

Chapter 1

Plan Objectives & Challenges

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Chapter 1 Plan Objectives & Challenges

A. Master Plan Objectives

The 2004 Port Master Plan aims to continue the Harbor District's long-standing tradition of stewardship for the use and development of the land and water areas under its jurisdiction and to meet public obligations for those areas as mandated by the State Tidelands Grant and the California Coastal Act of 1976. Chapter 3 of this Master Plan is incorporated into the local LCP as governing policies for Port San Luis Harbor.

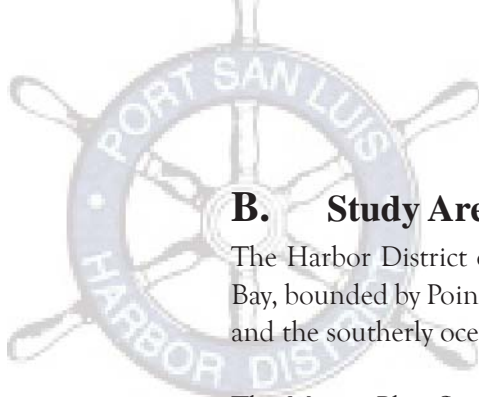
Within the context of comprehensive planning and the requirements of the California Coastal Act, this Master Plan aims to resolve the following major issues facing the Port San Luis Harbor District:

- Meet Coastal Act priorities for the harbor, especially the protection of coastal-dependent and coastal-related activities, visitor serving and waterfront recreation opportunities, and public access to the waterfront;
- Promote and facilitate the orderly and beneficial development and use of District lands, facilities, and resources;
- Provide land and water uses that are beneficial to residents of San Luis Obispo County and the people of the State of California;
- Increase revenue-producing opportunities to support the Harbor District's public and enterprise functions; and,
- Enhance and maintain the maritime character of the harbor.

These objectives are summarized in the overall Master Plan Goal for Port San Luis:

Port San Luis should be a harbor with protected, maintained, and enhanced resources that balances the environmental, social, and economic needs of the District and the various user groups.

(Chapter 3)

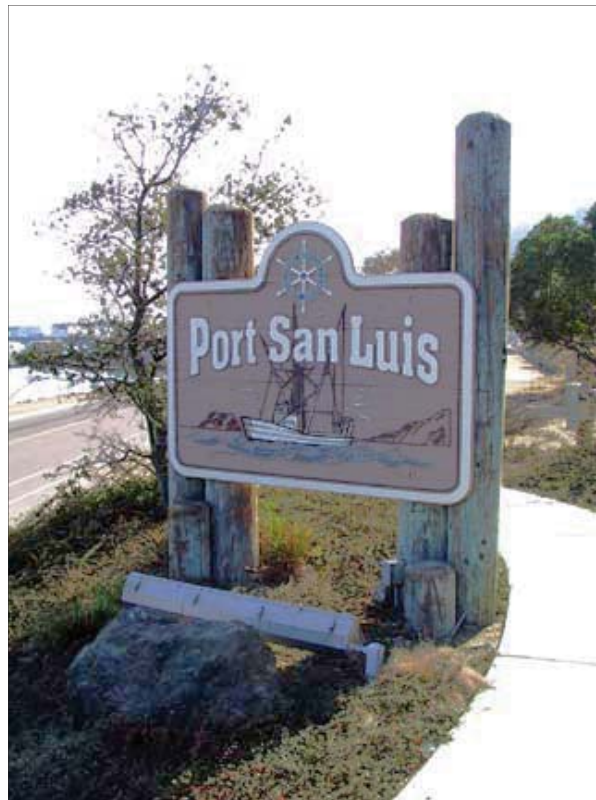


B. Study Area Summary

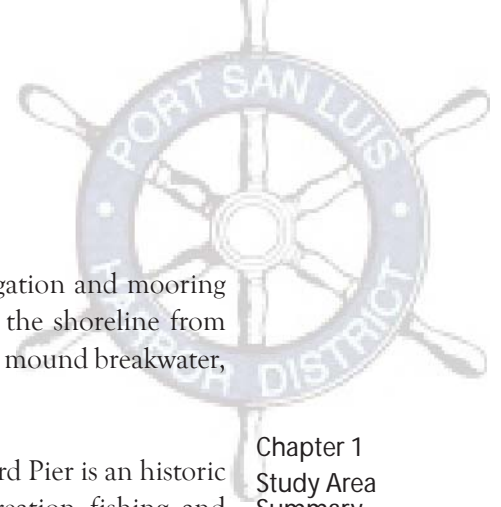
The Harbor District owns and controls both land and tideland properties at San Luis Obispo Bay, bounded by Point San Luis on the west, Irish Hills to the north, Sunset Palisades on the east, and the southerly ocean area three miles seaward.

Chapter 1
Study Area Summary

The Master Plan Study Area begins three and a half miles from Highway 101 in Avila Beach and extends approximately one mile westward. Avila Beach Drive, which is maintained by the County of San Luis Obispo, provides the only vehicular access route to the Port. The study area encompasses roughly 520 acres of water and 125 acres of land, and is divided into seven planning sub-areas as illustrated in Planning Sub-Areas Diagram, Figure 3 and briefly outlined on the next page according to the land use category established in the LCP for the San Luis Bay Planning Area.



Entry sign welcomes visitors to Port San Luis Harbor.



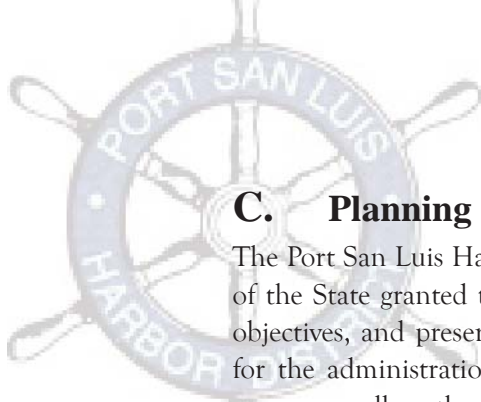
PUBLIC FACILITIES

Open Water*	The 520-acre harbor area, mostly used for navigation and mooring purposes. The Open Water Area also includes the shoreline from Point San Luis to Shell Beach, a 2400-foot rubble mound breakwater, and areas around three piers.
Harford Pier	The “backbone” of Port San Luis Harbor, Harford Pier is an historic working pier that serves commercial and recreation fishing and boating, and is a primary focus of Port activities.
Harford Landing	An 8.7-acre site at the base of Harford Pier that provides supportive land area to coastal-dependent and coastal-related uses at the main harbor, as well as serves visitor needs on the waterfront. Harford Landing is comprised of parking, launching facilities, a boatyard, and several buildings.
Harbor Terrace	An approximately 30-acre hillside property overlooking San Luis Obispo Bay along Avila Beach Drive that is currently used as storage area for boat owners, fishermen, and the Harbor District. A trailer park (non-conforming use) currently sits on the southeastern portion of the site. Development of Harbor Terrace is a primary long-term objective of the Harbor District.
Beach and Bluffs	A linear strip of land seaward of the County right-of-way of Avila Beach Drive, which provides recreational opportunities including coastal access, beach-oriented activities, informal parking, and ocean views.
Lightstation	A 25-acre site that includes the historic Point San Luis Lighthouse and several other buildings, served by a private road and trail with controlled public access.

RECREATION

Avila Beach, Pier and Parking Lot	The Avila Beach and Pier make up the “front porch” of the Avila community and primarily support recreational water-oriented activities. The Avila Parking Lot is located one block north of the beach and serves the parking needs of beach and pier users.
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* Technically, the Open Water Area is not designated under the Public Facilities use category per se, because it is not governed by the County of San Luis Obispo. For simplification, this Master Plan includes Open Water-related discussions, policies, and improvements organized under this designation. Although the Open Water Planning Sub-Area only comprises 520 acres, the Harbor District manages water areas out to sea for three miles.



C. Planning Challenges

The Port San Luis Harbor District Master Plan addresses the logical and sensitive development of the State granted tidelands of San Luis Obispo Bay, integrates ecological, social, and fiscal objectives, and preserves the unique character of the rural waterfront. Overlapping mandates for the administration of Port properties requires balancing the needs of numerous harbor users, as well as the resources required to serve them, such as waterfront locations, capital, and infrastructure improvements. Furthermore, all planning activities must be implemented in a responsible way in order to safeguard environmental resources including land and water ecosystems, scenic views, and the waterfront character.

Chapter 1
Planning Challenges:
District Priorities &
Fiscal Issues

The following narrative describes the major planning issues influencing the policy and design solutions embraced in this Plan (Chapters 3 and 4). Many planning challenges presented herein are interrelated and often affect more than one area of the Port. Consequently, there is some overlap in the discussions and reiteration of certain issues affecting Port planning.

Overlapping mandates for the administration of Port properties requires balancing the needs of numerous harbor users, as well as the resources required to serve them.

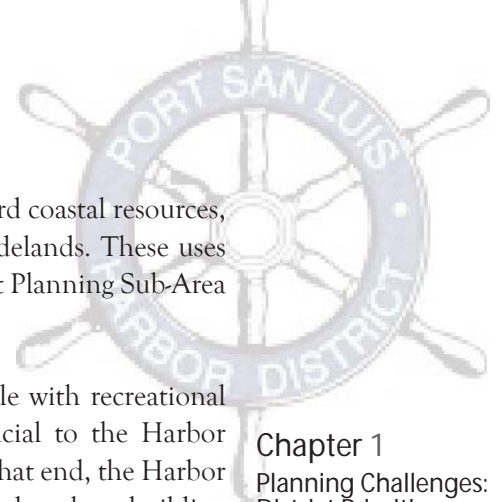
Planning Issue 1: District Priorities and Fiscal Issues

The original intent of the State Tidelands Grant to the Harbor District was to develop a public harbor to meet the needs of the people of the State for the promotion and accommodation of navigation, commerce, and the operation of public facilities. The Tidelands Grant also mandates that the District provide recreational uses within the granted lands.

