

Meeting Date: 08/21/25
Lease Number: 5161
Staff: D. Romero

Staff Report 35

APPLICANT:

Regents of the University of California, Santa Cruz

PROPOSED ACTION:

General Lease – Public Agency Use.

AREA, LAND TYPE, AND LOCATION:

Sovereign Land in the Pacific Ocean, adjacent to 115 McAllister Way, Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz County (as shown in Figure 1).

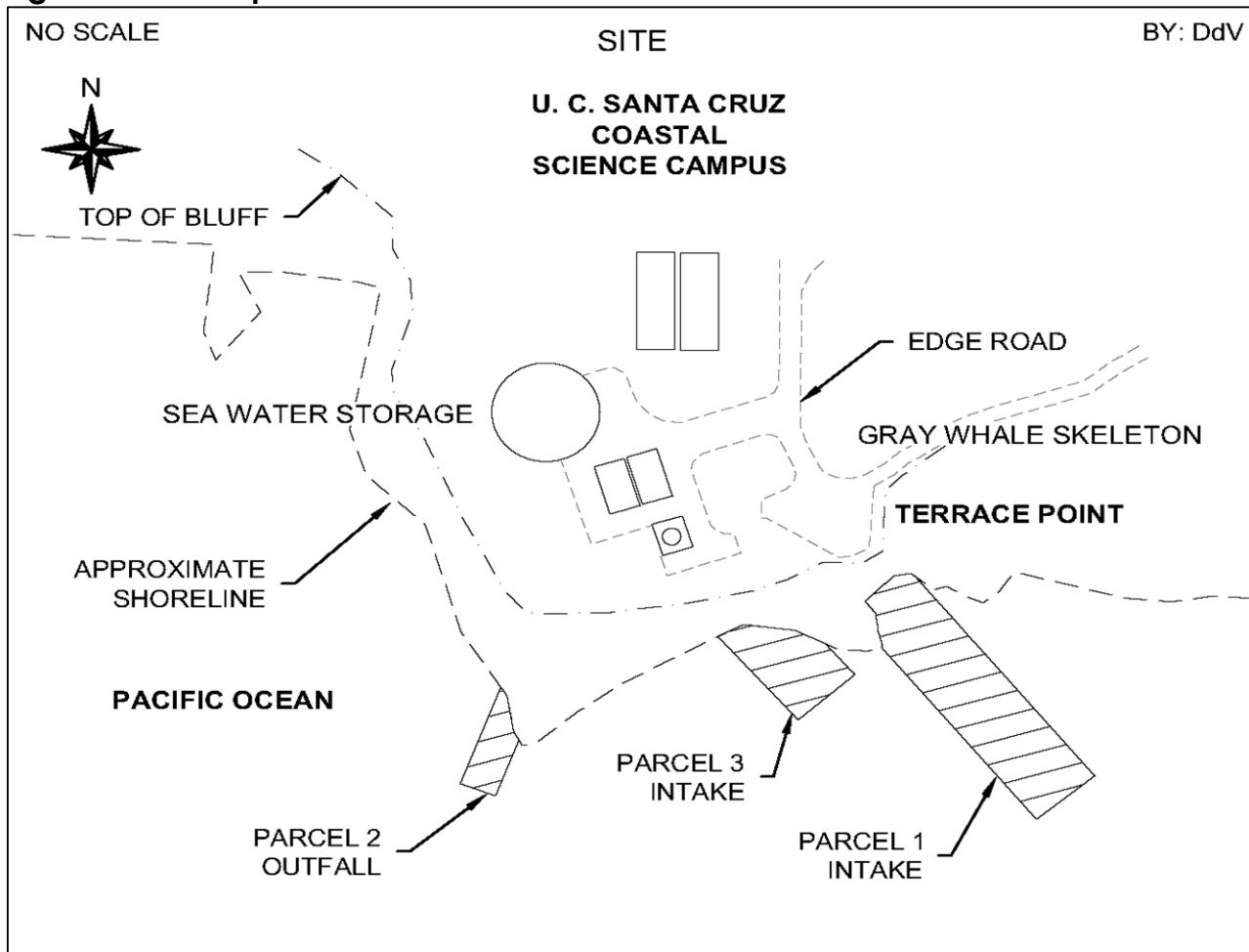
Figure 1. Location



AUTHORIZED USE:

Use of one existing 8-inch-diameter saltwater discharge pipeline, one existing 24-inch-diameter saltwater discharge pipeline, two existing 10-inch-diameter saltwater intake pipelines, and two existing 16-inch-diameter saltwater intake pipelines (as shown in Figure 2).

