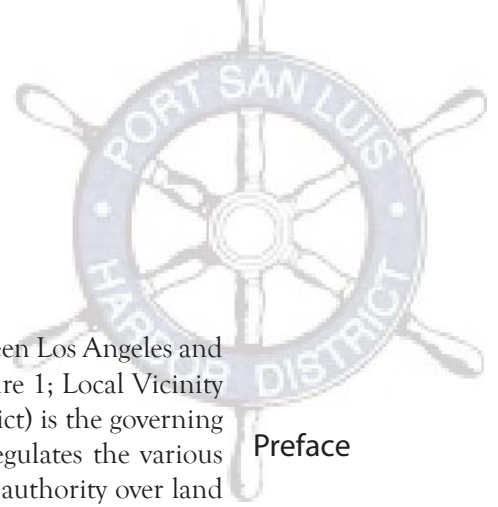




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A. Setting

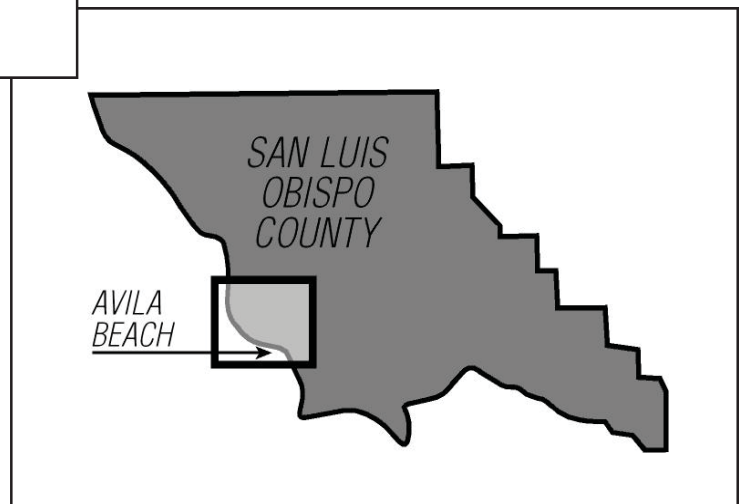
Port San Luis (Port) is located on the Central California Coast, midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, in San Luis Obispo County (see Regional Vicinity Map, Figure 1; Local Vicinity Map, Figure 2). The Port San Luis Harbor District (Harbor District or District) is the governing agency that provides public services and improvements for the Port and regulates the various commercial and recreational uses at the harbor. The Harbor District shares authority over land uses and development under its ownership with two regulatory agencies: the County of San Luis Obispo and the California Coastal Commission, as described in Governance below, and in Chapter 4 Development Approval Process.

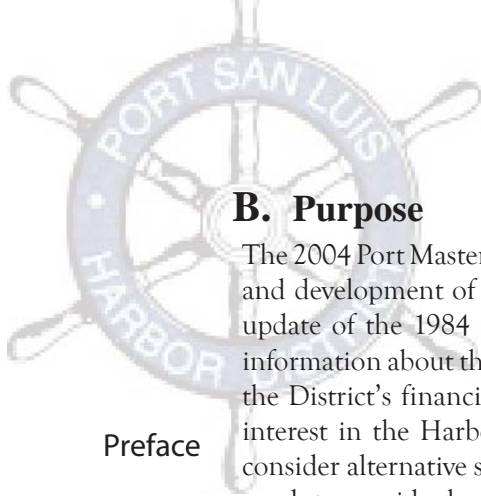
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Figure 1 Regional Vicinity Map

Figure 2 Local Vicinity Map





B. Purpose

Preface

The 2004 Port Master Plan sets forth the Harbor District's official public policy regarding the uses and development of the land, piers, and tidelands under its administration. A comprehensive update of the 1984 Port Master Plan was necessary to provide decision makers with current information about the land and water uses at Port San Luis. Several challenging issues, including the District's financial security, the weakening commercial fishing industry, and development interest in the Harbor Terrace site required the District to evaluate resource allocations and consider alternative strategies for the future treatment of Port facilities. In addition, the District needs to consider how the addition of new uses will affect their ability to meet public obligations in the future. This Plan encompasses the Harbor District's strategy for addressing these issues.

