



**CEQA and COASTAL DETERMINATIONS
and
NOTICE OF APPROVAL**

Project: Habitat Friendly Shoreline Structures at Harbor Island
Location(s): Southwest Shoreline of Harbor Island
Parcel No.(s): 005-013 and 005-018
Project No.: 2023-160
Applicant: Timothy Barrett, Environmental Programs Manager, Sustainability and Innovation Branch, Port of San Diego, 3165 Pacific Hwy, San Diego, CA 92101
Date Approved: March 10, 2026

Project Description

The proposed project would involve the replacement of portions of an existing riprap shoreline revetment along Harbor Island with habitat-friendly shoreline structures that create ecological value and resiliency while maintaining the necessary structural protection currently in place. The District received funding for the proposed project through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Community-based Restoration Program, and anticipates that installation would commence in spring or summer 2026.

In March 2021, the District successfully completed a nature-based pilot project along the existing armored shoreline of Harbor Island using EConcrete COASTALOCK interlocking tide pool units. Through material composition and design elements, the units provide an alternative solution to traditional armored shorelines that incorporates nature-based strategies into an urban context. The pilot project included the removal of approximately 160 linear feet of existing traditional riprap rock revetment and, in its place, the installation of a hybrid solution that increased local biodiversity, productivity, and ecosystem services while continuing to provide the equivalent shoreline stabilization required for the area. Since installation, semi-annual monitoring efforts have indicated the pilot project is exceeding performance expectations biologically and structurally. The units are creating a richer, diverse, and natural community with a lower ratio of invasive to native species compared to traditional rock revetment. The shoreline is expected to be more structurally sound in the long term than traditional riprap as biological growth over time further protects the units.

Informed by the success of the COASTALOCK pilot project, the District is now pursuing additional habitat-friendly structural shoreline alternatives. The proposed project site is located along the existing armored shoreline of Harbor Island in San Diego Bay in proximity to the existing COASTALOCK units installed in March 2021. The project scope consists of the removal of up to 450 linear feet of existing riprap rock revetment at two locations along Harbor Island, to be replaced with habitat-friendly structural shoreline units such as COASTALOCK or equivalent. The proposed habitat-friendly shoreline structures would be designed to incorporate water retaining elements which are absent in most urban waterfronts. The units will be placed between Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW) and Mean Higher High Water (MHHW) elevations within the footprint of the removed rock, as indicated in the attached construction plans. The expected area of impact is approximately 12 feet wide by 450 linear feet long, resulting in a total project area footprint of approximately 5,400 square feet distributed over the two locations. The proposed project would provide shoreline stabilization while simultaneously creating a well-defined local ecosystem that mimics natural rocky intertidal habitat, increasing local biodiversity and biological productivity. A five-foot buffer would be provided in each direction of the project site during installation. Since the project site would be intermittently submerged by the tide, it would not encroach into public park space.

The production of the habitat-friendly structural units would be completed off-site. The removal of the existing riprap stones and the installation of the habitat-friendly shoreline structure units could be



completed either waterside or landside. Installation of the units would occur over several weeks within acceptable low tide windows. Work would occur five days per week and would require approximately seven (7) construction workers. A temporary construction staging and laydown area for the proposed project would be located at Spanish Landing Park West, adjacent to Nimitz Bridge. This would involve the temporary use of the west parking lot, which is a paid lot and comprises 43 total spaces. Up to 28 spaces on the western end of this parking lot would be occupied by the staging and laydown area for a period not to exceed 180 days. The eastern end of this parking lot would continue to provide access to 15 parking spaces. The adjacent east parking lot would remain fully open, offering 56 spaces with 3 ADA-compliant spots.

If installed waterside, construction would likely involve a crane operated from a barge off the shoreline. The barge would avoid existing eelgrass and would be secured in place to avoid disturbance to the channel and not impede upon navigational rights. If installed landside, construction would likely involve a crane operated from the top of the existing shoreline slope with appropriate project limits demarcated with fencing. This may involve temporarily diverting public access during the installation period. Some temporary sidewalk detours may be provided to maintain public access during the installation period.

The existing riprap stones within the footprint of the installation site would be removed likely by crane from either waterside or landside, with the exception of leaving a few stones in place to lock in and support the foundation of the newly-placed sustainable shoreline units. The crane would likely remove the riprap using a clam bucket or grapple, as determined by the contractor.

All removed riprap stones would be removed from the project area and transported off-site to an upland location. Upon removal of the existing riprap stones, the new sustainable shoreline structures would be placed within the shoreline footprint likely with the use of a lifting crane. Ecological and structural monitoring would take place every six months post-deployment for two years to evaluate the performance of the habitat friendly shoreline structures as an ecological armoring alternative to traditional riprap stones.

The project requires a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) pre-certified Nationwide Permit #13 Bank Stabilization, and a Regional Water Quality Control Board Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification, as part of the entitlement process. Additionally, the Applicant would be responsible for complying with all applicable federal, state, and local laws regulating construction and demolition debris, noise, and stormwater. Although present in the nearshore adjacent to the project area, no eelgrass resources are known to occur within the project footprint. If construction occurs waterside, all operations will require avoidance of eelgrass habitat. A pre-construction eelgrass survey would be completed prior to commencement of construction activities to identify potential eelgrass and unvegetated areas present in the nearshore adjacent to the shoreline, consistent with the ACOE Nationwide Permit requirements. This survey and on-site observations would be used to inform construction method and operations in order to avoid impacts to existing eelgrass that may be present in the nearshore outside the perimeter of the project area.