Figure 2. Site Map



NOTE: This depiction of the lease premises is based on unverified information provided by the Applicant or other parties and is not a waiver or limitation of any State interest in the subject or any other property.

TERM:

10 years, beginning August 1, 2025.

CONSIDERATION:

Public use and benefit; with the State reserving the right at any time to set a monetary rent if the Commission finds such action to be in the State's best interests.

SPECIFIC LEASE PROVISIONS:

- Lessee shall not add, or allow the placement by any other party, any improvements on the Lease Premises without the prior express written consent of Lessor.
- No refueling or maintenance of vehicles, equipment, or watercraft shall take place within the Lease Premises.
- Lessee shall conduct an external inspection of the seawater pipelines at least once every five years.
- Lessee shall conduct a visual inspection of the housings appurtenant to the seawater pipelines at least once annually.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:

AUTHORITY:

Public Resources Code sections 6005, 6216, 6301, 6321, 6501.1, and 6503; California Code of regulations, title 2, sections 2000 and 2003.

PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:

On July 22, 1976, the Commission authorized issuance of a General Lease – Public Agency Use to the Regents of the University of California, Santa Cruz for the construction and maintenance of one 12-inch saltwater intake line and one 24-inch discharge line ([Item 24, July 22, 1976](#)). On October 1, 2002, the Commission authorized an amendment of lease to allow for the construction of an 8-inch diameter saltwater discharge pipeline and two 16-inch diameter saltwater intake pipelines ([Item 44, October 1, 2002](#)). This lease expired on July 31, 2025.

Now, the Applicant is applying for a General Lease – Public Agency Use for the use of one existing 8-inch diameter saltwater discharge pipeline, one existing 24-inch diameter saltwater discharge pipeline, and two existing 16-inch diameter saltwater intake pipelines previously authorized by the Commission and two existing 10-inch diameter saltwater intake pipelines, not previously authorized by the Commission.

Staff recommends issuance of a General Lease – Public Agency Use to the Applicant, effective August 1, 2025.

The seawater intake and discharge pipelines on the lease premises serve to provide a continuous source of seawater to the University of California, Santa Cruz's Coastal Science Campus, to support the educational and research interests of the Applicant. The Coastal Science Campus strengthens research collaborations and student opportunities with government agencies and conservation organizations. Therefore, the seawater intake and discharge pipelines provide a regional public benefit by supporting the academic enrichment of Northern California communities.

The proposed Lease does not alienate the State's fee simple interest or permanently impair public rights. The lease is limited to a 10-year term, does not grant the lessee exclusive rights to the lease premises, and will have no significant impact on Public Trust-consistent uses or resources in the area. Upon termination of the lease, the lessee may be required to remove any improvements from State land and restore the lease premises to their original condition. The proposed lease requires the lessee to indemnify the State for any liability incurred as a result of the lessee's activities thereon.

CLIMATE CHANGE:

INTRODUCTION:

The climate crisis and rising sea levels are impacting coastal California now. As underscored in the [State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance](#) (Ocean Protection Council, 2024), the combination of extreme weather events and the persistent and accelerating rise in sea levels will lead to increased coastal hazards, such as wave runup, storm surges, flooding, and erosion. Shorelines will move inland due to rising seas, exposing more of the natural and human-built environment to coastal hazards. The resulting damage will occur repeatedly and incrementally over years and, in extreme cases, over the span of a few large winter storms. These impacts may affect existing saltwater intake and discharge lines, subject to the proposed lease, located in the Pacific Ocean, near Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz County.