Initially, the Harbor District performed both harbor enterprise and public functions, enabling the District to pay for necessary capital improvements and operations-related expenses. The District also provided non-enterprise service functions and operations including those that serve coastal-dependent, visitor serving, and recreation uses, activities which benefit the users of the harbor and enhance the public's enjoyment of the waterfront but which generate no direct revenues. Tax revenues funded all the non-enterprise public programs. These tax-funded improvements are essential in maintaining and enhancing the public facilities at Port San Luis. Grants and other external funding sources, such as monies earmarked by voter propositions, are also significant contributors to capital improvement programs.

A 1997 economic analysis of the Harbor District found, although the District supplements expenses with grant income and its programs are targeted at cost-effectiveness, revenues cannot keep pace with the capital improvements expenditures that are required to sustain Port operations (Williams-Kuebelbeck, 1997). Diminishing revenues force the District to subsidize operating expenses and improvements with reserves and tax revenues, monies that are necessary to safeguard the District against the unpredictable nature of the ocean environment and the undependable nature of property tax availability.

During the master planning process, the Harbor Commission evaluated and refined uses allowable by the zoning categories under the County planning framework (partially represented in Appendix G) to create a list of potential uses permitted on Harbor District property. The goal of this exercise was to balance the distribution of activities around the Bay in a flexible and



financially sustainable framework that will enable new development, safeguard coastal resources, and provide opportunities for public enjoyment of the Harbor District's tidelands. These uses are reflected in this Master Plan as "Limitation on Use" policies for each Port Planning Sub-Area (Chapter 3).

It is the Harbor District's intent to create a mix of uses that are compatible with recreational opportunities and the surrounding area in a way that is mutually-beneficial to the Harbor District, the Avila community, and the people that enjoy the waterfront. To that end, the Harbor District plans to accommodate uses that are complementary and not opposed to the rebuilding of Avila Beach and the ultimate uses that will locate there. The Harbor District believes that the proposed developments in the Master Plan will draw more people to the area and create economic synergy that will benefit Avila.

When the Harbor Commission considers pursuing a project or allowing new development, current policy is to balance potential income (taxes and operating) against operating expenses of the new use. Harbor District Budget Policies also weigh the project's economic feasibility and the amount of grant funding available to fund it. Typically, the highest revenue generating uses are visitor-serving uses, which are generally enterprise functions. The business generated by visitors through the sale of goods and services offered by commercial components can offset some of the capital and overhead expenses of the Harbor District. If properly designed, the overall result can be a healthy, symbiotic relationship that augments Harbor District income, while meeting the needs of harbor users and those who come simply to enjoy the atmosphere and ambiance.

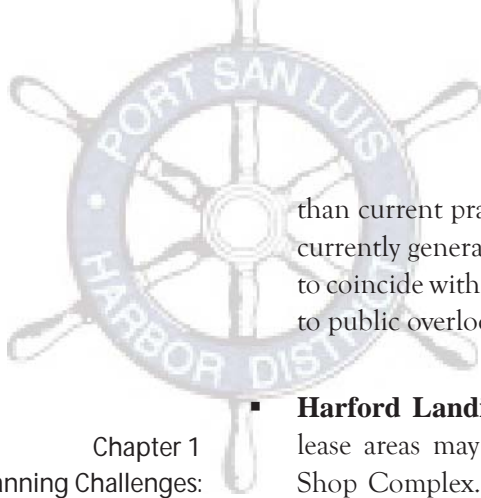
Additional revenue streams that would result from new leases could provide additional net operating income to the District that would allow it to improve deteriorating physical infrastructure, particularly Harford Pier, which was built in 1873. Additional income would also allow the District to maintain financial viability because reserves would not be drawn down and the District's debt repayment capacity would be improved. As a local government enterprise agency, the District needs to generate revenues to maintain operations and facilities by participating in the market place.

The following sites have opportunities for new leases and new revenue generating uses:

- **Harbor Terrace.** It has been the intent of the Harbor District since the mid-1970s to transform Harbor Terrace from surplus property into one developed with revenue-generating uses. Financially, new development of this site should be self-supporting and generate additional revenue to support other public services elsewhere in the harbor. For example, the cost of building the infrastructure for the development of Harbor Terrace should be predominantly borne by new development. To maximize developable space of this site, the Harbor District should acquire additional adjacent land. There should be a range of accommodations and complementary visitor-serving uses for the property, a portion of which should be affordable, making Harbor Terrace broadly available for use by the public. In addition, the site should continue to provide lease space for coastal dependent and related uses, such as boat trailer storage and gear storage. Harbor Terrace could also provide a more organized and efficient space for RV parking and camping,

Chapter 1 Planning Challenges: District Priorities & Fiscal Issues

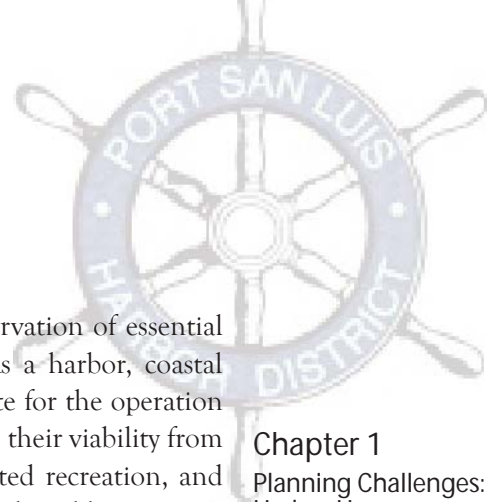
The goal of the planning process was to balance the distribution of activities in a flexible and financially sustainable framework that will enable new development, safeguard coastal resources, and provide opportunities for public enjoyment of Port tidelands.



than current practices allow in other parts of the harbor. To ensure no loss of revenues currently generated by RV campers, development of Harbor Terrace should be planned to coincide with the transition of the beach and bluff area from RV parking and camping to public overlooks.

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Planning Challenges:
District Priorities &
Fiscal Issues

- **Harford Landing.** With the relocation and consolidation of District facilities, new lease areas may be created at the Administration Building and at the Maintenance Shop Complex. The building and yard at the Maintenance Shop Complex could be used to accommodate expansion of the boat repair facility adjacent to the boat yard or leased to another related enterprise. The Administration Building could be made into a mixed-use space that provides lease space on the top floor and a Visitor Center or Harbor Information hub on the first floor. The lease space could house an office of a marine-related agency or marine-oriented business. A Visitor Center could distribute materials about recreational waterfront opportunities and harbor events such as Harbor District services, the opening of fishing seasons, whale watching excursions, tours of the Lightstation, Pecho Coast Trail hikes, kayak rentals, etc.
- **Harford Pier.** If and when the Harbor Patrol office moves, the existing harbor office space on Harford Pier would be available as new lease space. The Pier also has room to create a lease space under the Warehouse Canopy and to expand the structures at Pod 1, near the foot of the pier.
- **Avila Beach Parking Lot.** The First Street frontage of the Avila Beach parking lot may offer the Port an opportunity to increase lease space while also screening the parking lot, creating a cohesive façade, and maintaining at least 300 parking spaces (per deed requirement). Since the Avila commercial district is still re-establishing itself, it is important that new development be limited to coastal-dependent and coastal-related uses. There may be no more than 17 public parking spaces removed to accommodate lease space.
- **Avila Pier.** Avila Pier can accommodate new lease spaces at its terminus within the remainder of the deck area envelope created by the 10-foot pier edge setback and the 30-foot open space setback at the end of the pier. Including the existing 500 square foot structure currently at the terminus, the terminus may accommodate additional lease spaces up to a maximum of 6,000 square feet (combined open deck space and structures; not including space for skiff racks). A new landing under the pier could stimulate increased boating activities in this area. The new landing will accommodate larger vessels to facilitate water-oriented visitor uses such as harbor excursions, water-borne access to the Lightstation, or dinner cruises.



Planning Issue 2: Harbor Users

a. Coastal Dependent Uses

One of the fundamental priorities of the California Coastal Act is the reservation of essential coastal resources to serve coastal dependent and coastal related needs. As a harbor, coastal dependent and coastal related uses coincide with the District's state mandate for the operation and management of the harbor. Coastal dependent uses are those that derive their viability from proximity to the ocean. Activities such as boating and fishing, water-oriented recreation, and beach and boating facilities are typical uses that require a waterfront or ocean-based location.

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Harbor Users

1. Recreational Boating

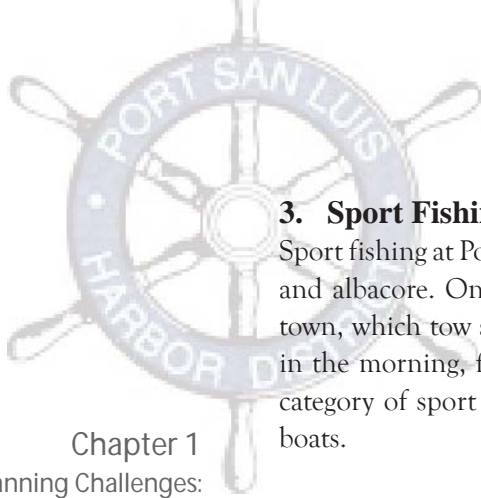
Recreational boating is a major activity at the Port, utilizing approximately 140 mooring spaces and a launching operation with a 7-½ ton sling hoist and parking area for boat trailers. The Coastal Commission recently commented on the lack of recreational boating facilities on the Central Coast (LCP Periodic Review, 2001). Other facilities needed include improved access to moorings, and improved boat and skiff storage facilities.

2. Commercial Fishing

Commercial fishing has long been an important component of the Port's economy. Although commercial fishing provides an important source of income for quite a few in the region, over the last decade the commercial fishing industry has suffered persistent declines. According to the Coastal Commission Periodic Review of San Luis Obispo County's Local Coastal Plan (July 2001), this trend is reflected in the decreasing need for facilities dedicated to commercial fishing purposes. The Coastal Act provides that, "Existing commercial fishing and recreational boating space shall not be reduced unless the demand for those facilities no longer exists or adequate substitute space has been provided" (Public Resources Code §30234). While there has not been a dramatic turnover of moorings at the Port, it is clear income from commercial fishing enterprises no longer supports the capital costs required to support the industry. In response, this Master Plan anticipates the redistribution of resources to other boating and fishing uses. Nevertheless, the Port will continue to value the industry as important to Port San Luis's heritage and future and, consistent with regional demand, will provide for the continuation of resources to serve it. Commercial fishing and related activities contribute in large part to the working character of the Port and require the presence and reinforcement of complementary uses. Many uses on Harford pier, such as the icehouse, the fish buying stations, and retail fish sales, continue to support these long-established maritime activities.

