



**Albany Beach Restoration and Public Access Project at McLaughlin
Eastshore State Park – Phases 2 and 3**

BCDC Permit Number 2014.005.01

**BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD AND STAFF COMMENTS, APRIL 17, 2017**

The following summarizes comments by the Design Review Board at the April 17, 2017 review of the project and provides responses to each, identifying program or design changes that have been made where appropriate. The list of comments were provided by BCDC staff and include some additional staff questions. As directed by the Board, the District's design team did meet with the two members of the public who addressed the Board at the April meeting (Susan Moffat and Andrew Sullivan) as well as three other Albany residents that included a landscape architect, an environmental planner and Albany Planning Commissioner, and an environmental educator. A summary of that meeting is attached. In addition, the Eat Bay Regional Park District participated in a public information meeting with the City of Albany about the project on May 16.

Design Review Board

Comment: Create a sense of arrival at the northern end of the project site by clustering amenities and activities. (we recognize the limitations of the project scope).

Comment: The Board recommended that the applicants consider the sequence of the experience of the place – visitors enjoying the views from the Bay Trail or driving to the location to drop off watercraft.

Response:

These two comments are inter-related.

It is agreed that the entry point to McLaughlin Eastshore State Park at Albany Beach, indeed the entrance to the entire Albany Plateau, Neck and Bulb lacks a "sense of arrival and place and that these elements all come together at the existing Buchanan Street turnaround.

The existing entry experience of the State Park starts at the I-880 / Buchanan Street interchange and ends at a sub-standard vehicular turnaround. Approaching the turnaround, there are a total of 75 existing 2-hour parking spaces operated by the City of Albany (City) along the Buchanan Street corridor that are used for accessing the Albany Beach, Plateau, and Neck / Bulb combined. There are 32 parallel parking spaces along the north side of Buchanan Street. There are 43 perpendicular parking spaces located on the south side near the end of Buchanan Street. These 43 spaces are located on Golden Gate Fields (GGF) property and have been made available for public use by an informal agreement between GGF and the City. They are also sub-standard, as they are only 14 feet long, and are actually located on GGF property. Buchanan Street itself is 20 feet wide. The paved Bay Trail on the north side of Buchanan is only 8 feet wide, with no shoulder, and at the end of the street there is no well-marked compliant accessible pathway to get to the Beach from the parking area or Bay Trail. The existing vehicular turn around at the end of Buchanan Street has in its center a pedestrian scaled sculpture. A failing port-o-let at the west side of the turnaround visually competes with the sculpture upon arrival. There is no clearly visible Park entry sign or other landscape features that provide a visual clue announcing entry and arrival to the Park, and the current facility lacks adequate way-finding indicating direction to the area's differing geographic destination and use areas, such as the Bulb, Neck, Plateau trail, or the beach and dune areas. No temporary parking or drop-off is currently provided. The designate ADA parking spaces at the end of Buchanan Street are not compliant and force users into the street, without markings or curb ramps. Emergency vehicle access and turn around is also very difficult.

The existing sequence and experience of place for most visitors accessing the Beach involves navigating at times through a very congested area, with abundant conflicts between people unloading and loading and leashing/unleashing multiple dogs in the vehicular travel-way, or getting gear out of their cars to take to the Beach or Bulb. Parking is inadequate on most sunny warm weather days and the parking problem and user conflicts among arriving and departing vehicles, bicyclists, dog walkers, and trail and beach users appears to have been exacerbated as more people visit this area. Increased visitation is principally accounted for because of the City's removal of homeless encampments at the Bulb in 2015. Park visitor use may increase with construction of the East Bay Regional Park District's (District) programmed Phase 2 and 3 improvements. This includes more people arriving by automobiles with bicycles or water sports gear, as well as families who want to enjoy the improved facilities that are provided, including the new restroom and picnic areas.