DATA & PROJECTIONS:

Sea levels along most of the California coast rose four to eight inches during the 20th century, and this trend will accelerate throughout the 21st century. The current

rate of sea level rise is triple the 20th century rate. There is growing confidence that by 2050 sea levels will be approximately ten inches higher than they were in 2000. The severity of sea level rise beyond 2050 is contingent on future levels of greenhouse gas emissions. The California Ocean Protection Council updated the State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance in 2024 to provide a synthesis of the best available science on sea level rise projections and rates for multiple emissions scenarios. To apply a precautionary approach, Commission staff evaluated the "intermediate-high" and "high" scenarios due to the vulnerability and exposure of the lease location and the continued global reliance on fossil fuels. The lease location is exposed to the large winter swells coming from the northwest direction, and the concrete support structure has been damaged in the past, demonstrating its vulnerability. The Monterey tide gauge was used for the projected sea level rise scenario for the lease area, as listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Projected Sea Level Rise for Monterey

| Year | Intermediate-High (feet) | High (feet) |
|------|--------------------------|-------------|
| 2040 | 0.6 | 0.7 |
| 2060 | 1.4 | 1.9 |
| 2080 | 2.9 | 3.9 |
| 2100 | 4.6 | 6.4 |

Source: Table 8, [State of California Sea-Level Rise Guidance: 2024 Update](#)

Note: Projections are with respect to a 2000 baseline.

ANALYSIS:

Commission staff used the online sea level rise mapping tool, [Our Coast Our Future](#), to evaluate risks to the lease premises and structures from sea level rise. At present sea levels, the lease premises is already regularly flooded and subjected to strong and frequent wave impacts and erosion, potentially damaging any structures or improvements on the lease premises. Episodic or short-term events, such as extreme storms, very high or King tides, and El Niño events, alone or in combination, can increase the vulnerability of the lease premises and expose it to higher water levels and stronger wave impacts and erosion.

As a result, the seawater intakes and support structures may sustain substantial damage and degradation over the lease term, requiring more frequent repairs and maintenance to retain their function. Stronger coastal erosion can wash away the soil and sediment supporting the structures, causing structural instabilities. The increased saltwater exposure from higher sea levels can accelerate the corrosion of metal components and the deterioration of concrete foundations. Additionally,

the seawater intakes and support structures may experience increased damage from waves breaking increasingly closer and stronger to shore.

RECOMMENDATION:

Regular maintenance, as referenced in the terms of the lease, may reduce the likelihood of severe structural degradation or dislodgement. Pursuant to the proposed lease, the lessee acknowledges that the lease premises and adjacent upland (not within the lease area) are located in an area that may be subject to the effects of climate change, including sea level rise and rising groundwater levels.

CONCLUSION:

For all the reasons above, staff believe approval of this lease will not substantially interfere with Public Trust needs at this location, at this time, and for the term of the lease; and is in the best interests of the State.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

1. Approval or denial of the application is a discretionary action by the Commission. Each time the Commission approves or rejects a use of sovereign land, it exercises legislatively delegated authority and responsibility as trustee of the State's Public Trust lands as authorized by law. If the Commission denies the application, the Applicant must remove the improvements and restore the property to its original condition. The lessee has no right to a new lease or to renewal of any previous lease.
2. This action is consistent with the "Leading Climate Activism" and "Meeting Evolving Public Trust Needs" Strategic Focus Areas of the Commission's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.
3. Staff recommends that the Commission find that this activity is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as a categorically exempt project. The project is exempt under Class 1, Existing Facilities; California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905, subdivision (a)(2).

Authority: Public Resources Code section 21084 and California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061 and California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

It is recommended that the Commission:

CEQA FINDING:

Find that the activity is exempt from the requirements of CEQA pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061 as a categorically exempt project, Class 1, Existing Facilities; California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905, subdivision (a)(2).

PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:

Find that the proposed lease will not substantially interfere with Public Trust needs and values at this location, at this time, and for the term of the lease; and is in the best interests of the State.

AUTHORIZATION:

Authorize issuance of a General Lease – Public Agency Use to the Applicant beginning August 1, 2025, for a term of 10 years, for the use of an 8-inch diameter saltwater discharge pipeline, 24-inch diameter saltwater discharge pipeline, two 10-inch diameter saltwater intake pipelines, and two 16-inch diameter intake pipelines; consideration being the public use and benefit, with the State reserving the right to set a monetary rent if the Commission finds such an action to be in the State's best interest.