

Meeting Date: 12/16/25

Permit Number: 8873

Staff: D. Romero

Staff Report 97

APPLICANT:

SoCal Holding, LLC

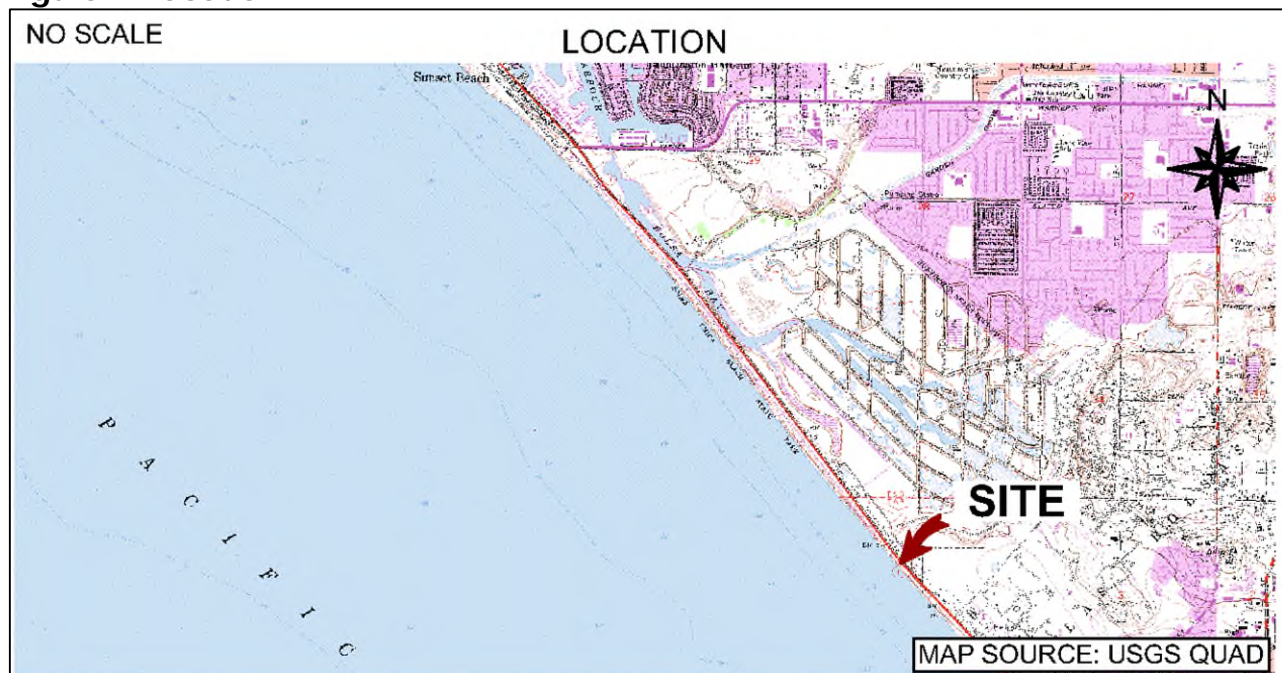
PROPOSED ACTION:

Issuance of a General Permit – Sand Removal.

AREA, LAND TYPE, AND LOCATION:

Sovereign land in the Bolsa Chica tidal inlet, near the intersection of Pacific Coast Highway and Seapoint Avenue, Orange County (as shown in Figure 1).