Existing uses at Port San Luis that require a waterfront location include:

- Recreational Boating
- Commercial Fishing
- Sport Fishing
- Aquaculture
- Marine Retail & Services
- Marine Related Public Agencies
- Water-oriented Recreation



3. Sport Fishing

Sport fishing at Port San Luis has historically revolved around three species: rockfish, salmon, and albacore. One category of sportfishers consists of boat owners, both local and out of town, which tow small powerboats on trailers. They launch boats at the trailer boat launch in the morning, fish during the day, and generally return that same afternoon. The other category of sport fishers are individuals that pay to fish aboard larger recreational charter boats.

The market at Port San Luis has realistically only been able to support one viable sportfishing business and a live bait barge at any one time. Increasing government regulations, quotas, and closures makes it unlikely that the fishing industry will expand. There is a demand for whale watching and eco-tourism; the sportfishing business is expected to expand into this market.



Sportfishing and whale watching trips depart from Harford Pier.

The sportfishing lease site on Harford Pier is in a suitable location; however, the age and condition of the pier structure, building, and landing (along with the lack of public restrooms) makes this area a candidate for future renovation and improvement.

4. Aquaculture and Mariculture

Aquaculture and mariculture are two forms of marine-life farming allowed in the Open Water Area. Aquaculture is currently practiced in the form of a salmon enhancement program run by Central Coast Salmon Enhancement. This program has successfully augmented the local salmon fishery by up to 140,000 salmon fingerlings each year at Port San Luis Harbor. Since its inception, the salmon fishery has increased holding capacity and yields. Additional potential exists to raise more species such as white seabass. This coastal dependent activity not only contributes to the ocean catch and the local economy, but also reinvigorates the local salmon population. There is interest and potential to raise other species of marine life in the bay such as abalone and rockfish as well.

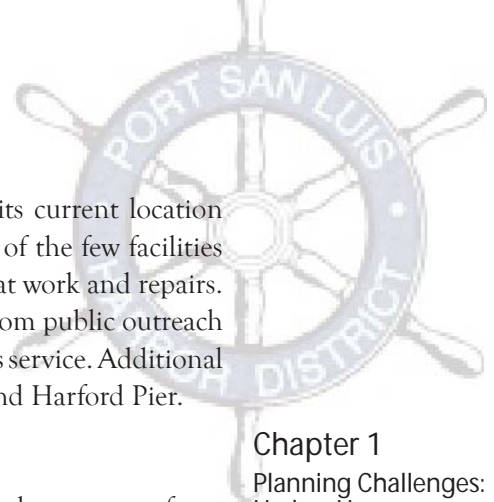
Currently, mariculture is not practiced at Port San Luis. Aquaculture and mariculture are allowable uses at nearly all Port properties.



A full boat returns from a day out fishing.

5. Marine Retail and Services

Several marine-related uses operate at Port San Luis providing support to coastal dependent activities. This category includes a blend of services that are fundamental components of the harbor environment so they are considered in the coastal dependent category. Uses such as the marine supply, the boat yard, and bait and tackle provide essential marine services and supplies to harbor users and to those who require replacement parts, boat and engine repair, and other marine provisions.



In 2002, the Port San Luis Boat Yard was reconstructed and sited to its current location behind the harbor offices. It should be noted that Port San Luis is one of the few facilities that provides an area where individual boat owners can do their own boat work and repairs. Requests from regular users at the Port, as well as information gleaned from public outreach surveys and reports from Harbor staff indicate that there is demand for this service. Additional marine-related lease sites are available on Avila Pier, Harford Landing, and Harford Pier.

6. General Water-oriented Recreation

This category comprises a combination of users that take advantage of the pleasant waterfront and beach environment. The largest category is composed of general beach-goers who frequent Avila Beach, and to a lesser extent, Olde Port and Fisherman’s beaches. During the summer, the three beaches attract thousands of visitors from within and outside the county for activities such as swimming, sunbathing, surfing, and leisurely walking. Small watercraft activities including kayaking, jet skiing, windsurfing, and catamarans are also popular. Facilities in support of this category include coastal accessways (stairways, ramps, and boat launches), picnic tables, barbecues, benches, and other amenities.

Port San Luis has two public fishing piers: Avila Pier and Harford Pier. Thanks to the open ocean conditions, clean water, and an abundance of baitfish these piers enjoy excellent fishing opportunities. Both piers incorporate open space setbacks along the pier frontages leaving these spaces uncluttered for pier fishing. In the spring, the catch includes halibut, perch, smelt, and mackerel. Rockfish and sharks are sometimes caught in summer and fall. There are bait and tackle shops, as well as fish cleaning racks on both piers. Public outreach surveys taken at the piers reveal that a significant number of pier fishers are frequent visitors; many travel to Port San Luis regularly from the Central Valley and South County. In addition to the fishers who use pier frontages, some (including “crabbers”) use the rock revetment along Harford Landing.

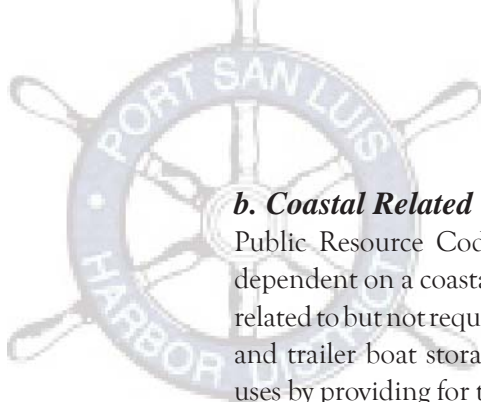


Father and son enjoy pier fishing at the terminus of Harford Pier .

Another waterfront recreational group is scuba divers, who frequently use area on the rocky shoreline west of Harford Pier for ocean diving launches. Currently, there are no facilities serving this recreational group of harbor users.

7. Marine Related Public Agencies

The administrative and operative divisions of the Harbor District require waterfront locations; hence, they are a coastal dependent use. Presently, District headquarters is located at Harford Landing. While the current arrangement makes an official presence available at the focal point of the harbor, this space could be better used to serve the needs of other harbor users and visitors. Relocating Harbor District facilities off Harford Landing would provide an opportunity to create a waterfront visitor center as well as new lease space. Additionally, moving Harbor District facilities would relieve parking spaces in this area currently used by Harbor District staff and patrons. The area with the most room to accommodate District facilities is at Harbor Terrace.



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Planning Challenges:
Harbor Users

b. Coastal Related

Public Resource Code §30101.3 defines a coastal related development as “...any use that is dependent on a coastal-dependent development or use.” Coastal-related uses then, include those related to but not requiring the presence of water, e.g., boat sales, engine repairs, seafood processing, and trailer boat storage. Additionally, coastal related uses may complement coastal dependent uses by providing for the needs of coastal visitors and workers including visitor accommodations, restaurants, event space, concessions, and parking. Public Resource Code §30213 (Coastal Act) requires the protection and provision of lower-cost visitor-serving and recreational development. Furthermore, the Coastal Commission acknowledges that upland support facilities such as directional signage, parking, and over-night visitor facilities are important elements in assuring that the public will have maximum access to shoreline recreation areas (LCP Periodic Review, 2001).

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1. Visitor Serving

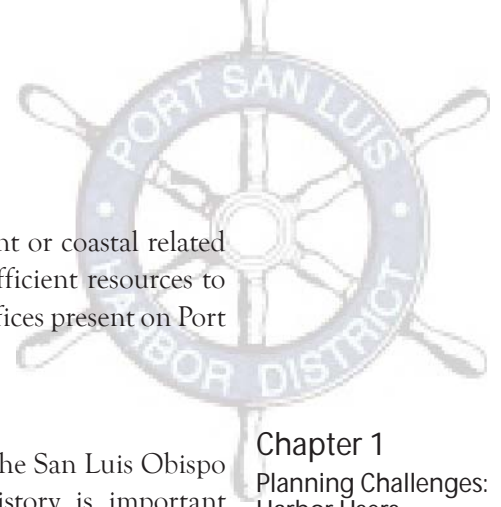
The Coastal Act embraces opportunities for low cost visitor serving uses on the coast, especially where visitors can access the waterfront and enjoy passive recreational and scenic opportunities. While not requiring direct waterfront locations, coastal related uses may complement coastal dependent uses by providing for the needs of waterfront visitors and workers. The major coastal related use at the Port is restaurants, which are frequented by harbor visitors and workers, and harbor users such as boaters and beachgoers. Other visitor-serving uses include general recreation and sightseeing. Many people come to visit Harford Pier during both day and night to sightsee and dine. Visitors consistently remark on how much they enjoy the character of the working pier and harbor.



Visitors to Harford Pier enjoy open pier walking and fishing.

Low cost amenities are evident at nearly all properties, and include the open beach and piers, picnic areas, walkways and trails, the beach boat launch, related parking areas, and concessions. Throughout the year, visitors are able to experience the oceanfront in formal and informal ways including tours of the historic Lighthouse, special events on Port property, and other casual recreation activities associated with the beach environment and waterfront.

Overnight camping also plays an important role in providing low-cost visitor facilities. According to the Coastal Commission Periodic Review of SLO County LCP, there is unmet demand for a variety of camping opportunities in coastal San Luis Obispo County (LCP Review, 2001). At Port San Luis, RV camping is an increasingly popular recreational activity. Year-round, RVs park overnight along the waterfront bluff area and at Harford Landing. While revenues from RV campers are an important source of income to the Port, the location of RV activities has prompted concern over obstruction of scenic ocean views from the road. As RV camping continues to increase in popularity and demand exceeds supply, the District has examined the idea of creating a multi-purpose campground on Harbor Terrace as one use, among others. The Harbor District envisions Harbor Terrace as a place where visitors are offered a range of opportunities to enjoy and experience the natural, scenic, and recreational features of Port San Luis.



c. Other Uses

Other uses encompass those that do not otherwise fit into coastal dependent or coastal related uses including residential, offices, and general retail. In order to ensure sufficient resources to serve coastal dependent uses, marine related retail is preferred at the Port. Offices present on Port property are Port operations or government organizations.