Some of these existing features and limitations were acknowledged in the District's Albany Beach Restoration & Public Access Plan EIR (2012), and in the City's Albany Neck and Bulb Transition Study, accepted by the City Council in June 2016, and in the City General Plan. The District's Plan addresses some of the accessibility and parking issues (on District and State owned property), emergency vehicle access, and will also provide entry signage and way-finding signage within its operational boundary. Conflicts between visitors crossing the new segments of the Bay Trail from the parking area or at the north end of the Park are managed by controlling access, and by providing visual cues and guiding access to areas with direct access to the beach, at the north and south ends of the dune enhancement area.

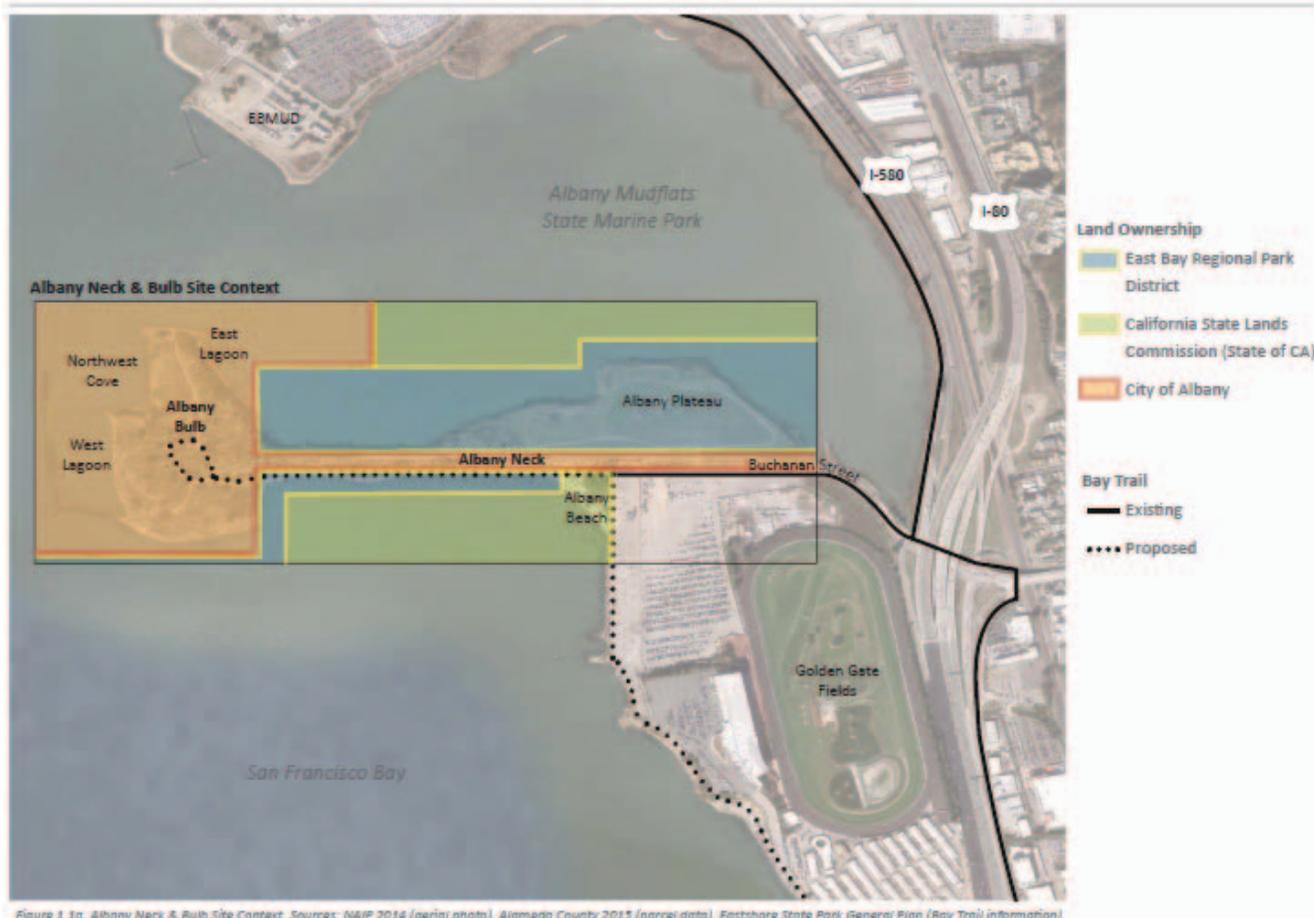
In order to adequately respond to the Design Review Board's broad goal of enhancing a sense of entry, additional improvements related to parking, entry signage, and user conflict reduction in the Buchanan Street corridor would need to be made. Such improvements would be on City of Albany / GGF property. They were not reviewed and evaluated in the Albany Beach Restoration & Public Access Plan EIR and therefore cannot be made at this time.