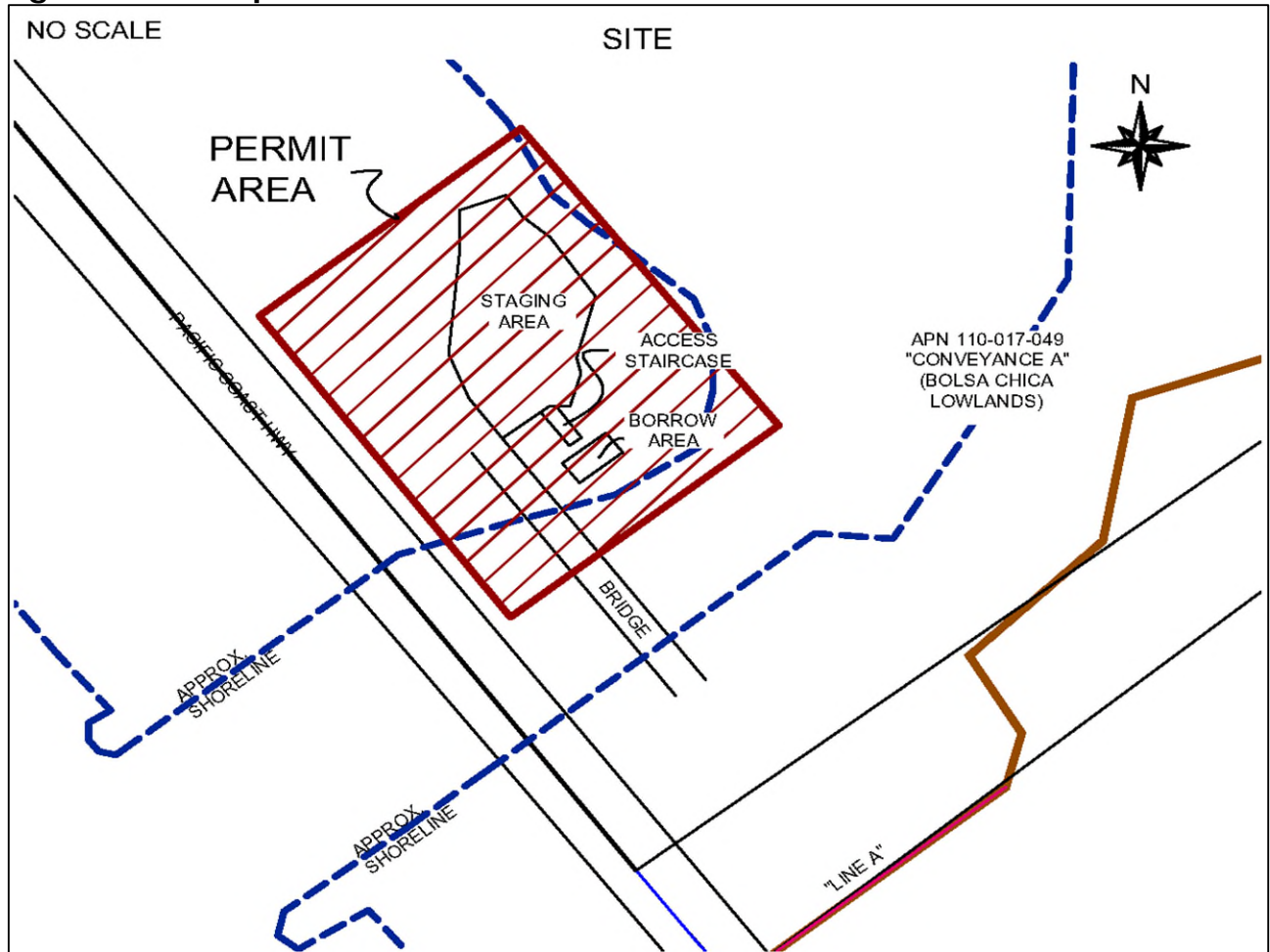
Figure 1. Location



AUTHORIZED USE:

Placement of a temporary portable stairway and removal of up to a maximum of 10 cubic yards of sand annually from an existing sand bar in Bolsa Chica tidal inlet (as shown in Figure 2).

Figure 2. Site Map



NOTE: This depiction of the permit 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 June 28, 2025.

CONSIDERATION:

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

SPECIFIC PERMIT PROVISIONS:

- Liability insurance in an amount no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence, or equivalent staff-approved self-insurance program.
- Annual removal of sand will be subject to Commission staff review and approval.
- Annual placement of a temporary stair accessway across the bank protection to the sand bar location in the Bolsa Chica tidal inlet will be allowed.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:

AUTHORITY:

Public Resources Code sections 6005, 6216, 6301, 6303, 6501.1, and 6503; California Code of Regulations, title 2, sections 2000 and 2003.

PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:

On August 19, 2015, the Commission authorized the issuance of a General Permit – Sand Removal Use to SoCal Holding, LLC for the removal of up to a maximum of 10 cubic yards of sand annually from an existing sand bar in the Bolsa Chica tidal inlet ([Item 58, August 19, 2015](#)). This permit expired on June 27, 2025.

The Applicant is now applying for a General Permit – Sand Removal for the placement of a temporary portable stairway and removal of up to a maximum of 10 cubic yards of sand annually from an existing sand bar in the Bolsa Chica tidal inlet, near the intersection of Pacific Coast Highway and Seapoint Avenue, Orange County.

The Bolsa Chica Lowlands Restoration Project created or rehabilitated nearly 600 acres of marine and wetland habitat in Orange County, restoring part of what had historically been a vast estuarine ecosystem. The project, the result of decades of planning and cooperation by the public and government agencies, is the largest wetland restoration in Southern California history. The design included mandatory maintenance of an open ocean inlet to ensure the wetland continues to function and to protect the biological benefits gained by the restoration investment.

Sand accumulates within the Bolsa Chica full tidal basin and forms a sand bar within a short distance of the inlet. The sand bar requires the periodic removal of sand to help maintain tidal exchange between the Bolsa Chica Basin and the

Pacific Ocean. Nearly all of the biological benefits of the restoration are a result of introducing daily tidal influence from the ocean. As with most human-made wetlands, the inlet requires maintenance to ensure connectivity with the ocean. Sand that naturally flows down the coastline is continually pulled into the Basin by the waves and tide. Without regularly removing sand from the inlet, the Basin would become closed off from the ocean, causing degradation of water quality, death of the biota in the basin, damage to intertidal plant communities, and loss of an important food source for nesting birds.