1. Marine Education and Research

Informing the public about issues affecting the marine environment at the San Luis Obispo Bay, including water quality, biological processes, and the Port's history is important to bridging the gap between the effect of an individual's and community's actions and maintaining a healthy marine ecosystem. At Port San Luis, information about the Bay and coastal resources is transmitted largely through the efforts of organizations and groups that lead special interest tours and field trips by boat, kayak, or similar means. Harford Pier has one or two older interpretive exhibits about sea life. The Pecho Coast Trail, which leads to the Lightstation and is currently managed by the local utility company, offers opportunities to learn about the coastal terrace environment and the history of maritime operations at Point San Luis Lighthouse.

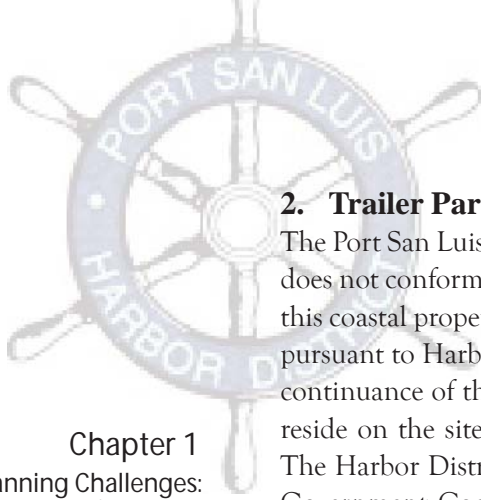
Public outreach surveys conducted during the planning process indicated broad support for increased education programs at the Port, ranging from a new museum to interpretive exhibits. Public Resource Code §30012 also advocates the expansion of public education of coastal resources. There are many opportunities for the installation of interpretive exhibits and display programs along pier frontages, Harford Landing, at the bluff overlooks, and on Harbor Terrace. Other educational opportunities are possible at the Lightstation and along the Pecho Coast Trail. A major goal for the Lighthouse is for it to serve as an educational site (Treatment Plan, 2001). To that end, the Port San Luis Lighthouse Keepers propose to establish a museum at the Lightstation to teach visitors of the history and marine environment of Port San Luis Harbor.



View of Cal Poly Marine Research and Education Facility as seen from Avila Beach Drive.

While marine education and research are valuable activities, establishing formal marine research facilities has been determined to be a lower priority at the Port so that the Harbor District may allocate scarce resources (particularly waterfront locations) in support of boating and fishing. Presently, there are two marine science facilities on or near Port property. The Port San Luis Marine Research Institute conducts research on the ecosystems and animal life of local coastal waters, leading a variety of educational marine science programs, hands-on lessons, floating laboratories, and other activities for local schools. The Institute has plans to relocate to Avila Beach.

California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo has a Marine Education and Research facility that is located on the former Unocal Pier. In 2001, Unocal gifted the pier to the University to advance its marine science education program, producing information and understanding about San Luis Obispo Bay marine life. Port San Luis Harbor District granted a forty-nine year ground lease to the University for these purposes.



2. Trailer Park

The Port San Luis Trailer Park, which occupies approximately three acres on Harbor Terrace, does not conform to the Public Facilities land use zoning designation in the County LCP for this coastal property. In addition, residential uses are non-conforming uses for Port property, pursuant to Harbors and Navigation Code §6086. This Section regulates the operation and continuance of the mobile home park and provides that after the current residents cease to reside on the site, the mobile home park may no longer be used for residential purposes. The Harbor District anticipates the eventual closure of the trailer park, in accordance with Government Code §65863, which controls how and under what circumstances a mobile home park may be converted to another use, consolidated, and /or closed.

Planning Issue 3: Environment

Waterfront areas are exceptional places that require attentive policy and design treatment. Good planning must ensure that development and activities will be appropriately located and designed to have less impact on the marine environment, limit conflicts with adjacent uses, and create a harmonious and aesthetic setting.

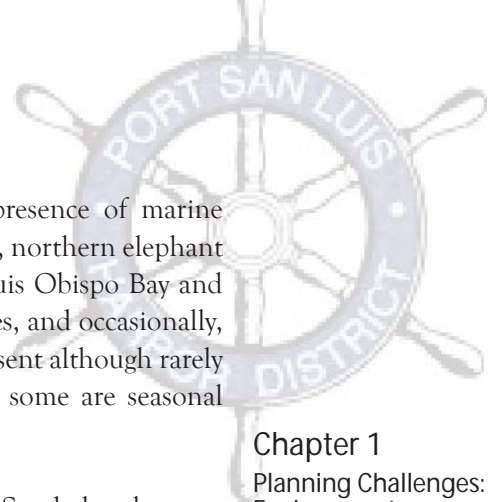
a. Offshore Resources

Marine biological resources in San Luis Obispo Bay support numerous activities at Port San Luis such as recreational fishing, which includes fishing from piers, small boats, and charter fishing boats, commercial fishing, sightseeing, whale watching, scuba diving, and bird watching. Public Resource Code §30230 and §30231 (Coastal Act) protect offshore resources and the marine environment, especially biologically productive marine habitat and aquatic life. To the greatest extent possible, interference with these resources through use or activities that occur either in the water (boating, etc.) or landward of the coastal waters (e.g., development) is restricted. Alternatively, marine resources should be maintained, enhanced, and, where feasible, restored.

Planning efforts must evaluate areas appropriate for development, and design improvements with sensitivity to the site and the surrounding areas.

1. Marine Ecology

A complex interaction of the southerly flowing California Current, the northerly flowing Davidson Current, and spring /summer upwelling produces conditions that are conducive to a diverse and active marine ecosystem at San Luis Obispo Bay. A 2002 marine biological resource survey identified abundant marine life and habitats in the nearshore areas of northern San Luis Obispo Bay (Tenera Environmental, 2002). Within this area, dominant fish habitats include rock substrate /nearshore rocky reefs, patches of eelgrass and surfgrass, and beds of giant kelp. Marine fishes include California halibut, Pacific staghorn sculpin, grunion, white croaker, and several species of rockfish. Albacore are caught in the offshore waters. Popular pier sportfish include jack smelt and mackerel. King salmon fingerlings have been reared and released within San Luis Bay since 1984 by Central Coast Salmon Enhancement. Anchovy, sardine, rockfish, and white seabass are also present in the open water areas. The subtidal habitat of the Bay is home to numerous identified marine invertebrates including several species of sea stars, sand dollars, red and purple sea urchins, several sea anemones, a variety of crabs (including rock crab) and many clams (including Pismos).



Chapter 1 Planning Challenges: Environment

The Bay's productive marine environment is also favorable to the presence of marine mammals such as common and bottlenose dolphins, California sea lions, northern elephant seals, harbor seals, and southern sea otters. Common whales in San Luis Obispo Bay and near off-shore areas include gray whales, humpback whales, minke whales, and occasionally, orca and sperm whales. Green sea turtles and leather back turtles are present although rarely encountered. While many of these species migrate through this area, some are seasonal visitors while others are permanent residents.

Numerous species of birds routinely inhabit this coastal environment. Sandy beach areas, coastal bluffs, and offshore rocky outcrops support resident, migrating, and wintering populations. Commonly seen birds in nearshore areas include western grebes, three species of cormorants, several gull species, California brown pelicans, great blue herons, several species of terns, several alcid species, flocks of tens of thousands of pink footed (aka sooty) shearwaters during most summers, and an occasional Peregrine falcon.

San Luis Obispo Creek flows into San Luis Obispo Bay on the west side of Avila Beach, creating an estuarine habitat for a variety of aquatic species. The most interesting fishes in this habitat include tidewater gobies, striped bass, steelhead trout, Pacific lampre, and king salmon. The last four species are anadromous, potentially migrating through the estuary to spawn in the freshwater upstream.

2. Water Quality

Public Resource Code §30231 addresses water quality of coastal waters. Water quality is affected by the introduction of contaminants and other materials originating landside and in the water (boating-related). Erosion and sedimentation into the San Luis Obispo Creek and San Luis Obispo Bay potentially compounds the deposition of materials into the area around Harford Landing, which affects both water quality and boating accessibility. The presence of toxins or contaminants compromises not only the health of beach-goers, but also wetlands and riparian habitats, which are essential features of the marine ecological system.

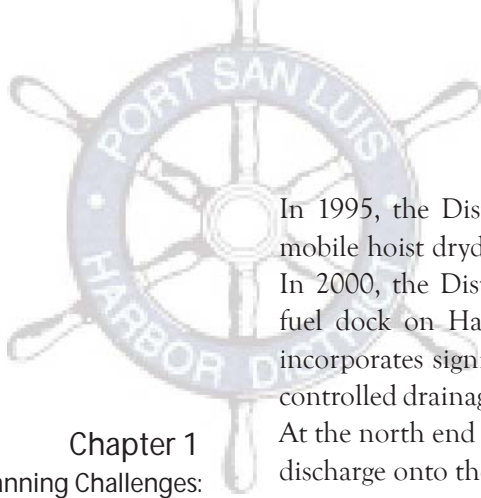
Development that occurs inland of San Luis Obispo Bay is not under the control of the Harbor District, but the District supports decisions and actions of responsible agencies that minimize deposition of materials and toxins into the Creek and Bay. There is a need to better coordinate and control shoreside development and recreational open water areas.

Port San Luis has led in the implementation of measures to prevent pollution. The Coastal Commission and State Water Quality Control Board are generally looked upon to regulate land-use and water quality issues, respectively. San Luis Obispo County has permit authority for the land areas. The County Environmental Health Agency monitors water quality at the mouth of San Luis Obispo Creek and on beaches to protect public health, but the County does not otherwise regulate ocean water quality.

To the greatest extent possible, interference with these resources through use or activities that occur either in the water (boating, etc.) or landward of the coastal waters (e.g., development) is restricted.



Blue Heron wading in the bay near Harford Pier.



