

**FOCUS PROGRAM: Priority Conservation Area Designation
Nomination Form**

PART 1: AREA INFORMATION

Area Name: Pedro Point Headlands
Area Location: Located between City of Pacifica and Devils Slide Coastal Trail
Total Acreage:

PART 2: NOMINEE CONTACT INFORMATION

Lead Nominating Agency/Organization: San Mateo County Parks Department
Contact Person: Sam Herzberg, Senior Planner
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Phone Number: 650/363-1823
Partnering Agencies/Organizations: City of Pacifica, CA Coastal Conservancy, and Pacifica Land Trust

Natural Landscapes—areas critical to the functioning of wildlife and plant habitats, aquatic ecosystems and the region’s water supply and quality.

Regional Recreation—existing and potential regional parks, trails, and other publicly accessible recreation facilities. Examples: regional trail networks, areas for potential regional park expansion.

Area Description

The Pedro Point Headlands is a large promontory located at the southern edge of the City of Pacifica, 15 miles south of San Francisco. While a small portion of Pedro Point is developed with houses, the Conservancy owns approximately 98 acres as permanently protected open space, and the City of Pacifica owns an adjacent 157 acres purchased with Conservancy funding. Protected public land extends directly to the south at Devil’s Slide County Park, which was opened to the public in 2014. The land rises almost vertically from the ocean to a height of 625 feet, where the bluff-tops provide a spectacular view of the coastline north to Point Reyes, south to Devil’s Slide, and east to Montara Mountain and the Santa Cruz Mountains. The only level land on the 255 acres owned by the Conservancy and the City is found at the top of the ridgelines and the floor of the main valley. Informal trails run along these level bluff-top areas and down through the valley, connecting to an informal six-foot-wide trail that runs parallel to Highway One.

The Coastal Trail alignment will utilize this existing informal trail once access rights are acquired from the one private property owner that separates the Headlands from the City of Pacifica to the north. To the south, the trail alignment connects to the 1.2 miles of paved Coastal Trail at Devil’s Slide County Park. When the Coastal Trail is completed through the remaining private property, it will connect seven

miles of existing Coastal Trail segments in Pacifica to 1.2 miles of Coastal Trail at Devil's Slide.

The Pedro Point residential neighborhood climbs the slopes of San Pedro Mountain on the west side of Highway 1. One-of-a-kind homes have been built there on impossibly narrow and steep streets. Twisted cypress and Monterey pine cling to the hillsides. At the foot of the coastal side of the mountain, hidden from view to all but walkers, is a tiny village called Shelter Cove. North of the Headlands, San Pedro Terrace Road supports mixed commercial uses, and the Linda Mar Boulevard shopping mall is just a half mile to the north, across Highway One.

Aside from its recreational value, the Headlands provide habitat that supports the health of local coastal plant and animal species. Its usefulness as wildlife habitat is enhanced by its proximity to other open spaces and protected lands. The Bay Area Upland Habitat Goals Project rates the Pedro Point Headlands as an "area essential to the Conservation Goals" of the Santa Cruz Mountains North landscape unit. The lands owned by the Conservancy and the City host healthy communities of native vegetation, including areas of reed-grass prairie, which has been identified by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife as a rare plant community type. The proposed Coastal Trail segment will not be near this plant community.

PART 3: AREA CRITERIA

A. Level of Consensus

The effort began in 1989, when the Conservancy and regional land trusts helped Pacifica residents form a local land conservation organization, the Pacifica Land Trust. The Land Trust immediately turned its attention to the 246-acre Pedro Point Headlands property, which was threatened at the time with a subdivision plan for 217 units. The Conservancy joined other agencies in granting acquisition funds in the early 1990s, resulting in the permanent protection of much of the Headlands. Public enjoyment of this protected land was limited, however, by the fact that there was no safe way for the public to get there.

When Devil's Slide County Park was created in 2014, the public could finally access the adjacent Pedro Point Headlands properties from the County's safe parking lot. With this successful project completed, the County expressed interest in expanding its park by accepting the Pedro Point Headlands properties. The transfer is expected to be completed by the end of 2015. Following the transfer, the network of private organizations and public agencies that work in the area will pursue funding for the construction of the Coastal Trail through the Headlands into the City of Pacifica.

On March 26, 2015, the Coastal Conservancy will consider authorizing the transfer of its 98-acre Pedro Point Headlands open space property in Pacifica to San Mateo County as an addition to its spectacular, cliff-hugging Devil's Slide County Park. At the same time, the County is working to accept the adjacent 157 acres of Pedro Point open space from the City of Pacifica. The completed transfers will fulfill decades of

effort on the part of the local community, regional land trusts, and many public agencies to preserve the Pedro Point Headlands and make the lands accessible to the public.

A Resolution in support of designating the Pedro Point Headlands as a Priority Conservation Area has been approved by the Pacifica City Council and we have received a letter of support from the Pacifica Land Trust.

B. Regional Significance

While there is almost universal consensus that the property is of great significance for its great beauty, resource and open space value and location near a major metropolitan area, it has been difficult in a period of economic stagnation and government revenue decline to secure a government entity that is willing and able to accept new management responsibilities.

When Devil's Slide County Park was opened, however, the public could finally access the adjacent Headlands properties from the County's safe parking lot. The time is right to transfer the Headlands properties to a park agency that is willing and able to accept new management responsibilities. The County Park Department had won five national and regional awards for the design, construction and management of the Devils Slide Coastal Trail. The County's Board of Supervisors are excited to accept the Pedro Point Headlands properties from the Coastal Conservancy and City of Pacifica.

C. Urgency

Transfer of the property to the County will allow for the development of safe trails, including the Coastal Trail, where scenic views will be protected, and bluff top erosion will be decreased, the public will have access to the shoreline for recreation, and existing park properties will be linked.