The Port Master Plan is both a policy plan and master development plan for the areas under the control of the Harbor District. Significant portions of this document, particularly the Goals and Policies set forth in Chapter 3, are incorporated into the County Local Coastal Program (LCP) for the San Luis Bay Planning Area. The goals and policies provide long-term visions and policy commitments for the use and development of Port property. Chapter 4 makes up the development component, familiarly known as a "master plan," has a shorter time horizon, and is principally concerned with translating the goal and policy statements of this Plan into physical improvements. Both the "master plan" and "policy plan" must be consistent with the County's LCP. All activities of the Harbor District affecting the physical development of the harbor must be consistent with this Plan.



Fisherman's Memorial near Harford Landing.



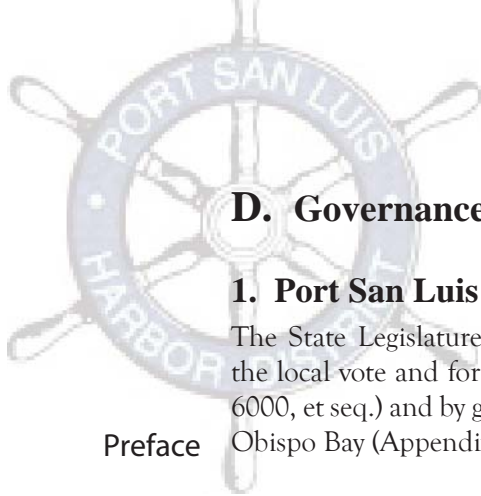
C. Organization of the Master Plan / How to Use this Document

The Port Master Plan is organized to facilitate use by the public, Harbor District tenants, Harbor Commissioners, staff, public agencies, and others who interact with the Port. The organization of the document is summarized as follows:

- Preface** Provides a brief introduction and discusses the governance of Port San Luis including the authority of the Harbor District, California Coastal Commission, and County of San Luis Obispo, followed by a review of Master Plan preparation, adoption, and amendment processes.
- Chapter 1** Presents the objectives of the Master Plan, introduces the Planning Sub-Areas, and reviews the planning challenges addressed by the policies and physical improvements of this Plan.
- Chapter 2** Tells the history of Port San Luis, from its inception in 1868 to the present, and sets the planning context for each of the seven Planning Sub-Areas, including existing conditions and vision.
- Chapter 3** Presents goals and policies for the use and development of Port facilities. This Chapter is incorporated into the LCP for land and water areas under the jurisdiction of the Harbor District.
- Chapter 4** Outlines the development approval process and presents recommended improvement projects, supporting actions, and Design Guidelines that will guide future uses and developments in each Planning Sub-Area. Additionally, this Chapter explains the estimated phasing plan and identifies potential funding sources.
- Appendices** Several Appendices provide background information to support the information presented in this Master Plan.

Information presented in Chapter 3 generally follows the County LCP format; it is organized according to area-wide issues (Districtwide) or areas designated with Public Facilities land uses, or Recreation land uses. At the Port, the Public Facilities category applies to Open Water, Harford Pier, Harford Landing, Beach and Bluffs, Harbor Terrace, and the Lightstation. The Recreation category applies to Avila Beach, Avila Pier, and the Avila Parking Lot.

Users of this document should begin with a review of District-wide goals, policies, and implementation measures and then move to the individual Planning Sub-Area of interest to read additional goals, policies, and actions relevant to that Planning Sub-Area.



D. Governance of the San Luis Obispo Bay Waterfront

1. Port San Luis Harbor District

Preface

The State Legislature gave impetus to the development of the harbor in 1954 by approving the local vote and formation of the Harbor District (State Harbor & Navigation Code Section 6000, et seq.) and by granting to the District those State-owned tidelands encompassing San Luis Obispo Bay (Appendix I).

The original intent of the Harbor District in obtaining the State Tidelands Grant was to develop a public harbor to meet the needs of the people of the state. The Tidelands Grant was based on this objective and mandated specific functions that the District must guarantee for public use within the granted lands, including recreational and visitor-serving uses. The Tidelands Grant to the Harbor District by the State of California (Chapter 647 - 1955; Chapter 302 - amended 1957) mandates:

For the establishment, improvement, and conduct of a harbor, and for the construction, maintenance, and operation thereon of wharves, docks, piers, and other facilities necessary or convenient for the promotion and accommodation of commerce and navigation, and for the construction, maintenance, and operation thereon of public buildings, parks, and playgrounds, and for public recreational purposes.