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In 1995, the District installed mechanical equipment to capture boat wash water at the mobile hoist drydock pad. This water is pretreated and discharged into the sanitary system. In 2000, the District installed state-of-the-art sewer and bilge pumpout equipment at the fuel dock on Harford Pier. The new 46,500 square foot Boatyard, completed in 2002, incorporates significant water quality control improvements: a reinforced concrete surface, controlled drainage into a clarifier, and a comprehensive best management practices program. At the north end of Avila Beach an innovative drainage outfall was designed to reduce trash discharge onto the beach and to reduce beach sand scouring from high water flows.

The Harbor District also promotes clean boating by distributing educational brochures and encouraging boating facility operators to safeguard the bay's water quality. Harbor District staff receives training and education in clean water management and water quality control. A hazardous materials and used oil collection center is available for the use of boaters and other harbor users. District maintenance staff closely monitor sewer lines and lift stations to ensure they are functioning properly and to prevent any accidental spillage.

b. Onshore Resources

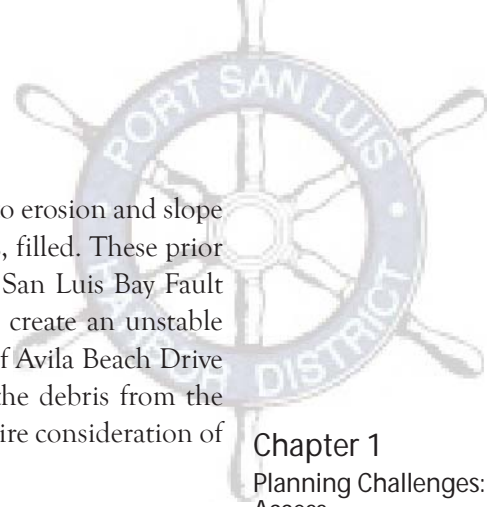
Waterfront land is influenced by the local marine environment, which produces distinctive features such as vegetation, habitat, and soils. At the Port most land areas that front San Luis Obispo Bay, particularly the Beach and Bluffs and Harbor Terrace, have experienced previous disturbances, including grading and active use. Even so, planning efforts must evaluate areas appropriate for development and design improvements with sensitivity to the site and the surrounding areas. San Luis Obispo County Coastal Policies, development standards, and land use ordinances apply to land development at the Port and address associated issues such as setbacks, height limits, grading, and drainage.



Evidence of bluff erosion adjacent to Avila Beach Drive, across from Harbor Terrace.

1. Geology / Bluff and Hillside Erosion

Like coastal bluffs throughout California, the waterfront bluffs and hillsides along Avila Beach Drive have suffered significant erosion over the years from natural processes such as wave and wind action, water runoff, and the cumulative effects of use. Maintaining bluff integrity is a particularly important issue for the Port because there is only one road into the harbor—and the bluffs support it. Much of the seaside bluffs at Port San Luis are 15 to 20 feet in height and have been protected against further erosive wave action by riprap revetment; however, there are portions without shoreline protective devices. Natural rock projections are also present in the middle section of the bluff face. At the intersection of Avila Beach Drive and Diablo Canyon Road, there has been extensive erosion and the road is in jeopardy of washing out. This would effectively close the Port. Moving the road inland is not possible due to the proximity of a sensitive archaeological site. In addition to the road, the narrow width of bluffs along Avila Beach Drive provides space for sightseeing, parking, and lateral coastal access. Some shoreline protection is extremely critical to protect the road and ensure the continued safety of the parking area and walkways. Shoreline protection devices are needed to prevent further undermining of bluff integrity. A balance of protecting the sandy beach area and the coastal road is necessary to provide continued adequate and proper access to the harbor.



Hillside bluffs and terraces that support Harbor Terrace are also subject to erosion and slope slippage. Much of the site has been previously graded and, in some areas, filled. These prior activities, plus the presence of several major and minor landslides, the San Luis Bay Fault (considered inactive), as well as smaller slumps and subsurface springs, create an unstable geological condition on this site. Active landslides on the upslope side of Avila Beach Drive “creep” onto the roadway, requiring periodic maintenance to remove the debris from the road (Harbor Terrace EIR, 1998). Construction of new facilities will require consideration of these factors to address potential geologic constraints.

2. Cultural and Historic Resources

Cultural resource sites from early inhabitants of this area, including the Chumash Indians, are known to be in the vicinity of Harbor Terrace and Lightstation Planning Sub-Areas. Historic resources at the Port include Harford Pier, the Lighthouse, and the San Luis Yacht Club. Development at or near these resources should be compatible with the historic values of these facilities and should incorporate techniques to reduce negative impacts and improve degraded areas.

3. Scenic Resources

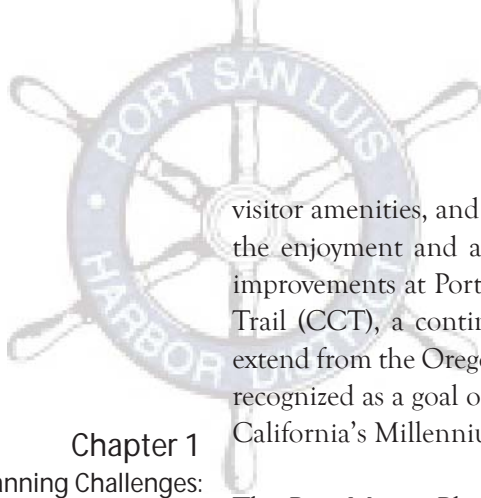
The Port San Luis Harbor Commission is committed to maintaining the scenic qualities at San Luis Obispo Bay. The rural waterfront landscape remains much the same as it has for generations: a pleasant, seaside harbor with maritime facilities and abundant natural charm. Port facilities such as the piers, boatyard, and historic Lighthouse contribute in large part to the harbor’s long-lived character. Recently, the Coastal Commission has indicated concern with the incremental deterioration of scenic landscapes of coastal public viewsheds (LCP Review, 2001). In Public Resource Code Sections 30251 and 30253 (Coastal Act), scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas are required to be protected. Key concerns include grading and landform alteration, compatibility with surrounding waterfront character, views from offshore areas, and restoring and enhancing the visual quality of degraded areas. The Coastal Commission prefers avoidance of impacts through site selection and design alternatives rather than mitigation through landscape screening.

Port facilities, such as the piers, the boatyard, and Lighthouse, contribute in large part to the harbor’s long-lived visual character.

The waterfront character of Port San Luis Harbor should be recognized in the architecture, lighting, and landscaping of new development. Additionally, new uses should incorporate design measures that reduce long-term maintenance requirements.

Planning Issue 4: Coastal Access

Both the Coastal Act and the California Constitution guarantee the rights of all citizens to access and use State tidelands. Moreover, boaters need access to the water and to their vessels. Port San Luis’s jurisdiction embraces the tidelands of San Luis Obispo Bay, with much of the property along the waterfront abutting Avila Beach Drive (County right of way). Opportunities for public access exist vertically from the land or pier structure to the water and boating facilities and laterally along the waterfront perimeter. A network of walkways, open spaces, overlooks,



visitor amenities, and integrated circulation improvements improves public access and enhances the enjoyment and appreciation of the San Luis Obispo Bay waterfront. In addition, access improvements at Port San Luis support other County efforts to develop the California Coastal Trail (CCT), a continuous 1,200-mile trail along the California coastline that will ultimately extend from the Oregon border to Mexico. The California Coastal Trail is a work in progress and recognized as a goal of state and national importance. The trail has been officially designated as California's Millennium Legacy Trail.

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The Port Master Plan includes a number of projects that will support the connection of the California Coastal Trail through or along the Harbor District's property to Avila Beach. These planned improvements include pedestrian paths, overlooks, interpretive exhibits, public restrooms, and water and beach access improvements. The Port supports efforts of the County to establish a pedestrian path along the bluffs of Avila Beach Drive between the Port and Avila Beach. The Master Plan recommends a pedestrian path along the edge of Harford Landing that would connect to the Harbor Terrace campground facilities as a logical extension of the Avila Beach Drive pedestrian improvements.

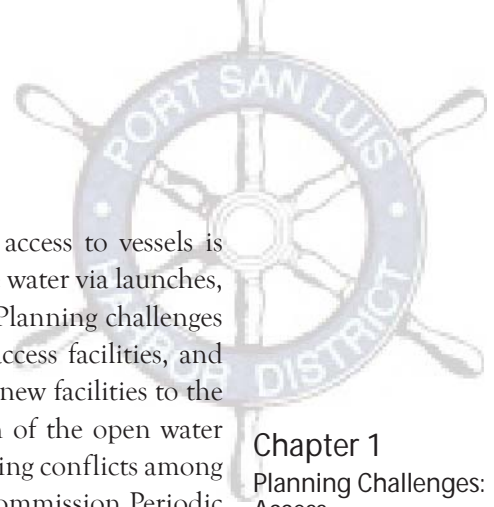
a. Road Access (Road Capacity)

The only vehicular access to the Port is along Avila Beach Drive, which is controlled by the County of San Luis Obispo. This arterial also serves as the primary access road for the nuclear power plant at Diablo Canyon. As such, it is a critical route, extending from Highway 101 to the entrance to Diablo Canyon Road. Avila Beach Drive is also a crucial link for continuous, safe, and convenient bicycle and pedestrian connections to Port San Luis from Avila Beach, Avila Valley, and beyond. The segment of road encompassed within the Port San Luis Study Area extends for over one mile between Avila Beach and Harford Pier.

The Coastal Act and the California Constitution guarantee the rights of all citizens to access and use State tidelands. A coordinated program that encourages alternative transportation through the District, including walking, bus service, trolleys, and bicycling may both alleviate road congestion and parking demands.

One of the chief priorities of the 1976 Coastal Act concerns the protection of public access to the waterfront (PRC §30224, PRC §30254). Both the County and the Harbor District maintain policies advocating reserved road capacity for coastal dependent uses.* The County continues to approve non-priority uses both in and outside the coastal zone, consuming road capacity necessary to serve high priority coastal dependent uses. Most uses and functions that occur at Port San Luis Harbor are coastal dependent, such as boating, fishing, and waterfront recreation. The Harbor District is concerned that development occurring outside of its control could limit the ability to provide for high priority uses. During the San Luis Obispo County LCP Periodic Review (2001), the Coastal Commission advised the County to implement its road capacity reserve to serve priority resources under the Coastal Act. The Harbor District intends to continue to request reserve road capacity for priority uses at the waterfront. Further discussion of Road Capacity occurs under Planning Challenge 5, Services.