For the work crew to access the sand bar safely, a portable stairway is placed over an existing concrete cap covering the riprap down to the sand bar. The work crew will use hand shovels to place sand in geotextile bags that will temporarily be placed on a pallet on the sandbar. A boom truck will be used to place and remove the stairway and remove the pallet containing the filled sandbags from the sandbar. The pallet will be placed onto the bed of the boom truck. The annual sand removal will be performed during low tide and is expected to be completed in one day.

The proposed permit does not alienate the State's full fee simple interest or permanently impair public rights. The permit is limited to a 10-year term, does not grant the lessee exclusive rights to the permit premises, will help maintain tidal exchange between the Bolsa Chica Basin and the Pacific Ocean, and will have no significant impact on Public Trust-consistent uses or resources in the area. The proposed permit requires the lessee to indemnify the State for any liability incurred as a result of the lessee's activities thereon.

CLIMATE CHANGE:

INTRODUCTION:

Climate change impacts, including sea level rise, more frequent and intense storm events, and increased flooding and erosion, affect both open coastal areas and inland waterways in California. The proposed project would remove up to 10 cubic yards of sand within the inlet of the Bolsa Chica Basin annually to restore tidal exchange with the Bolsa Chica Basin and the Pacific Ocean. The permit area at this location, is a tidally influenced site vulnerable to flooding at current sea levels and at a higher risk of flood exposure given projected scenarios of sea level rise.

DATA & PROJECTIONS:

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. Commission staff evaluated the “intermediate-high” and “high” scenarios due to the vulnerability and exposure of the project site and the continued global reliance on fossil fuels. The Los Angeles tide gauge was used for the projected sea level rise scenario for the region, as listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Projected Sea Level Rise for Los Angeles

Year	Intermediate-High (feet)	High (feet)
2040	0.6	0.7
2050	0.9	1.1
2070	2.1	2.7
2100	4.5	6.3

Source: Table 12, State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance: 2024 Update

Note: Projections are with respect to a 2000 baseline.

In addition to rising seas, warmer temperatures have led California to experience a megadrought from 2000 to 2022, measured as the driest 22 years in the past 1200 years, and more megadroughts are projected through the end of the century ([U.S. Global Change Research Program 2023](#)). Despite the region’s increasing aridity, flooding from extreme precipitation events is projected to increase, attributed to earlier snowmelt, sea level rise, and more intense and frequent atmospheric rivers. Minor and moderate flooding (flooding events defined as disruptive to damaging), attributed to higher water levels, is expected to increase five to ten orders of magnitude by 2100, according to [NOAA’s 2022 Sea Level Rise Technical Report](#) (NOAA 2022).

ANALYSIS:

The combination of these projected conditions could increase the likelihood of sediment build-up within the permit area during the term of the permit. For example, the accumulation of sand within the inlet of the Bolsa Chica tidal basin is influenced by coastal processes and the armored channel connecting tidal exchange with the Bolsa Chica Basin and the Pacific Ocean. The hydraulic confinement of the armored channel directs flow and sedimentation along the south armored levee within the Bolsa Chica Basin inlet resulting in a catchment area for sediment accumulation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The resultant catchment and accumulation of sediment will result in an ongoing need for sediment removal to restore tidal exchange and circulation of the Bolsa Chica tidal basin with the Pacific Ocean, particularly if sedimentation rates increase as influenced by the effects of climate change, such as sea level rise and increased flooding. Removal of sediment as authorized by the permit will help alleviate the effects of climate change.

CONCLUSION:

For all the reasons above, staff believes issuance of the proposed permit will not substantially interfere with the Public Trust needs and values at this location, at this time, and for the term of the permit; 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.
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 4, Minor Alterations to Land; California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15304.

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

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 4, Minor Alterations to Land; California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15304.

PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE’S BEST INTERESTS:

Find that the proposed permit will not substantially impair the public rights to navigation and fishing or substantially interfere with the Public Trust needs and values at this location, at this time, and for the term of the permit; and is in the best interests of the State.

AUTHORIZATION:

Authorize the issuance of a General Permit – Sand Removal to the Applicant beginning June 28, 2025, for a term of 10 years, for the placement of a temporary portable stairway and removal of up to a maximum of 10 cubic yards of sand annually from an existing sand bar in Bolsa Chica tidal inlet near the intersection of Pacific Coast Highway and Seapoint Avenue, Orange County; consideration is the 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; and liability insurance in an amount no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence which may be satisfied through a self-insurance program.