There are technical reasons why the parking lot and other amenities can not be clustered at the far northern end of the project site, including moving the Bay Trail to the east, as proposed in the alternative plan (by Dan Johnson) presented to the Board on April 17. These reasons have to do with existing topography and elevating the Bay Trail elevation at 12' to accommodate sea level rise. There is a constraint in that any construction must add to the existing topography and not cut into the landfill berm that exists both on District land and City of Albany (City) land to the north (as directed by the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The impact is that in order to have vehicular access to a parking lot and cross the Bay Trail, Buchanan Street at elevation 8.5' to 9' would have to be reconstructed to ramp up to the trail elevation. At a 4% grade such a ramp would start from the east and eliminate perpendicular parking spaces to the east that are on GGF property. All of this would occur on City property in the Buchanan Street corridor. In addition, BCDC policies and the Bay Trail guidelines are that the Bay Trail should be as close as feasible to the shoreline.

As designed, provision of an elevated Bay Trail and accessible parking will also increase visual access to the shoreline, which is a BCDC and Bay Trail goal.

These and other improvements to Buchanan Street, to GGF property, and to City lands adjoining the State Park on the north, such as portions of the Neck and Cove, will need to be made by the City through a separate planning, design, and environmental review program. These potential improvements could include additional parking, landscaping and signage, gateway features, and Buchanan Street / Bay Trail elevation adjustments for sea level rise resiliency.

The District was a partner with the City Phase 1 Neck Improvements, as well as the preparing the 2016 Neck and Bulb Transition Study and will also continue to work cooperatively with the City in developing and implementing these needed improvements, along with the recommendations included in for that area. The figure that follows is from the Neck and Bulb Transition Study and illustrates the ownership patterns of the area. A copy of that study has been provided to BCDC staff.



It should be noted that the District lacks land use jurisdiction over City and GGF property. The Albany Beach Restoration and Public Access Project is designed to be compatible with reasonably foreseeable proposed land uses on City property.

Comment: Reconsider the parking and circulation — consider shifting the vehicular access further north to allow for expansion of the Beach and open space to the south, thereby reducing the amount of new asphalt in the project area.

Response: The site plans (see revised Figure 5, 6, 7 and 11) have been modified to move the parking stalls and turnaround to the north as much as feasible while recognizing accessibility needs, direct access to the Beach, emergency access to the Beach and GGF, and grading and drainage requirements. In addition, the radius of the turnaround has been reduced and that the Bay Trail is shifted to the east below the turnaround. The resulting plan creates an expanded beach, and open use area at the southern end of the parcel. The location of emergency access bollards to the GGF north parking area requested by the City Fire Department has been altered to be directed to the east. To better illustrate the amount of asphalt that will be removed by the project, an additional figure has been added to illustrate the disposition of existing pavement (see Figure 17).

Comment: Modify the bicycle rack selection per public comments, including parking layout for oversize bicycles such as extra-cycles and bike trailers.

Response: Bicycle racks have been changed to use an inverted-U rack system (see revised Figures 6, 7, and 9). Fewer racks are proposed at the south side of the restroom area to accommodate tandem bicycles and bicycles with trailers. Additional bicycle parking is now provided at the overlook.

Comment: Modify the trail configuration at Buchanan to address the oversize bicycle turning radius issue mentioned in the public comment.

Response: The design has been revised (see revised Figure 5) to provide a 40-foot turning radius in each direction where the proposed Bay Trail connects with existing Bay Trail (to the east) and Bay Trail Extension (to the west).

