Chapter P3

Green Trail from HHNA to Spanish Bay

Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of indirect project impacts related to increased equestrian and pedestrian use of the existing Green Trail between Huckleberry Hill Natural Area (HHNA) and Spanish Bay. The environmental setting used as the basis for evaluating these impacts is at the end of this chapter.

This analysis supplements the discussion of biological resources in Chapter 3.3 (direct) and Appendix E (Setting) in the Draft EIR.

The indirect effects of increased equestrian and pedestrian trail use within HHNA were addressed in the Draft EIR. Comments on the analysis of project impacts on HHNA in the Draft EIR will be addressed in the Final EIR. This analysis does not revise the analysis in the Draft EIR relative to HHNA itself.

Figure P3-1 shows the location of the Green Trail segment analyzed in this Chapter.

Revisions Since Draft EIR

The key changes in analysis of indirect effects of increased equestrian trail use related to Draft EIR are as follows:

- Impact BIO-A6 has been added to address impacts of increased equestrian and pedestrian use of the Green Trail between Congress Road and Spanish Bay. The impacts have been analyzed and found significant.
- Mitigation has been added to address impacts to two wetland locations, one of which is a crossing of a riparian area of Sawmill Gulch.
- Existing mitigation identified in the Draft EIR for indirect effects of equestrian trail use has been extended in geographic scope to include the Green Trail between Congress Road and Spanish Bay.

The Green Trail impact analysis and environmental setting are new discussions that are added to the DEIR Biological Resources section (Chapter 3.3).

PRDEIR Text	DEIR Text Affected by PRDEIR Text
Introduction	**New Text**
Revisions Since DEIR	**New Text**
Summary of Project Impacts	**Adds** new impact under subsection A on page 3.3-2.
Relevant Project Characteristics	**Adds** new text on page 3.3-3 regarding trails.
Impacts and Mitigation Measures ▪ Criteria for Determining Significance ▪ Biological Resources Impact BIO-A6	 Criteria used for the new impact discussion remains the same. **Adds new Impact** under subsection A on page 3.3-17 before the subsection B discussion.
Environmental Setting	**Adds** new text.

Summary of Project Impacts

The following table provides a summary of the project impact on biological resources and the significance conclusion. The impact analysis is presented later in this section.

Summary of Project Impacts, Green Trail from Congress Road to Spanish Bay

IMPACT TOPIC	GC	EC	SBI	SBE	SBR	PBL	SUB	CY	RD	HWY
A. ESHA (also B. Non ESHA C. Wetlands D. Sensitive Plants)										
A6. Increased equestrian and pedestrian traffic on the Green Trail between Congress Road and Spanish Bay could adversely effect sensitive biological resources.	—	◉	○	—	—	—	○	○	—	—

● = Significant Unavoidable Impact

◉ = Significant Impact that can be Mitigated to Less-than-Significant

○ = Less than Significant Impact

— = No Impact or Not Applicable to the development site

GC – Golf Course; **EC** – Equestrian Center; **SBI** – Inn at Spanish Bay; **SBE** – Spanish Bay Employee Housing; **SBR** – Spanish Bay Driving Range; **PBL** – The Lodge at Pebble Beach; **SUB** – Residential Subdivisions; **CY** – Corporation Yard Employee Housing; **RD** – Roadway Improvements; **HWY** – Highway 1/Highway 68/17-Mile Drive Improvement

Relevant Project Characteristics

The characteristics of the Proposed Project that were used as the basis for the impact analysis are described below. The environmental setting relative to the impact analysis is presented after the impact analysis itself.

Proposed Project

The Proposed Project includes relocation of the existing Equestrian Center to the Sawmill Site. The Proposed Project does not include any proposed physical changes to existing conditions along the Green Trail segment between HHNA (at Congress Road) to Spanish Bay (at Spanish Bay Road).

The Proposed Project would relocate the existing equestrian traffic to the new center. Based on data provided by the applicant, present use of equestrian trails near the existing equestrian center represents about 9,125 annual horse trips (Questa 2003). This amount would be shifted from its present location to the areas surrounding the Sawmill site (e.g. HHNA including the SFB Morse Preserve).

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Criteria for Determining Significance

The following significance criteria were developed in accordance with CEQA, State CEQA Guidelines, Monterey County plans and policies, and agency and professional standards.

A. Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHAs)

- result in any direct or indirect disturbance of habitats designated as an ESHA, as defined in Appendix A of the Del Monte Forest LUP, which results in disruption of protected resources and habitat values;

B. Sensitive Habitats (non-ESHA)

- have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local, state or federal regional plans, policies or regulations, including those resulting in long-term degradation of a sensitive plant community because of substantial alternation of a land form or site conditions (e.g., alteration of wetland hydrology);

- for direct and indirect effects to Monterey pine forest within the Del Monte Forest, a "substantial adverse effect" is defined in this document as "*the loss, conversion, and/or fragmentation of Monterey pine forest such that the natural forested character is not retained to the maximum extent feasible consistent with allowable development under the Del Monte Forest Land Use Plan (per LUP Policy 31), or such that long-term protection of the natural forest resource is not achieved, including preservation of forest plant associations, forest geographic and genetic diversity, native soil cover, and overall forest health (per LUP Policy 32*);
- for cumulative effects to Monterey pine forest on a regional basis, a "substantial adverse effect" is defined in this document as "*the loss, conversion, and/or fragmentation of Monterey pine forest such that the future conservation of Monterey pine forest, in absence of an adopted regional conservation plan, would be uncertai*n"; uncertainty is defined as the loss of more than 5% of existing undeveloped Monterey pine forest on a regional basis.

C. Wetlands

- have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or wetlands that meet the Coastal Act definition, through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption or other means;

D. Special Status Species

- have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (USFWS) including reducing the number or restricting the range of an endangered, rare or threatened species;

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Impact BIO-A6. Increased equestrian activity on the Green Trail between Congress Road and Spanish Bay could result in indirect disturbance to environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHA) including wetland, riparian areas and remnant dunes, Monterey pine forest, special-status plant and wildlife species and water quality. These are potentially significant impacts that can be reduced to a less-than-significant level with mitigation.

Based on data provided by the applicant, about 9,125 annual horse trips would be shifted from their present location to the areas surrounding the Sawmill Gulch site. More than half of the trips are by guests. Riding to the beach is popular with both those who board their horse and by guests. The most-direct route from the New Equestrian Center to the beach would follow the Green Trail from

Congress Road to Spanish Bay. Specific estimates of how many additional horse trips would be added to the Green Trail were not developed although it is probable that the resultant increase in trips will be on the order of thousands per year.

Pedestrian use of this portion of the Green Trail is also likely to increase with the addition of the Corporation Yard Employee Housing, the additional visitor-serving units at the Inn at Spanish Bay and the new residential lots in Area F-2 and Area F-3. Some of the new residents are likely to use the trail to access the beach at Spanish Bay. Provided this increased use is limited to pedestrians, the effect of increased pedestrian use is unlikely to be noticeable by comparison to the effects of increased equestrian use. Indirect effects of increased equestrian use would occur with project development and would be considered a significant impact on biological resources.

ESHA

This segment of Green Trail crosses three ESHA areas: Sawmill Gulch and its associated riparian/wetland area near Mission Court, a wetland south of Colton Road, and remnant dune habitat at Spanish Bay.

The trail in the vicinity of the Colton Road wetland encroaches the wetland for a length of approximately 100 feet. Within this segment, the trail weaves in and out of wetland, such that short segments of the wetland are impacted, rather than a continuous stretch of 100 or more feet. The trail crosses the Sawmill Gulch wetland near Mission Road, where it is approximately 30 feet wide. At drainage and wetland crossings, equestrian use can result in sedimentation and trampling of riparian/hydrophytic vegetation. This is a *significant* impact. With the implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-A6, this impact would be reduced to a *less-than-significant* level.

The Green Trail through the Spanish Bay dunes is already subject to extensive foot traffic due to its proximity to the coast. Cable fencing and signage is already in place to limit the widening of the trail and disruption of the dune habitat. However, increased equestrian use increases the potential for erosion along the edges of trail and increased maintenance will be required for the trail controls. Increased equestrian use of this segment of the trail would also increase horse manure and the resultant risk of spread of noxious weeds that could affect special-status plants in the dunes. This is a *significant* impact. With the implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-A6, this impact would be reduced to a *less-than-significant* level.

Sensitive Habitats (non-ESHA)

This segment of the Green Trail crosses through areas of Monterey pine forest between Congress Road and Sloat Road outside of the Monterey Peninsula Country Club golf course, roads, and wetland areas. The existing trail is very narrow in certain locations. Increased equestrian use could result in widening of the trail, increased erosion and loss of understory vegetation that could degrade the value of the Monterey pine forest adjacent to the trail. This is a *significant*

impact. With the implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-A6, this impact would be reduced to a *less-than-significant* level.