* SLO County Ordinance 2702: Priorities and policies of the California Coastal Act and San Luis Obispo County LCP shall be considered in reference to any development proposal in Avila Beach Urban Area, which could impact traffic levels on Avila Beach Drive.



b. Access to Vessels and Water

Port San Luis provides harbor services and functions; as such, providing access to vessels is essential. Boaters need regular access to the water: from getting boats into the water via launches, ramps, and hoists, to reaching vessels on moorings, and alongside the pier. Planning challenges facing water access issues include conflicting water area uses, insufficient access facilities, and sand shoaling. The sheltered area of the harbor has limited capacity; adding new facilities to the water area may preclude space from other uses. Determining the allocation of the open water area requires the Harbor District to balance demand simultaneous with avoiding conflicts among uses while meeting the demands of the market. According to the Coastal Commission Periodic Review of County's LCP (2001), the state (and this region in particular) is experiencing a trend towards increased recreational boating facilities and away from those dedicated to commercial fishing.

1. Boating Access

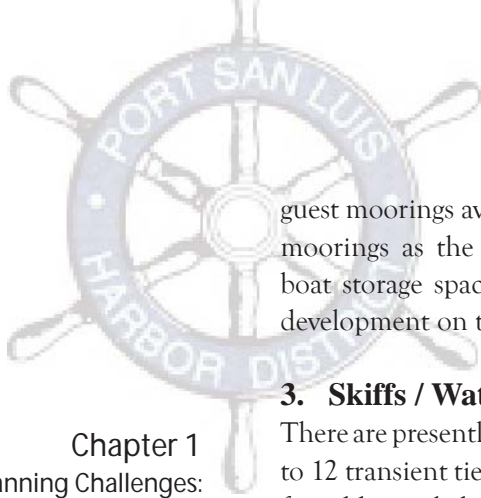
The primary boating access points occur at the launches on Harford Landing and the hoists and landings at Harford Pier. To a lesser extent, boating access also occurs at the hoist and landing at Avila Pier and the small boat ramp at Olde Port Beach. Primary access to vessels on moorings and in the anchorage is via personal skiffs or the water taxi. The water taxi, a service subsidized by the Harbor District, embarks from the small dock adjacent to the Marine Supply at the trailer boat launch.

To facilitate access by skiffs, Harford Pier has four public hoists and two private hoists (and associated ladders) dispersed down the length of the pier. Boating access also occurs at the public landings that exist in three locations on Harford Pier: two fixed, and one floating. Avila Pier has one public hoist (and ladder) and a single landing.

The trailer boat launch facilitates launching for vessels up to 7.5-tons or 15,000 lbs. A 50-ton mobile boat hoist on a concrete pier hauls boats out of the water for dry-dock. Boating access at the two boat launches is limited due to chronic sand shoaling. Shoaling reduces the water depth and amplifies the effects of surge. Despite an on-going program of annual maintenance dredging, it is difficult, dangerous, or impossible to launch and haul boats during the winter months. In order to keep the launch operational, the Harbor District must dredge this area regularly. The District is conducting studies and consulting with marine scientists to better understand wave action and sand circulation within San Luis Obispo Bay. The long-term goal is to find an engineering solution that will eliminate or reduce the frequency and scope of maintenance dredging. (See 1990 Moffat & Nichols Mobile Boat Hoist Facility study for further recommendations.)

2. Moorings and Dry Boat Storage

The Harbor District manages both moorings and trailer boat storage. The number of people on the waiting list for moorings fluctuates with market demand. At one time, the waiting list for these facilities was lengthy; since instituting a waiting fee, the length is characteristic of other harbors in the region. Currently, there are approximately 280 mooring spaces in the main harbor divided among recreational power and sailing vessels, commercial fishing, guest spaces, and about a dozen moorings on the west side of Avila Pier. Currently, commercial fishing vessels utilize 45% of harbor moorings as compared to 52% consumed by recreational vessels. Both categories have available expansion capacity. There are also thirty-four seasonal



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guest moorings available to accommodate transient mooring needs with room for additional moorings as the market demands. The Harbor District currently provides secure trailer boat storage space for various size boats on Harbor Terrace. To improve this space, new development on the site should improve the efficiency of the boat storage facility's design.

3. Skiffs / Water Taxi

There are presently 67 racks and tie-ups (wet skiff storage) at Harford Pier and approximately 10 to 12 transient tie-ups for small boats at Avila Pier. There has been consistent public demand for additional skiff storage space. Space constraints and funding are the major limitations to relieving the skiff deficiency. Skiff racks themselves are fairly inexpensive; however, the associated pier deck, landings, and hoists are very expensive to build and maintain. The Harbor District subsidizes water taxi service with limited seasonal hours of operation. The Harbor District conducted a survey in 2002 that concluded there is a demand for 140 more skiff storage spaces (wet/dry) harbor-wide. The Harbor District plans to add skiff storage spaces at both Avila Pier and Harford Pier. The survey also indicated strong support for continued water taxi service to reach vessels on moorings.

4. Public Pier Fishing

Port San Luis has two public fishing piers: Avila Pier and Harford Pier, which provide excellent fishing opportunities. Both piers incorporate open space setbacks along the pier edges, leaving these spaces uncluttered for pier fishing by locals and out-of-town visitors alike. There are bait and tackle shops, as well as fish cleaning racks on both piers. In addition to the fishers who use pier frontages, other fishers (including "crabbers") use the rock revetment along Harford Landing.

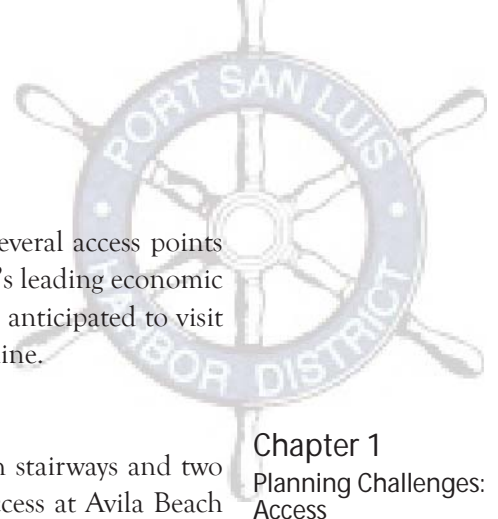
5. Breakwater / Marina

For decades, harbor users have sought an expansion of the breakwater at Port San Luis to allow for a recreational marina. The existing 2,400-foot rubblemound breakwater was constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) in 1913 and affords only limited protection from northwest swells. Because the harbor is exposed to southerly storms, vessels and facilities near the water are susceptible to significant wave damage. In 1988, the Corps demonstrated the financial infeasibility of adding a detached breakwater to increase the amount of protected area in the harbor (General Re-evaluation Report, 1988). Consequently, the last Master Plan (1984, revised 1994) discontinued further consideration of the subject. Nevertheless,

many boaters remain committed to the prospect of an enhanced breakwater and marina at Port San Luis. The Coastal Commission indicates an appreciable lack of recreational boating facilities in the Central Coast area (LCP Periodic Review, 2001). The expanded protection for the harbor from an additional detached southerly breakwater would provide a greater opportunity for Port San Luis to meet recreational boating needs in this area. The Harbor Commission would consider proposals that demonstrate the overall feasibility of such an endeavor.



New stairs at Avila Beach include this stepped seating area near the Pier.



c. Vertical Access: To Beaches and Shoreline

Since the Port began managing the tidelands in this area, the creation of several access points have improved public access to the waterfront. Tourism is one of the County's leading economic activities; as development proceeds in the Avila Valley area more visitors are anticipated to visit Port San Luis. This section describes non-boating related access to the shoreline.

1. Avila Beach

Visitors to Avila Beach benefit from the newly developed (2000) eleven stairways and two handicap ramps to the shoreline. Other amenities enhancing public access at Avila Beach include new restrooms, two beach showers, picnic tables, barbecues, and seating areas.

2. Olde Port and Fisherman's Beaches

The two Port beaches astride Avila Beach Drive (Olde Port and Fisherman's Beaches) currently have several accessways from the road to the shoreline including two stairways, a handicap ramp, two minor bluff trails, and a small boat launch. Other amenities in this area include fire rings, restrooms, and a lifeguard station. Additional accessways may be necessary to serve access to the beaches. The need for additional accessways should be assessed, including identification of appropriate locations. With the addition of visitor serving development at Harbor Terrace, and/or increased tourism in the area, access connections across Avila Beach Drive and to the beach may need to be provided. At that time, additional vertical accessways to the beach should be evaluated and pursued.

3. Harford Landing

Scuba divers would benefit from the construction of a launching area near Harford Pier at Harford Landing. Scuba divers informally use this area, but a few basic improvements such as an outdoor shower, benches, and stairs or ramp would enhance its usability for ocean diving purposes.

4. The Lightstation

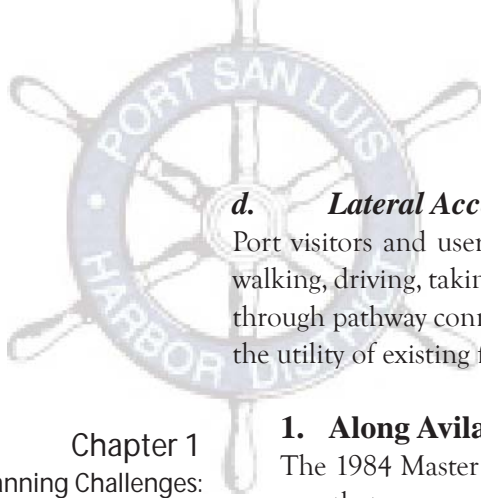
In the Lightstation Planning Sub-Area, a pier was formerly located at Lighthouse Beach adjacent to the breakwater. This pier was once as a primary access point to the Lightstation. The Lighthouse Keepers and the District are planning to replace the historic pier to facilitate water access to the Lightstation. Lighthouse Beach now serves as the customary landing area for kayakers visiting Point San Luis. The Lighthouse Keepers anticipate increased usage of the beach landing with completion of the Lighthouse restoration, yet there is not a trail to connect the beach landing to the Lighthouse. In order to foster alternative accessways to this site, a more formal trail should be constructed and improved after the pier is built.