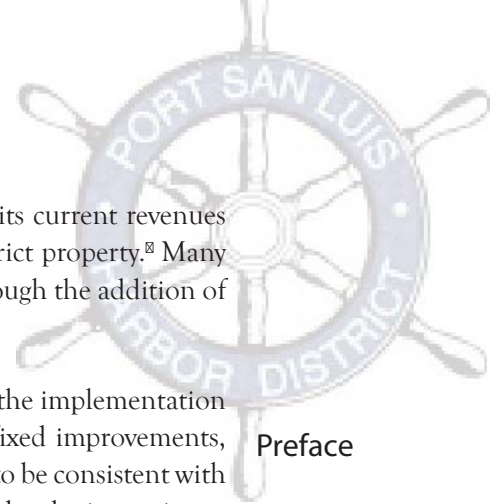
-Chapter 302, Statutes of 1957, §1 (paraphrased)

The grant also mandates that "...the State of California shall have at all times the right to use, without charge, all wharves, docks, piers, slips, quays or any other improvements and facilities constructed on said lands."

The Harbor District is unique in that services it provides are confined to a narrow coastal band around Port San Luis, yet residents throughout the county and beyond benefit from its opportunities. A five-member Board of Commissioners (Harbor Commission) presides over the Harbor District. Commissioners are elected at-large by voters within District boundaries to serve four-year terms. Jurisdictional boundaries of the Harbor District encompass most of the area within Supervisor Districts 3 and 4, and portions of Supervisor Districts 2 and 5. This territory reaches from the Santa Maria River in the south, to Lake Lopez in the east, and includes much of the City of San Luis Obispo to the north (see map of Harbor District boundary in Appendix I). The estimated population within the District's boundary is 95,000 people (2000 Census).

As the governing agency for the Port, the Harbor District is responsible for the overall planning for the area under its control. The Board establishes policy, sets goals and objectives, approves the annual budget, approves major expenditures, and performs other related functions. The Harbor Commission appoints a Harbor Manager to implement the policies of the Harbor Commission. The Harbor Manager hires staff to conduct the day-to-day operation of the Port.

The Port Master Plan serves as an official statement of public policy set forth by the Board of Commissioners regarding future growth and development of properties under its administration. The Harbor District implements the Master Plan primarily through three categories of activities that affect the physical development of the Harbor: Property Management, Capital Improvements, and Regulatory Actions.



Property Management. The District derives a substantial part of its current revenues from the rents paid by lessees and other businesses on Harbor District property.⁸ Many major components of the Master Plan can be implemented only through the addition of new revenue-generating uses and private investment.

Capital Improvements. The capital budget is a significant tool for the implementation of this Master Plan. Each item in the capital budget that involves fixed improvements, such as pier improvements or beach access, must first be determined to be consistent with this Master Plan. If a particular capital improvement project is found to be inconsistent with this Master Plan, an amendment would be required. The Harbor Commission will adopt the amendment before committing funds for the project in the District's annual budget. Grants and other external funding sources, such as monies earmarked by voter propositions, are also significant providers to capital improvement programs.

Regulatory Actions. The Harbor District Code of Ordinances is responsible for the regulatory functions of the Port, dealing with matters such as administrative procedures, pollution control, vessel loading and off-loading, architectural controls, vessel mooring, pier fishing, overnight parking, etc. Other planning policies and documents that relate to the study area include Harbor District Lease Policies, the Coastal Act, and the LCP. Each of these documents gives priority to ocean dependent uses at the Port.



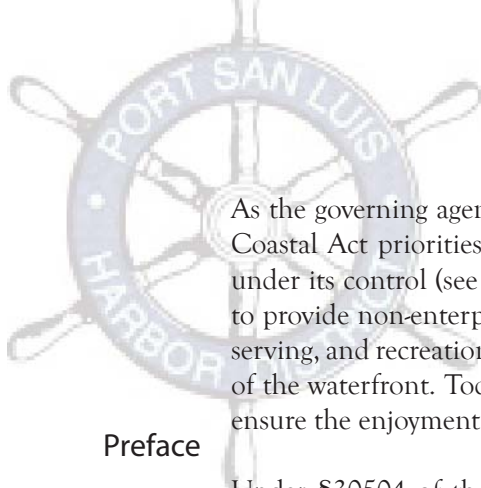
Mobile boat hoist at Harford Landing.

