time, the MRCA anticipates the following environmental effects to be analyzed in detail within the EIR:

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| ■ Air Quality | ■ Public Services (emergency response) |
| ■ Biological Resources | ■ Recreation |
| ■ Cultural Resources | ■ Transportation and Traffic |
| ■ Geology, Soils, and Paleontological Resources | ■ Tribal Cultural Resources |
| ■ Hydrology and Water Quality | ■ Visual Resources |
| ■ Noise and Vibration | ■ Wildfire Hazards |

This list will be finalized at the end of the 60-day public scoping period for the EIR. Mitigation measures will be developed as necessary to avoid or reduce potential significant effects of the Project. The EIR will also discuss alternatives to the proposed Project, including a no project alternative (See CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 (e)). The alternatives discussion in the EIR will evaluate alternatives considered as a means for lessening or avoiding any potentially significant environmental impacts of the proposed Project.