Public landing at Harford Pier.



Mooring and floating dock area north side of Harford Pier.



d. Lateral Access: Connectivity among Port Properties

Port visitors and users frequently go to more than one destination on Port property by boat, walking, driving, taking the Avila trolley, or bicycling. Facilitating connections between properties through pathway connections, and providing pedestrian amenities and other facilities, enhances the utility of existing facilities and experience of the user.

1. Along Avila Beach Drive to Harford Landing

The 1984 Master Plan proposed numerous access improvements along the County right of way that were not realized. There remains a need to improve access along this roadside to enhance the safety and experience of people walking and cycling through this area and to provide a convenient alternative mode of travel among Port properties. The County controls the planning, maintenance, and improvements for Avila Beach Drive, the crucial link to the heart of Port San Luis. The bluffs along Avila Beach Drive are subject to erosive wave action, making the bluff top areas unstable and threatening to encroach into the roadway (parts of the road toward the west are in jeopardy of washing out). The County has obtained grant funding to construct a pedestrian walkway from Avila Beach to the Fisherman’s Memorial at the entrance to the Port. Establishing a connection from this walkway and extending it continuously to the main harbor area would help to provide continuous, safe, and convenient pedestrian connections and reduce vehicle traffic between Avila Beach and Port San Luis.

Numerous visitors also come to the Port by bike, including families, recreational day-trippers, and other cycling enthusiasts. During peak periods when cars park along both sides of the road, cyclists have to share the roadway with vehicles. Bicycling to the Port is a recreational activity that should be supported not only because it is pleasant but also

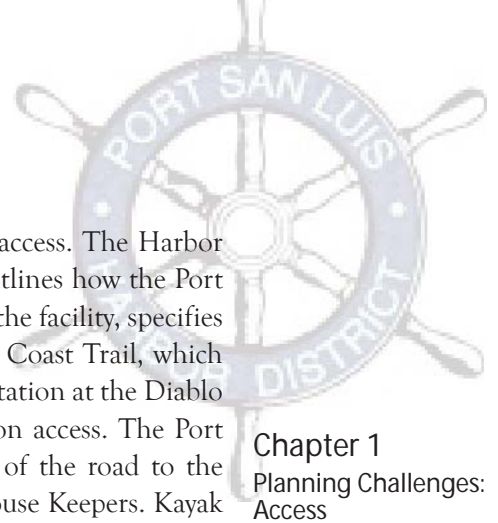
because it creates added benefits of reducing road capacity consumption and parking demand. The County’s most recent circulation study (Avila Circulation Study, 2001) does not propose bicycle transportation improvements along the right of way to the Port. To provide a safe and pleasant traveling environment and encourage cycling transportation as a recreational experience at the Port, bike lanes should be provided along the right of way.

The overlook areas on the bluffs offer excellent occasions to provide the public with a recreational area where they can appreciate uninterrupted scenic vistas of marine life, the waterfront landscape, and the working harbor. Many visitors already use the

bluffs for these purposes without additional improvements; however, RV camping often blocks views and the overlooks. Additionally, the bluffs are near the trailhead for the Lightstation, Pecho Coast Trail, and front the beach area. Development of the bluffs should be planned and coordinated with development of visitor facilities on Harbor Terrace and should include safe connections to other Port facilities with walkways, crosswalks, trolley stops, or other appropriate facilities. All bluff top improvements must take into consideration County right of way terms and conditions.



Access should be improved along this corridor to enhance the safety and experience of people walking and cycling through this area and to provide a convenient alternative mode of travel among Port properties.



2. Lightstation

One of the major planning challenges for this site is providing public access. The Harbor District's Light Station Utilization Program (1990), a document that outlines how the Port meets the obligations established by the U.S. Government for the use of the facility, specifies docent-led access for day use only. Lighthouse Driveway and the Pecho Coast Trail, which are controlled by the local utility company and originate near the guard station at the Diablo Canyon power plant access road, presently, provide primary Lightstation access. The Port contracts with the local utility company to allow limited daytime use of the road to the lighthouse by the District and the custodians of the station, the Lighthouse Keepers. Kayak trips led by the Sierra Club also visit the site by landing at Lighthouse Beach; however, currently no formal trail connects the beach to the station.

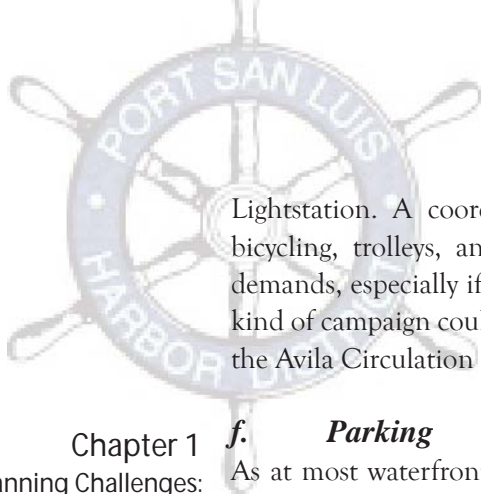
The Lighthouse Keepers also adhere to the concept of "managed access" to the station, meaning "...there will be no unsupervised access to the site" (Point San Luis Lightstation Access Analysis, 1996). When restoration work at the Lighthouse is completed, the Lighthouse Keepers propose four modes of access:

- Use a van or small bus to shuttle visitors to the site via the Lighthouse Driveway;
- Docent-led tours along the Pecho Coast Trail with two to three hikes led to the station each week by docents. (The local utility company currently provides regular docent-led tours to the Lightstation as part of a negotiated agreement with the Coastal Conservancy);
- Via kayak trips, disembarking at Lighthouse Beach and met by docents; and
- Rebuilding of the former Lighthouse pier ("Coast Guard Pier") and providing water shuttle service.

The fourth option is an attractive, albeit costly, solution. The former Coast Guard Pier was located adjacent to Lighthouse Beach just inside the breakwater and once provided the primary means of access to the Lightstation until the road was constructed in the early 1960's. The pier burned to the waterline and was subsequently removed by the Coast Guard in 1979. The Lighthouse Keepers have expressed interest in restoring waterborne access to improve accessibility to the site and enhance visitor's experiences of the Lighthouse. The water taxi or other functionally equivalent service could shuttle visitors from other Port properties to the reconstructed Lighthouse Pier. In addition to access routes, dedicated parking and staging areas are needed to serve the 1,000-plus monthly visitors (projected by the Lighthouse Keepers) to the historic Lightstation (See parking discussion below).

e. Access Signage

Public access at the Port could be improved with an access signage program that coordinates with the Port's existing signage and/or with a signage program for the greater Avila area. Uniform signs that indicate access points, parking areas, launch facilities, and scenic overlooks could improve circulation and public awareness of the types of facilities available at the Port. Specific areas that could benefit from such a program include beach accessways, dedicated beach parking at the Avila lot, direction signs to long-term and short-term parking areas, and staging for the



Lightstation. A coordinated program could encourage alternative transportation including bicycling, trolleys, and walking. Such a program may reduce road congestion and parking demands, especially if information is broadly disseminated in a public outreach campaign. This kind of campaign could be coordinated with the County's intercept parking program outlined in the Avila Circulation Study (2001).

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f. Parking

As at most waterfront destinations in California, demand for parking spaces at Port San Luis often exceeds supply, particularly during warm weather and fishing seasons. The District's intent is to assure an adequate supply of parking for visitors, residents, and harbor users, as well as smooth traffic flow within the harbor and the community.

The Port operates two public parking areas, Harford Landing and the Avila Beach parking lot, totaling almost 600 spaces (including boat trailer spaces at Harford Landing). Various user groups vie for the limited number of spaces at both public parking areas as well as on Harford Pier, and during high fishing seasons at the bluff turnouts. The Harbor District is considering charging a modest parking fee at the public lots.

1. Harford Landing

Parking and circulation through this lot fluctuates and, like most demands at the Port, is largely dependent on the weather. During warm summer months, weekend parking demand is at its peak with recreational fishermen, tourists, beach visitors, and employees and patrons of the local restaurants alternating usage of available spaces with boat trailers and automobiles. This scenario may be replayed on any given weekend from May through October. During the winter months, and on weekends with cold or foggy weather, parking provided at the Port is more than adequate. Currently, Harford Landing provides parking for 248 cars and 35 vehicles pulling boat trailers.

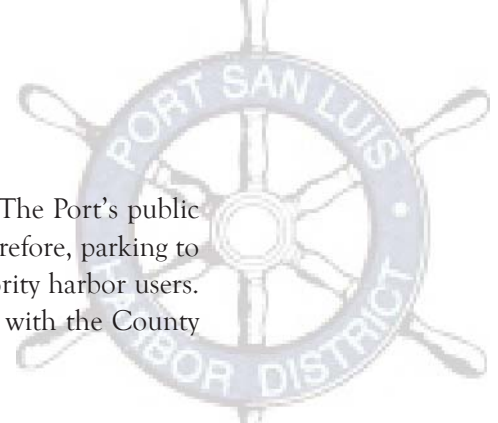
2. Harford Pier

The pier offers limited parking due to space constraints, structural load limits, and restrictions by the local fire authority. Sixteen spaces are dedicated to visitors and two are dedicated to loading and off-loading needs of lessees on the pier. No increase in parking is planned. If warranted, some form of valet service may be funded and administered by pier tenants to serve guests' needs.

3. Lightstation Staging Area

The operators of the Point San Luis Lighthouse, the not-for-profit Lighthouse Keepers, anticipate a dramatic increase in the number of visitors to the Lighthouse once better access is created. Primary means of access to the facility is planned to initially be via vans or shuttles to transport Lighthouse visitors from a parking and staging area. If possible, the staging area should remain in proximity to the Lighthouse driveway. This Plan recommends providing a flexible parking area at the east end of Harford Landing in the East Parking Lot for Lightstation parking and staging needs. Additionally, a flexible parking area could be incorporated into the future development on Harbor Terrace and /or be provided off-season at the Avila Beach parking lot. It may not be possible to provide adequate parking to serve Lightstation needs

The District's intent is to assure an adequate supply of parking for visitors, residents, and harbor users, as well as smooth traffic flow within the harbor and the community.



because of the already challenging parking condition at Port San Luis. The Port's public parking areas fill to capacity during peak seasons and special events; therefore, parking to serve Lightstation visitor needs may conflict with the need to serve priority harbor users. Coordinated use of remote staging areas (parking lot at Ontario Road) with the County should also be considered (see Avila Circulation Study, 2001).