Comment: Provide space for kitesurfers to continue to be able to launch their kites at this Beach to the extent possible — This would be useful to demonstrate this with a diagram.

Response: The design presented to the DRB was based on recommendations from a kitesurfer made during the EIR process and included an open use area suitable for layout and landing. At the DRB April meeting, Mr. Andrew Sullivan, who uses Albany Beach for a variety of recreation pursuits including kitesurfing, expressed a different perspective about spatial needs for launch and landing. At a subsequent meeting conducted by the design team with Albany residents that included Mr. Sullivan, and at a City-sponsored information session, it was expressed that the Albany Beach site is really suitable only for experienced kitesurfers, and kite surfing launching and landing (and transportation of the kite from vehicle to launch site and back) may be hazardous for other beach visitors. Also noted is that varying winds essentially require use of adjacent GGF property as a clear area.

The revised design (see Figure 5) expands open areas and removes fencing in the southern portion of the site versus the plan previously presented to the DRB. Due to the size of the site as well as wind direction challenges, it is not possible to create a single-purpose use area with adopted plans that support the Beach area for universal recreational use and inclusion of the Bay Trail. As currently envisioned, the District does not intend to prohibit kitesurfing from the Park. However, if kitesurfing activities demonstrate a clear hazard to other Park users, the District reserves the right to institute and enforce such prohibitions.

Comment: Preserve the trees at the vista points as much as possible.

Response: The trail alignment will not remove all the trees along the Fleming Point area. To the greatest extent practical existing trees near the alignment will be preserved.

Comment: Consider revising the plant palette per Mr. Leventhal's comments — see post script in the meeting notes.

Response: The plant palette (see revised Figures 10A and 10B), after having been reviewed by the District botanist and design team landscape architects and horticulturist, has been revised accordingly. It should be noted that the design intent of the dune enhancement is to provide a educational opportunity and demonstration of Bay dune habitat. Also, wetland container plantings have been identified. The plan has been changed (see figure 5) to show locations where access gates into the dune area will be provided for maintenance, outdoor education classes, and scientific research. Shrubby vegetation along the Bay Trail frontage was selected to provide a low-growing, structural barrier to trap sand not contained by the sand fence, and not for habitat enhancement.

Comment: Consider revising the sand fence and sand wall designs per Mr. Leventhal's comments — see post script in the meeting notes.

Response: The comments are noted. The ideal sand fence design would have 80% porosity. The proposed 2-inch chain link fence is well less than that, approximately 20% porosity, so blockage will be less. The concern is not blockage, but wind erosion of the dunes before they become stabilized with native vegetation. Through adaptive management, temporary wood slats may be added, perhaps at every other opening, to obtain the porosity desired. This would be during the first year, in addition to the proposed temporary snow/sand fencing that is interior of the chain link. Permanent slats may be provided in the chain link fence along the Bay Trail side of the dunes, as well as a shrub barrier. The sand fence along the beach was set back from the dune face to allow limited user access to dunes, as well screen the fence from the beach.

Comment: The Board recommended that the applicants analyze how the location will be used over time and throughout the year, and how the circulation and amenities will work during crowd-gathering events.

Response: The use of the area will be the same as it currently exists throughout the year with the exception that the implementation of the project will encourage additional use. No proposed restrictions on any particular recreation activity or general use are proposed. A temporary barricade could be used at the entrance drive to the beach parking so that the driveway, parking area, and turnaround may be closed to vehicular use and be utilized for crowd-gathering and staging during events. This would be a new management option that is not now easily available within the City of Albany Buchanan Street corridor.

BCDC STAFF COMMENTS / REQUESTS

Comment: Provide a figure and/or description that describes where and how the exiting asphalt will be modified on the site.

Response: Figure 17 has been added to the graphics package.

Comment: Consider providing an access point to the fishing peninsula from and across the trail.

Response: Fishing and other casual shoreline uses are types of dispersed recreation. The trail design near the peninsula has been modified (see revised Section 4), to provide a shallow slope along the western side of the trail that will not prevent recreationists from accessing the peninsula or other nearby shoreline areas.