2. Coastal Act, Coastal Commission, and County of San Luis Obispo

In 1976, the California State Legislature adopted the California Coastal Act (Division 20 of the Public Resources Code, §30000 et seq.). One of the Coastal Act's basic goals is to assure orderly, balanced utilization and conservation of coastal zone resources by taking into account the social and economic needs of the people of the State. It is the overall policy of the State of California, under the Coastal Act, to reserve coastal resources for coastal dependent and coastal related uses. The State also places high priority on land uses that serve the public including waterfront recreation opportunities, visitor serving amenities, and coastal access.

The Coastal Commission is the State body responsible for implementing Coastal Act goals and requirements. The Coastal Commission requires that each government entity within the coastal zone plan for the implementation of Coastal Act policies and requirements within its jurisdiction in an LCP. LCPs are to include land use plans, zoning ordinances, and any other actions necessary to implement the Coastal Act. The local government must submit the LCP to the Coastal Commission for certification.

⁸ For the purposes here, the terms "lessees and other businesses" includes all tenants, licensees, permit holders and other private users authorized by the Harbor District.



As the governing agency for Port San Luis, the Harbor District is responsible for ensuring that Coastal Act priorities guide decisions related to the use and development of waterfront areas under its control (see Coastal Act Priorities, facing page). The Coastal Act requires the District to provide non-enterprise service functions and operations including coastal-dependent, visitor serving, and recreation uses that benefit the users of the Port and enhance the public's enjoyment of the waterfront. Today, many responsibilities of the Harbor District are to provide services to ensure the enjoyment, safety, and access of the State-granted lands.

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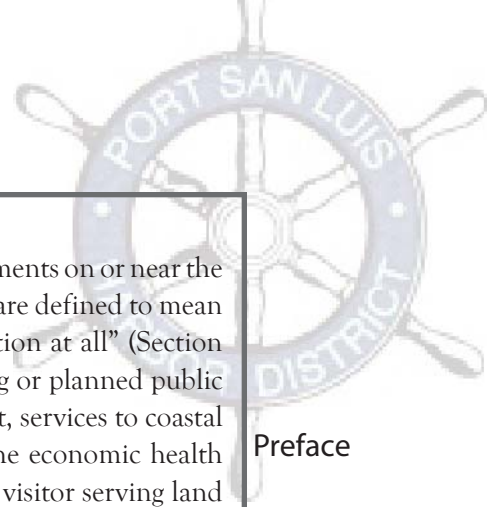
Under §30504 of the Coastal Act, the Harbor District must submit its Port Master Plan to San Luis Obispo County for consideration by the County in the preparation of the LCP. The County's San Luis Bay Area Plan incorporates significant portions of the Port Master Plan concerning land and water use at Port San Luis.

County LCP Policies, Programs, and Standards govern areas landward of the mean high tide line. Land controlled by the Port that is subject to the County's coastal planning authority closely adheres to the County's land use designations and development standards as set forth in the LCP and San Luis Bay Area Plan. Piers and water areas remain under the Coastal Commission's original jurisdiction and are administered by the Harbor District as described in Development Approval in Chapter 4.

Policies provided in this Master Plan overlap other policies in the LCP but are necessary to address the particular needs of the Port and harbor uses.



Dinghy sits in the bay, just off Harford Pier.



Coastal Act Priorities

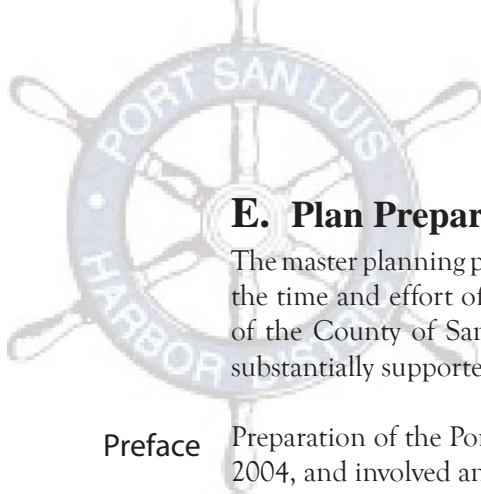
General: “Coastal-dependent” developments have priority over other developments on or near the shoreline (Section 30255 of the Public Resources Code); such developments are defined to mean “any use which requires a site on, or adjacent to, the sea to be able to function at all” (Section 30101). The act also summarizes overall priorities as follows: “Where existing or planned public works facilities can accommodate only a limited amount of new development, services to coastal dependent land use, essential public services and basic industries vital to the economic health of the region, state, or nation, public recreation, commercial recreation, and visitor serving land uses shall not be precluded by other development” (portion of Section 30254).