4. Avila Beach Drive

The County currently allows daytime parking along both sides of Avila Beach Drive at Olde Port Beach. This linear strip is estimated to provide 125 spaces. Potential reconfiguration of the road to provide safe pedestrian and bicycle circulation could lower available area for parking along the road.

5. Avila Beach Parking Lot

The Avila Beach parking lot currently provides 353 spaces of public parking to serve the parking needs of beach and pier users. The Port is required to provide a minimum of 300 spaces in this lot, pursuant to an agreement with the County. The 2001 Avila Specific Plan proposes a reconfiguration of this parking lot to allow more flexibility in the use of this property and further the community's redevelopment objectives. This Master Plan would implement that objective by allowing development along the First Street frontage. The majority of the parking lot would remain public parking. The Port will use parking lot revenues from the Avila lot for Avila Beach maintenance and operations. While not the preferred alternative, the Avila Beach Lot may serve as a flexible (off-season) staging area for Lightstation staging.

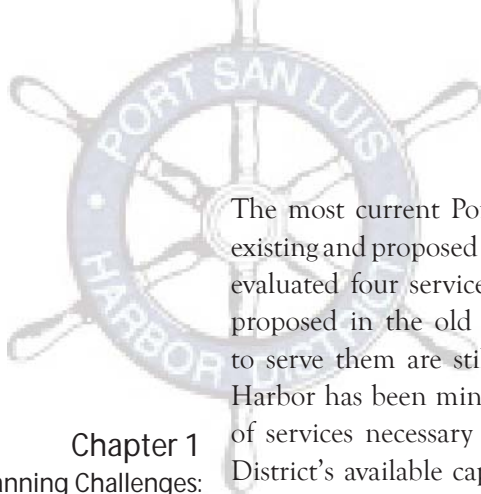
6. Parking Management and Special Events

Parking can be an influential tool in managing congestion and affecting how people choose to move about. Parking at the Port is generally unregulated. In addition, there is currently no established plan or method for managing parking during special events and high demand periods such as the opening day of fishing seasons. With new development at Harbor Terrace and the completion of Lighthouse renovations, there will be a need to coordinate usage of available parking among the Planning Sub-Areas to accommodate the anticipated increase in visitors.

The Avila Community has shown interest in using the Avila parking lot to hold special events. The Port is interested in entertaining this idea during off-season months when the parking lot typically has available capacity.

Planning Challenge 5: Services

Public Resource Code §30254 and §30224 (Coastal Act) directs local governing agencies to reserve essential public services and resources to serve coastal dependent and coastal related uses. San Luis Obispo County's LCP maintains a similar program, which connects development approvals to the governing jurisdiction's ability to provide services and resources to that development. Since the Harbor District is governed by the County's LCP, proposed developments at the Port must be within resource and system capacities available to the Harbor District.



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The most current Port Resource Capacity Study (1997) outlined capacities available to serve existing and proposed development as presented in the 1984 (revised 1994) Master Plan. The Study evaluated four service capacities: Water, Wastewater, Road, and Parking. Some developments proposed in the old Master Plan were not built; therefore, the resources that were planned to serve them are still available. Since adoption of the 1997 study, new development at the Harbor has been minimal and capacities have not changed significantly. Although the amount of services necessary to serve new development on Harbor Terrace is unknown, the Harbor District's available capacity of water and wastewater resources are estimated to be sufficient to serve proposed improvements in this Plan. Before approving new developments proposed in the 2004 Master Plan, the Resource Capacity Study should be updated to verify sufficient capacity is available and ensure an adequate reserve for existing uses and future development.

The following is an estimate of available services. Please refer to Planning Challenge 4, Access, in the previous section of this chapter for a thorough discussion of Port parking issues.

1. Water

The Harbor District receives its water from County Service Area 12 (CSA-12), which in turn receives its water from the San Luis Obispo County Lopez Reservoir. The Harbor District allocation is 100 acre-feet per year (AFY); present consumption is approximately 35% of this allocation. A reserve of 5% AFY per year is required to guard against emergencies such as drought. Included in the Port reserves is water use for the Port San Luis Trailer Park, which is estimated to be 1.8 AFY (1997). Utilization of conservation techniques should assure an adequate supply of water for Port use. Water system facilities include a 100,000-gallon water tank on the Harbor Terrace property and Lopez water lines that extend from the Avila metering station at First Street and Avila Beach Drive to Harford Landing. The most serious deficiency with the present water system is the adequacy of fire flows, i.e., the ability of the water distribution system to provide reliable water pressures for fire suppression. (See Safety section below.)

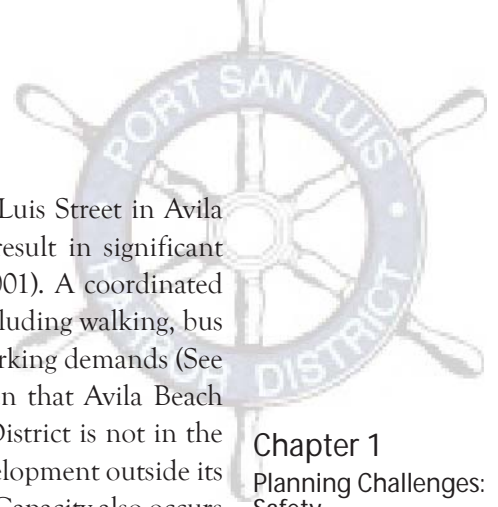
2. Wastewater

The Port currently contracts with the Avila Beach Community Services District for sewage disposal. The District has contracted 70,000 gallons per day (gpd) of the treatment plant's current (2002) 200,000-gpd capacity. Historic wastewater flows pumped from the Port averages 17,000-gpd, well below the Port's contracted capacity with the Community Services District. The Harbor District has a reserve capacity of 50,000-gpd, anticipated to be enough to satisfy proposed development in this Plan.

3. Road Capacity

The County has established Level of Service C (LOS) as the acceptable condition for roadways in the Avila area; however, circulation studies that consider anticipated growth and development in the Avila Community indicate that key areas of the roadway will experience substandard LOS conditions during summer weekends and holidays, i.e., peak visitor periods. The critical section of the road where capacity is limited is that reach

Proposed developments at the Port must be within resource and system capacities available to the Harbor District.



lying between the intersection of San Luis Obispo Bay Drive and San Luis Street in Avila Beach. Studies show that expanding the capacity of the road would result in significant environmental and financial consequences (Avila Circulation Study, 2001). A coordinated program that encourages alternative transportation through the Port including walking, bus service, trolleys, and bicycling may alleviate both road congestion and parking demands (See discussion on Lateral Access, in Planning Challenge 4). However, given that Avila Beach Drive and land areas are under the County's jurisdiction, the Harbor District is not in the position to shape circulation improvement efforts nor to ensure that development outside its jurisdiction does not absorb essential road capacity. Discussion on Road Capacity also occurs under Planning Challenge 4 earlier in this Chapter.

Planning Challenge 6: Safety

1. Fire

Harbor District firefighting infrastructure shares the same facilities as the Port's water system network: a 100,000-gallon water tank on the Harbor Terrace property and Lopez water lines that extend from the Avila metering station at First Street and Avila Beach Drive to Harford Landing. In addition, the Port has two fireboats: the 56' LCM workboat and 26' Radon used by the Harbor Patrol.

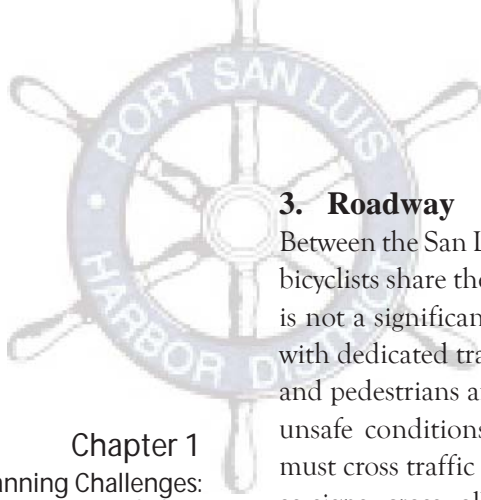
The local fire authority requires water flow of 1,500 gallons per minute (gpm) for a sustained period (four hours). Water flow at the terminus of the Port's water line is limited to 1,200 gpm for two hours, partly due to pipeline constraints between the metering station at Avila and Harford Landing. To provide the Port with sufficient fire flow, the fire authority recommends two actions: Add another water tank at Harbor Terrace (with capacity to be determined by an engineering review) and /or resolve the pipeline constraints. On Harford Pier, the local fire authority recommends installing sprinklers, fire grates, a hose box, and a 20' wide access lane down pier (currently 18'). Redevelopment of the pier, especially renovations of the pier drive, should integrate fire protection measures such as fire grates and additional sprinkler systems.

2. Emergency Response Plans

The County Office of Emergency Services is responsible for managing an Emergency Evacuation Plan for the Port and Avila areas. The Port should refine this emergency response plan to address emergency evacuation of Port properties due to accidental or terrorist release of radioactive materials from Diablo Canyon, earthquake, tsunamis, fire, war, storms, etc. Currently, Harford Pier maintains a 10-foot setback around structures and the pier edge to provide for emergency pedestrian exit, which is required by the local fire authority.



Avila Beach Drive provides the only vehicular access to the Port. The roadway is shared by motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians.



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3. Roadway

Between the San Luis Obispo Creek Bridge and Harford Landing, motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists share the roadway. During most times of the year, the safety of non-motorized users is not a significant problem, even though the experience of these users would be improved with dedicated travel areas. However, during high visitor periods the road is more congested and pedestrians and cyclists must compete for travel room with vehicles, creating potentially unsafe conditions. Additionally, beachgoers who park on the north side of the roadway must cross traffic lanes to reach the beach. Currently, there are no safety improvements such as signs, crosswalks, or bike lanes along the right of way to provide safe passage for non-motorized travelers.