

23 Feb 2004

**NOISE PROBLEMS IN PEBBLE BEACH, CALIFORNIA
COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT EIR FOR THE PEBBLE BEACH COMPANY'S
APPLICATION FOR MAJOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS IN
DEL MONTE FOREST**

3/19/2004
#32

NOISES IN PARADISE

The noise description of the Pebble Beach Company construction application (the "Preservation and Development Plan") is a traditional analysis. Unfortunately, it is a grossly inadequate study.

It is deficient on two fronts:

- (1) It fails to consider intermittent noises although modern acoustical science recognizes that intermittent noise is far more annoying than easily-measured, continuous noise; 1
- (2) It proposes to measure noise outputs at a standard 50 ft from the noise source, rather than at the property line of the homeowner. In the language of the acoustical engineer, it concentrates on noise emission rather than noise immission. 2

The analysis fails to address the unusual problems that will be created by this proposed major project in this prestigious community in the center of the Monterey Peninsula. The project would take place in a forest-residential region that is constrained by four guarded gates and an emergency gate that exits into a busy two lane road (Route 68). These gates constrict access to the outer world of Pacific Grove, Monterey and Carmel. If one or more of these gates is clogged by construction traffic the other gates, which are already working at full capacity, become traps for residential traffic, the booming tourist traffic and emergency vehicles. Furthermore, the noise associated with the cutting down and removal of thousands of mature pine trees, as well as the grading and shaping of the land to produce a golf course, would add to the turmoil that will characterize the project. None of this has been considered by the noise consultants. 3 4

The affluent residents of Pebble Beach are unlikely to remain placid under the threat of this upheaval, or when they begin to experience the noises produced by this project. Homes that have been shielded from traffic noise will be exposed to both the noises of construction and the noises from diverted traffic. 5

Fortunately, new noise control procedures and standards that have been adopted by the City of Pacific Grove can be adapted to the forest environment of Pebble Beach, so that the proposed project can be guided by up-to-date practical constraints. 6

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O C E A N A C O U S T I C S A S S O C I A T E S

NEEDED FEASIBLE MITIGATION MEASURES FOR THE PEBBLE BEACH COMPANY PROJECT

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Noise Goal

The purpose of this noise element is to maintain the overall quiet of the natural and healthful environment of Pebble Beach; to avoid and mitigate harmful and annoying man-made unwanted sound (noise) in Pebble Beach, including during periods of construction.

Noise Findings

1. This Mitigation Measure agrees with the World Health Organization in recognizing that noise is not merely a nuisance, it is a "serious health hazard." Noise levels and types can cause harm, annoyance and even death to humans and wildlife, and noise can interfere with individual and community activities and cheapen the value of property.

a. Damage: Continuous or transient noise at and above 75 dBA at the ear of the listener can cause hearing damage;

b. Annoying and Significant: Noise above 55 dBA at the ear of the listener, can be annoying and is considered to be a "significant impact" by the U.S. Environmental Protection and the World Health Organization;

c. Conversation Blocking: Noise levels of 50 dBA barely permits intelligible conversation; and

d. Inaudible Harm: Inaudible low frequency infrasound and high frequency ultrasonic noise can cause biological and property damage.

2. This Mitigation Measure recognizes that relative levels of noise intrusion, compared to the existing noise levels, are sometimes more important than absolute noise levels, and that short term noise can be harmful.

For example 50 dBA can be annoying or harmful in a quiet natural area - a park, a trail, rural areas, a golf course, or at a beach, but unnoticed at a shopping area. Therefore, it is important to measure existing time-variable natural sound level baselines rather than time-averaged, man-made noise levels, which may be too high already.

3. This Mitigation Measure recognizes that harm and complaints are more often caused by actual short duration maximum noise levels rather than calculated average noise levels.

ACTIONS FOR NOISE MITIGATION AND THE PROTECTION OF THE FOREST *AMBIENCE*

I. This Mitigation Measure and Condition of Approval shall include, prior to construction -
a. A complete inventory of existing noise levels for:

- I. All areas of natural sounds, and
- II. Noise sources of all man-made activities experiencing transient or continuous noise of at least 45 dBA; and

b. Physical measurements, as opposed to estimates or computer models, leading to maps of natural sound levels in all public areas and legally-accessible private lands, as well as the identification of continuous and repeating transient maximum noise levels for all noise sources in the updated inventory of noise levels of all man-made activities.

The measurements shall separately measure and map all noise locations in Pebble Beach, to determine --

- I. The Maximum Instantaneous Noise Levels,
- II. Noise Durations,
- III. The dBA difference of an area's average natural sound level compared to that of the man-made intruding noise level at the time of the intrusion.

2. To prevent harm, annoyance and activity interference by noise, no activity, existing or proposed, is permitted which can cause any transient or continuous noise exceeding --

a. Noise levels of 55 dBA at the boundary line of property of any party unwilling or unable to give their consent.

b. By 5 dBA the local natural sound levels, where any alternative exists.

(For example: truck routes can be specified and truck speed limits can be lower than for other vehicles. An alternative to idling a bus or a truck is to require the motor to be turned off.)

3. To adequately warn people consenting to sound levels exceeding 55 dBA about the potential harm to their health, each person giving consent shall sign, and be given a copy of, a declaration clearly describing all potential harms to their health from the activity.

4. At all times, the jurisdiction of Monterey County shall provide resources to fully enforce this element and have at least one full-time safety officer trained in noise detection, measurement and enforcement and noiseless alternatives.

5. To eliminate outside noises which adversely affect Pebble Beach, Monterey County shall encourage noise avoidance and alternatives to all those agencies and jurisdictions which have control over potentially noisy activities.

Dr. Herman Medwin,

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