Comment: If already existing, consider showing visualizations of trail on the site to explain how the grade modifications will impact the overall access to the waterfront edge.

Response: Overall access to the waterfront edge is not prohibited by the plans with the exception of trail sections ascending and descending over Fleming Point.

Comment: Reconsider limited-time parking as we believe this will be difficult to enforce at this site. Are there other design solutions such as a loading zone that would be more appropriate?

Response: In addition to the number of time-limited parking spaces in the lot the turnaround and fencing have been reconfigured to be used as a loading-unloading zone (see revised Figure 5). Access control railings have been removed from the plans along this portion of the site to allow direct access to the Beach. Park visitors who use the private Golden Gate Field parking will continue have open pedestrian access through existing bollards into the lower open recreation areas of the Beach.

Comment: Provide a figure that illustrates the effects of sea level rise on the design for the Albany Beach area.

Response: Figure 18 has been added to the graphics package.

Comment: Address sea level rise at the Beach area and how public access to the Beach will change with increased water elevations.

Response: By its very nature, sea level rise will increase high tides and reduce public access on the Beach over time. With or without the project, there will be times that the existing upper Beach areas below the dune system are not accessible to the general public during the high tide periods and major storm events.

The project (see figure 18) does include the Bay Trail set at an elevation of twelve feet (12') that provides a north-south access along the Beach and accommodates projected sea level rise conditions. This segment of the Bay Trail connects with the Phase 1 Bay Trail extension that was set to the same elevation. The District's project will expand the existing Beach and sand dune system to the east above the projected 2050 sea level rise elevation. The southern portion of the new Beach will continue to be available for access, even at high tides.

It is not feasible or practicable for the District to develop a project to sustain a beach at Albany under potential sea level rises of up to 66 inches by the year 2100. However, the width of the trail cross section through the Beach area will also accommodate adaptive management, such as topping, to raise the trail elevation if needed. Without design accommodations made to the Buchanan Street corridor and GGF properties, flooding related to sea level rise will occur to the east of the project area. Without such improvements the future Bay shoreline would likely inundate the entire race track parking lot and Buchanan Street, and would create islands out of the Albany Neck and Bulb and Fleming Point.



Albany Beach Restoration and Public Access Project – Phases 2 and 3

April 24, 2017

SUMMARY

Purpose: Discuss beach area design and public access features; comments by Susan Moffat, Dan Johnson, and Albany Strollers and Rollers

The meeting was arranged to review proposed plans with Susan Moffat and Andrew Sullivan both of whom spoke at the April 18 Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) Design Review Board (DRB) meeting. Three additional Albany residents were in attendance. A summary of the discussion follows.

Access and Circulation

Entry, Parking, and Trail: The design team reviewed the history of how the program for the beach was developed and the technical reasons why a parking lot could not be located at the north end of the property moving the Bay Trail to the east, as proposed in the alternative plan prepared by Dan Johnson. This principally has to do with existing topography and the need to keep the Bay Trail elevation at 12' to accommodate sea level rise. There is a constraint in that any construction must add to the existing topography, and that the Regional Water Quality Control Board directed that the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) not cut into the landfill berm. The impact is that in order to have vehicular access to a parking lot and cross the Bay Trail, Buchanan Street at elevation 8.5' to 9' would have to be reconstructed to ramp up to the trail elevation. At a 4% grade such a ramp would start from the east and eliminate perpendicular parking spaces to the east that are on Golden Gate Fields (GGF) property. All of this would occur on City of Albany (City) property. In addition, BCDC policies and the Bay Trail guidelines are that the Bay Trail should be as close as feasible to the shoreline.

The same constraints exist in addressing BCDC DRB recommendations to create a sense of arrival at the northern end of the project site.

The residents indicated that they had moved beyond the plan by Dan Johnson and understand the basis for the design of the proposed project. However, they also expressed a desire to remove the driveway and parking from the site plan and provide it on City land north of Buchanan to not just to provide additional parking but to retain more of the rectangular parcel for recreational use as a multi-purpose meadow rather than as a driveway, parking and turnaround.