Commercial Fishing and Recreational Boating: “Facilities serving the commercial fishing and recreational boating industries shall be protected and where feasible, upgraded. Existing commercial fishing and recreational boating harbor space shall not be reduced unless the demand for those facilities no longer exists or adequate substitute space has been provided. Proposed recreational boating facilities shall, where feasible, be designed and located in such a fashion as not to interfere with the needs of the commercial fishing industry” (Section 30234).

Recreational Boating: “Increased recreational boating use of coastal waters shall be encouraged, in accordance with this division, by developing dry storage areas, increasing public launching facilities, providing additional berthing space in existing harbors, limiting non-water dependent land uses that congest access corridors and preclude boating support facilities, providing harbors of refuge, and by providing for new boating facilities in natural harbors, new protected water areas, and in areas dredged from dry land” (Section 30224).

Recreation and Visitor-serving Commercial: “Coastal areas suited for water-oriented recreational activities that cannot readily be provided at inland water areas shall be protected for such uses” (Section 30220). “Oceanfront land suitable for recreational use shall be protected for recreational use and development unless present and foreseeable future demand for public or commercial recreational activities that could be accommodated on the property are already adequately provided for in the area” (Section 30221). Also, “the use of private lands suitable for visitor-serving commercial recreational facilities designed to enhance public opportunities for coastal recreation shall have priority over private residential, general industrial, or general commercial development, but not over agriculture or coastal-dependent industry” (Section 30222, emphasis added). “Visitor serving facilities that cannot feasibly be located in existing developed areas shall be located in existing isolated developments or at selected points of attraction for visitors” (Section 30250(c)). Finally, “upland areas necessary to support coastal recreational uses shall be reserved for such uses, where feasible” (Section 30223).

Scientific Research and Education: “Sound and timely scientific recommendations are necessary for many coastal planning, conservation, and development decisions.” (Section 30006.5) Furthermore, “an educated and informed citizenry is essential to the well-being of a participatory democracy and is necessary to protect California’s finite natural resources, including the quality of its environment...through education, individuals can be made aware of and encouraged to accept their share of the responsibility for protecting and improving the natural environment.” (Section 30012 (a))



E. Plan Preparation

The master planning process was directed by the Port San Luis Harbor Commission and involved the time and effort of Harbor District Staff. The update was developed with the cooperation of the County of San Luis Obispo and the California Coastal Commission. The Plan was substantially supported by a planning grant from the California Coastal Conservancy.

Preface

Preparation of the Port Master Plan occurred over a multi-year period, from May 2001 to May 2004, and involved an extensive public outreach program. Outreach was initiated with a series of three public workshops that provided opportunities for people to comment and provide suggestions for the use and development of District properties. The Harbor Commission also conducted surveys of the jurisdiction's voters, visitors to the Port, and leaseholders to broaden the scope of public participation. The results of the surveys were added to workshop findings, resulting in a wide-range of perspectives on the unique Port environment guiding development of the new Master Plan.

Planning efforts focused on identification of existing conditions and desirable uses of Port properties, capital improvement planning, and organization and presentation of the Master Plan document. Public meetings of the Harbor Commission for the Master Plan Update focused on topics such as Goals and Policies, Allowable Uses, and design concepts. Additional Master Plan presentations were made at regularly scheduled Harbor Commission meetings. (see Appendix D: Needs Assessment Process)

F. Adoption of the Master Plan and Status of Previous Plans

This Master Plan was initially adopted in 2004 by the Port San Luis Harbor Commission as an overall statement of policy regarding activities in the District that affect the physical development of the harbor. The Plan was revised after the Coastal Commission adoption of the LCP in November 2006. The Plan reflects a comprehensive evaluation of the opportunities, mix of users, and capabilities of the Harbor District and serves as an important tool for coordination among various regulating agencies. Because of overlapping jurisdictions over the land and water areas owned by the District, this Master Plan will be adopted and/or interpreted by at least three different agencies: the Harbor District, the County of San Luis Obispo, and the California Coastal Commission.