The following categorical determinations are based on the project submittal and all project information known to the District as of the date of this determination.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)

CATEGORICAL DETERMINATION

Categorical Exemptions: SG §15301, Class 1/Section 3.a: Existing Facilities; SG §15302, Class 2/Section 3.b: Replacement or Reconstruction; SG §15304, Class 4/Section 3.d: Minor Alterations to Land and SG §15306, Class 6/Section 3.f: Information Collection

3.a. Existing Facilities (SG § 15301) (Class 1): Includes operation, repair, maintenance, or minor



alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that previously existing

AND/OR:

3.b Replacement or Reconstruction (SG § 15302) (Class 2): Includes replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure being replaced.

AND/OR:

3.d Minor Alterations to Land (SG § 15304) (Class 4): Includes minor alterations in the condition of land, water and/or vegetation not involving removal of mature, scenic trees

AND/OR:

3.f. Information Collection (SG § 15306) (Class 6): Includes basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to environmental resources. These may be for information gathering purposes, or as part of a study leading to an action which has not yet been approved, adopted or funded.

The proposed project is determined to be Categorical Exempt pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines and the Sections of the District's *Guidelines for Compliance with CEQA* as identified above. These are appropriate for the proposed project because it involves temporary use of a portion of paid parking lot for construction staging, as well as removal of existing rip rap or revetment stones to be replaced with the installation of habitat-friendly structure units that would involve negligible or no expansion of use beyond that previously existing, would have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure being replaced, does not involve removal of mature or scenic trees, and does not result in a serious or major disturbance to environmental resources. The project would not result in any significant cumulative impacts due to the minor impacts of the installation and monitoring, as well as the small number of employees. Further, there would no dredging or fill impacts and the project would not cause any disturbance to sensitive species or habitat. The District has determined none of the six exceptions to the use of a categorical exemption apply to this project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2).

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15062, a 35-day statute of limitations for this CEQA exemption shall apply from the date a Notice of Exemption is posted with the San Diego County Clerk, or a 180-day statute of limitations for this CEQA exemption shall apply if no Notice of Exemption is filed.

CALIFORNIA COASTAL ACT

PORT MASTER PLAN CONSISTENCY

Planning Districts: 2 - Harbor Island/Lindbergh Field (Precise Plan Figure 9)

Land and Water Use Designations: Open Bay/Water and Park/Plaza

The proposed project conforms to the certified Port Master Plan because it would involve the temporary use of a portion of paid parking lot for construction staging, as well as replacement of existing rip rap or revetment stones with habitat-friendly structure units consistent with the existing certified Land and Water use designations. The proposed project would not change the use of the site nor would it interrupt or expand the existing conforming uses of the site. In addition, the proposed project is consistent with Section II Planning Goals in the certified Port Master Plan, including Goal VIII "The Port District will enhance and maintain the Bay and Tidelands as an attractive physical and biological entity" and Goal XI "The Port District will protect, preserve, and enhance natural resources, including natural plant and animal life in the Bay as a desirable amenity, an ecological necessity, and a valuable and usable resource."



CATEGORICAL DETERMINATION

Categorical Exclusions: Section 8.a: Existing Facilities; Section 8.b: Replacement or Reconstruction; Section 8.d: Minor Alterations to Land; and Section 8.e: Information Collection

8.a. Existing Facilities: The operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographic features, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that previously existing

AND/OR

8.b. Replacement or Reconstruction: Replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located essentially on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced

AND/OR

8.d. Minor Alterations to Land: Minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve the removal of mature, scenic trees

AND/OR

8.e. Information Collection: Basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major significant disturbance to an environmental resource.

The proposed project is determined to be Categorically Excluded pursuant to the Sections of the District's *Coastal Development Permit Regulations* as identified above. These are appropriate for the proposed project because it would involve negligible expansion of use beyond the existing uses, have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced, would not involve the removal of mature, scenic trees, and would not result in a serious or major significant disturbance to an environmental resource.

Pursuant to California Coastal Act Section 30717, there is a 10-working-day period to appeal this "Coastal Act Categorical Determination of Exclusion" to the California Coastal Commission.

If there are portions of the proposed project that are located outside of the District's Coastal Act approval authority, additional approvals may be required from other agencies.

CALIFORNIA PUBLIC TRUST DOCTRINE

The proposed project complies with Section 87.(a)(1) of the Port Act, which allows for the establishment, improvement, and conduct of a harbor, and for the construction, reconstruction, repair, maintenance, and operations of wharves, docks, piers, slips, quays, and all other works, buildings, facilities, utilities, structures, and appliances incidental, necessary, or convenient, for the promotion and accommodation of commerce and navigation. The Port Act was enacted by the California Legislature and is consistent with the Public Trust Doctrine. Consequently, the proposed project is consistent with the Public Trust Doctrine.

SCOTT CHADWICK
President/CEO

Determination by:
Lily Tsukayama
Principal Planner
Planning Department

Signature: Lily Tsukayama
Date: 3/11/2026

Assistant/Deputy General Counsel

Signature: Shiraz Tangri
Date: 3/11/2026