Wetlands

The two wetlands crossed by the trail are both natural freshwater marshes and are considered ESHA. Project impacts are as discussed above.

Special Status Species

The area surrounding Green Trail is considered suitable habitat for certain special status plant and wildlife species as discussed in the Environmental Setting below. Increased equestrian use could result in soil and vegetation disturbance directly along this segment of the Green Trail. Depending on existing trail width, maintenance, and user behavior, an area adjacent to heavily used trails can be subject to soil compaction and/or erosion, vegetation loss, and loss of habitat. At drainage crossings, equestrian use can result in sedimentation, vegetation loss, and direct disturbance of biota in the drainage itself. Equestrian traffic could also trample and or remove (i.e. uproot) special status plant species and trample special status wildlife species, in particular amphibian or reptile species, which could potentially occur in Sawmill Gulch. Equestrian traffic can also spread noxious weed seeds that may be carried by horses in hide or hoofs or may be within horse manure that could result in habitat conversion or degradation. This is a *significant* impact. With the implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-A6, this impact would be reduced to a *less-than-significant* level.

Water Quality

Nutrients within horse manure can affect downgradient water quality in wetlands and drainages. Water quality impacts associated with potential increased nutrients associated with animal waste along trails were analyzed in the Draft EIR, Chapter 3.4, “Hydrology and Water Quality”. Increased equestrian traffic on this trail segment could degrade water quality in Sawmill Gulch. Degradation of water quality could affect biological resources downstream. This is a *significant* impact. With the implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-A6, this impact would be reduced to a *less-than-significant* level.

Mitigation Measure BIO-A6. Implement measures to protect Sawmill Gulch, wetlands, remnant dunes and other sensitive biological resources along the Green Trail between Congress Road and Spanish Bay from substantial disruption due to increased equestrian use.

The following shall be completed prior to issuance of any grading permit for the New Equestrian Center:

- The applicant shall design either a re-route around the wetland just south of Colton Road or an elevated trail (e.g. a boardwalk) to avoid encroachment into the wetland area itself.

- The applicant shall design an elevated clear-span bridge structure to avoid encroachment into Sawmill Gulch at the crossing near Mission Court.
- The applicant shall obtain necessary permits from the CDFG, USACE, or RWQCB if the trail improvements would result in encroachment into ESHA and non-ESHA wetland areas. If any wetland or riparian areas must be disturbed in order to construct the bridge, the applicant shall replace any temporary or permanent loss by restoration of wetland and/or riparian areas within Sawmill Gulch to avoid any net loss of habitat.

The following measures shall be completed prior to boarding of any horses at the New Equestrian Center:

- The applicant shall fund and construct the approved trail improvements near the wetlands south of Colton Road.
- The applicant shall fund and construct the approved trail improvements for the Sawmill Gulch crossing near Mission Court.

The following measures shall be implemented once horses are boarded at the New Equestrian Center

- The applicant shall be responsible for an annual program of erosion control and trail maintenance along the Green Trail between Congress Road and Spanish Bay. The applicant shall monitor the Green Trail during the wet season, temporarily close the trail to equestrian use when monitoring identifies that a substantial erosion potential exists, and conduct periodic maintenance as necessary to prevent soil erosion and sedimentation from subsequent storm events.
- The applicant shall conduct at least annual (and more frequent if necessary) weed control surveys of the Green Trail between Congress Road and Spanish Bay and use manual, mechanical, and appropriate means of control where infestation of noxious weeds is identified.
- The applicant shall extend the requirements of Draft EIR Mitigation Measure HWQ-C3 to Sawmill Gulch between Congress Road and Spanish Bay. The measure requires the implementation of stream and wetland water quality monitoring, and identification and implementation of additional control measures if monitoring shows a substantial increase in nutrients resulting from animal waste along trails.
- The applicant shall permanently close and revegetate any informal “social” trails along this portion of the Green Trail between Congress Road and Spanish Bay, provided permission is granted by the underlying landowner.
- The applicant shall maintain the existing barriers along the dune habitat near Spanish Bay.
- The applicant shall incorporate environmental education about the sensitive resources along the Green Trail to all trail users and attendees at special events including measures that individuals can implement to lower their impact such as not hitching horses to trees, crossing drainages at marked crossings, staying on designated trails, and use of noxious weed-free feed.

The applicant shall incorporate these measures into a supplemental portion of the site-specific RMP for the HHNA.

Environmental Setting

The Green Trail between Congress Road and Spanish Bay traverses forested areas along the Monterey Peninsula Country Club (MPCC) Dune Golf Course between Congress Road and Sloat Road and dune areas along the MPCC course between Sloat Road and Spanish Bay Road. This setting describes the sensitive biological resources identified along this portion of the trail.