The County LCP, estimated to be comprehensively updated in 2004 and certified by the Coastal Commission, includes modified language from this Master Plan. Chapter 3 of this plan provides the governing policies for the land and water areas under Harbor District control in the Local Coastal Program (LCP). The adoption of this Master Plan was an integral part of the preparation and adoption of the County's LCP for the San Luis Bay Planning Area. Adoption of this Plan supersedes all previous Port plans.

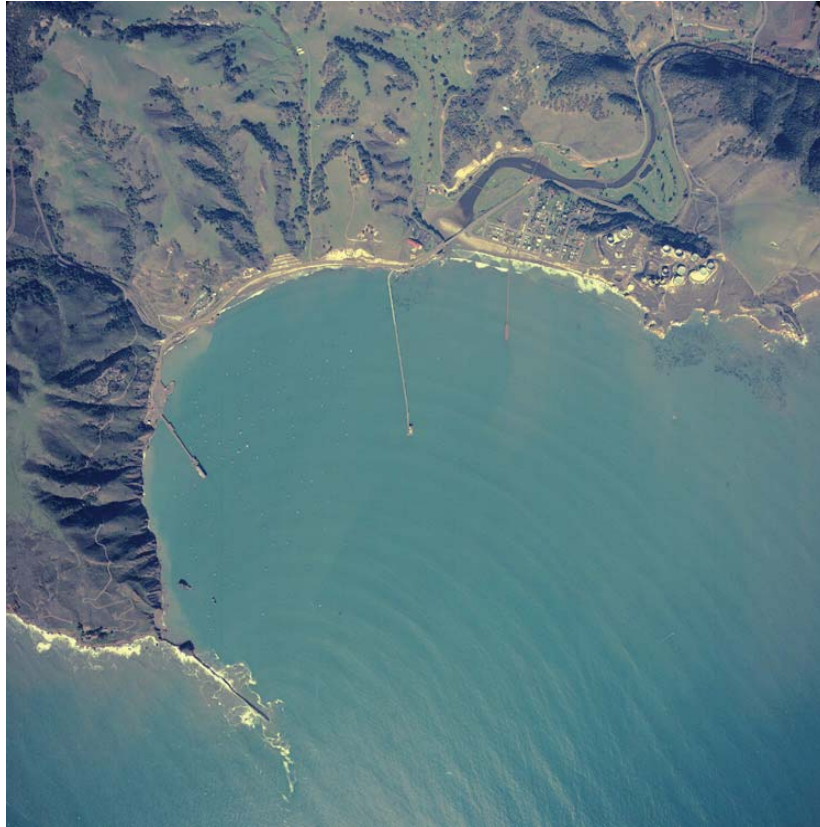
G. Master Plan Amendments

The Harbor Commission may amend their Master Plan from time to time to reflect the changes that may occur in federal, state, or local rules and regulations or as necessary to address the changing needs of the public (users of the Port). In addition, proposed uses that are identified as inconsistent with the Master Plan require a Master Plan amendment before the use may be approved or budgeted.



Preface

The Harbor District will confer with the California Coastal Commission and County of San Luis Obispo during the preparation of any amendments to ensure conformance with those agencies' current regulations. Upon completion of preparation of the amendment, the Harbor District will submit to the County of San Luis Obispo a request for amendment to the County's LCP for consideration by the Board of Supervisors. The Department of Planning and Building will bring the request to the Board for possible authorization after appropriate review by affected agencies including local advisory committees. If authorized, the LCP amendment process will continue. If the Harbor District has not prepared a CEQA document for the LCP amendment, County staff will conduct CEQA review and will prepare the appropriate environmental document. Once environmental review is completed, the application shall be considered by the Planning Commission at a noticed public hearing. The Planning Commission shall pass on a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. If the Board approves the amendment, the application will be forwarded to the Coastal Commission for final adoption. The Planning Commission may refer the application back to the Board if changes are made by the Coastal Commission that requires the County's concurrence.



Aerial View of Port San Luis Harbor.