Revised Parking, Emergency Turn-around, and Trail Alignment: The design team presented a first draft revised site plan prepared to respond to the DRB comments about reducing the amount of pavement, particularly at the southern end of the parcel. This design would create an open meadow that could also better accommodate windsurf launching. Emergency access requested by the City of Albany Fire Department would be to the east (rather than south) into the GGF north parking lot. It was questioned if the access control railing that still extended south was needed. The design team said they would reconsider that.

Kite Surfer Access / Use: Overall wind patterns and a needed minimum 100-foot radius arc to launch (and land) were explained. Also noted is that the Albany Beach site is really for experienced kite surfers, that kite

surfing launching and landing (and transportation of the kite from vehicle to launch site and back) is hazardous for other people, and given the way the Bay Trail subdivides the site, there's an increased likelihood of conflict. Ideally the meadow should include a gate or opening (to the east) to the GGF north parking area. The kitesurfer's preference is that the Albany Beach parking area and other concentrated staging uses be located to the far north. It was explained by the design team that a goal of the project is to provide for multiple uses on the beach and to provide direct access to the beach for other types of watercraft, hence the location of the overlook and the parking area. The goal of the project is to disperse use of the beach and not focus use in one area.

Bay Water Trail Amenities: Ben Botkin of the Bay Water Trail was contacted. The design team was informed that Albany Beach was intended to be a general use recreation area. Albany Beach is due to be formally "designated" as a water trail site in June without a specific designated water trail activity as it is too small for exclusive use areas. The overall plans and CEQA documentation in the current design related to the Bay Water Trail include increased parking and direct access to the beach, an expanded beach use area, restroom, and accessibility features. Amenities such as a shower are not included at this time as there is no water to the site. Changing rooms were not requested during the public meetings when the Albany Beach program was developed.

Additional Parking: The residents explained that there is a need for additional parking. All agreed this was the case.

Question: Could the project's proposed parking be eliminated if additional parking were developed on City land? Residents said they would like to remove the driveway, parking and turnaround in the site plan in order to retain that area as a multipurpose recreational space. They proposed this parking be replaced by parking north of Buchanan on City-owned land.

Answer: No, it's in the EIR and provides close, accessible spaces servicing the beach. The EIR contained a study on parking and the project will comply with the 20 spaces evaluated. One resident indicated he liked close parking.

The Albany Neck and Beach Transition Study stated that the City would get rid of the red zones on Buchanan to provide 28 additional parallel spots, which has been done. The Plan also stated that the City would negotiate with GGF if additional parking is needed. The design team noted that the Metropolitan Transportation Commission is considering an I-880 / Buchanan commuter parking facility under the interchange and adjacent to the Bay Trail. All agreed that overall beach/neck/bulb-related parking expansion would involve a redesign of the City-owned Buchanan corridor with potential expansion north into EBRPD / State Park property and that this was not part of this project.

Access / Use Under Eucalyptus: The plans do not include any access control fencing between the proposed pedestrian trail and the eucalyptus grove, so access for educational purposes is not precluded. There was a request to provide picnic tables under or near the eucalyptus and the shade they provide. That will be considered. If benches or picnic tables were put there, they would require an accessible route of travel.

Bay Trail Intersection: The need for expanded turning ability for tandem bikes or bikes with trailers was noted where the new and the existing Bay Trail would join at the north end of the trail. Though a 25-foot radius is currently shown, that will be reconsidered.

Bay Trail Extension Along Gilman: At the south end, the design team indicated that it is City of Berkeley's jurisdiction so that would be a future implementation project by that city.

East-West Access: Concern was expressed about the north-south circulation and how people would go east - west through the rain gardens, stating the design presents a chopped up space, since people need access to the

beach. Concern was also expressed about standing storm water and small children. This will be reviewed by the design team.

Emergency Access: There was discussion of the turn-around which was reviewed by City of Albany Fire Marshall to provide emergency access, since the end of Buchanan is substandard. The City also indicated support for the overlook that would provide direct access for light vehicles to the beach and possible boat access for emergencies.

Bicycle Circulation: There was some discussion of bicycle circulation and if people who now are using the parking lot could get to the trail, where they would cut through and how this would be used by commuters. It was explained that some cyclists would probably continue to use GGF lands if they want to avoid multiple users.

Overlook Use: The use of the 18'-wide route and ramp to access the beach by bikes might be a conflict. A gathering spot for teaching is needed, away from the main circulation pattern with the suggestion that the overlook circle be shifted north so one side would be bigger than the other to create space off the trail. The design team said that was a reasonable request and would work on that.

Access Control Fencing Around Dunes:

Question: Would fencing around the dunes have gates, to allow people access for environmental education and scientific research?

Answer: Yes for maintenance in three locations. These will be added to the site plan. Use for school groups or for scientific research would have to be coordinated with EBRPD.

Planned Amenities

Picnic Area: The plans do not clearly identify where and how the proposed Phase 1 picnic tables will be positioned. The City of Albany Cove Improvement Plan should be coordinated. The design team agreed to investigate and clearly identify a coordinated location for the picnic tables.

Vault Toilet:

Question: What is the size of the vault toilet?

Answer: One vault toilet with two stalls is proposed.

Trash Containers: The need for more trash cans was suggested. The pros and cons of trash cans were discussed noting that some agencies are moving toward a zero waste pack-in pack-out policy. However, EBRPD already does maintain trash cans in the Phase 1 area. The design team will consider adding trash cans, particularly at the restroom and overlook.

Dog Waste Dispensers: The usefulness of dispensers was expressed and design team agreed this needed to be added to the program. It was suggested that six dog waste receptacles were needed.

Signs:

Someone else said stewardship is important and they need beach signage.

Question: How is the entry sign going to be labeled?

Answer: McLaughlin Eastshore State Park.

Additional Seating Along Bay Trail:

Question: Is there an opportunity for additional seating or a seat wall along the slopes of the Bay Trail at the Fleming Point section?

Answer: Only at two spots where benches are proposed that overlook at Fleming Point and then south of the bridge near the Jockey Parking Lot; otherwise there are trail conflicts if you had seating all along that area.

Bike Racks: It was noted that the style of racks is being changed to an inverted-U rack system. The need for space to park tandem bikes and bicycles with trailers and the like, particularly at the restroom, was noted. The design team stated they can work within the basic footprint to accommodate that request.

Crosswalks: The crosswalks across the Bay Trail are intended to be clearly visible to bicyclists with a different pavement type or striping.

Sand Placement: There were questions about the sand placement, the sand dynamics, and the type of sand that were explained by the design team.

Beach Mats: Beach mats will be placed to provide an accessible route to the water in two locations.

Other

Maintenance:

Question: Who would provide long-term maintenance?

Answer: EBRPD.

Question: What about the creosote logs, will they be cleaned up?

Answer: The logs wash in with the tides and it is as ongoing maintenance program to remove them. The beach chair, if not containing creosote, would remain.

Related Plans: The use of lands west of the Tom Bates Sportfields at McLaughlin Eastshore State Park south of Gilman was brought up and whether those could be developed for recreational use and perhaps have more room? It was explained that was far beyond the scope of this project.

Next Steps

Additional Review: The BCDC permit is one of the last steps before construction. This design is implementing the program contained in the EIR which was extensively reviewed and part of previous master plans, including the City's Bulb Transition Plan. There is a time constraint based on grant deadlines for implementation and the window for construction is narrow.

Question: Could the residents at the meeting see the revised plans before the next BCDC meeting.

Answer: The time available time for review and comment does not make that possible. The revised plan will be modified based on the direction provided and submitted to BCDC Staff.

Question: Is EBRPD expecting a support letter from the group?.

Answer: It is the prerogative of the group or individual members to write the BCDC DRB about their opinions of the plan. Of course EBRPD is hopeful that this meeting has helped all in attendance better understand the thinking behind the design.

The residents indicated, for which there was general agreement, that EBRPD and the City of Albany should have better communications as this plan and other plans in the future move forward.