Background research and a field survey by two Jones & Stokes biologists was conducted in June 2004 to identify sensitive habitat areas and the potential for special-status plant and wildlife species to occur along the trail in areas that might be affected by increased equestrian use. Special status species records for the area from the California Natural Diversity Database (California Department of Fish and Game 2004), species lists for the Del Monte Forest (see Appendix E.4), and the species information developed to support the Draft EIR were reviewed to identify a list of target species with potential to occur along this portion of the Green Trail.

Green Trail Route Description

From HHNA, the Green Trail crosses Congress Road and then proceeds on the north side of the MPCC course and Sawmill Gulch to Colton Road. The trail follows Colton Road for a short segment that crosses Sawmill Gulch and then leaves the road and proceeds on the north side of the MPCC course in a forested area between the course and Sawmill Gulch. Near Mission Road, the Green Trail crosses Sawmill Gulch at an undeveloped low-water crossing, and then proceeds along the north side of Sawmill Gulch to Sloat Road. Crossing Sloat, the Green Trail enters an area of dunes along the MPCC course until it reaches Spanish Bay Road adjacent to the beach at Spanish Bay.

The existing trail varies in condition. The upper portion just north of Congress Road is fairly wide (~10 feet). As the trail proceeds toward Colton Road, the trail narrows to about 2-3 feet wide in places. North of Colton Road, the trail remains narrow in most segments, except when it is directly adjacent to the MPCC course, all the way to Sloat. North of Sloat, the trail widens and receives a fair amount of use. Through the dune areas, the trail edge is bordered by a cable fence to prevent access into the adjacent sensitive dune habitat.

ESHA Areas

Based on the background research and field reconnaissance, the following ESHA areas were identified within the area that may be affected by increased equestrian use of this portion of the Green Trail.

Coastal Dunes

The area between Sloat Road and Spanish Bay Road contains remnant dune habitat that contains coastal dune scrub, a sensitive vegetation community that is considered ESHA by the Del Monte Forest LUP, special-status plants, and habitat for several special-status wildlife species.

Riparian Habitat

Sawmill Gulch is adjacent to the Green Trail between Congress Road and Spanish Bay Road. The creek contains riparian vegetation, a sensitive vegetation community that is considered ESHA by the Del Monte Forest LUP, and provides suitable habitat for several special-status wildlife species.

Wetlands

Two areas of wetlands were identified along the Green Trail between Congress Road and Spanish Bay:

- **South of Colton Road**. This area is located several hundred feet south of Colton Road. The wetland consists of freshwater marsh, dominated by panicled bulrush *(Scirpus microcarpus*). The trail currently is located on a portion of this wetland. As a natural freshwater marsh, this wetland would be considered ESHA by the Del Monte Forest LUP.
- **Sawmill Gulch near Mission Court**. This area is located several hundred feet south of Sloat Road where the trail crosses Sawmill Gulch along Mission Road. It consists of the Sawmill Gulch channel and adjacent wetlands dominated by panicled bulrush above the ordinary high water mark. This wetland is approximately 30 feet in width at the site of the trail crossing. As a natural freshwater marsh, this wetland would be considered ESHA by the Del Monte Forest LUP.

Non-ESHA Sensitive Habitats

The dominant natural vegetation community in the upland areas along the Green Trail between Congress Road and Sloat Road is Monterey pine forest, which is a sensitive vegetation community, but is not considered ESHA by the Del Monte Forest LUP.

Special-Status Plant Species

Based on a review of botanical survey results, the CNDDB (2004) the prior uncertified Pebble Beach Lot Development Final EIR (County of Monterey 1997 and 1995) and other sources of information (see Draft EIR Appendix E), and the presence of suitable habitat conditions, a number of special-status plants were identified as having the potential to occur in the Del Monte Forest (see Appendix E.4 in this document). This list was used as the target list for the field survey of this portion of the Green Trail.

Jones & Stokes' biologists conducted a field survey of all plant species identified directly adjacent to the Green Trail between Congress Road and Sloat Road. All plants encountered in this area were identified to a taxonomic level sufficient to exclude the possibility that the plant was one of target special status species for the area. The only special status plant species identified during this survey was Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*), which is the dominant species in the forest throughout the area surveyed. In addition, three special status species with potential to occur in the project area would not have been apparent at the time of the June 2004 survey. These species are Hickman's onion (*Allium hickmanii*), San Francisco collinsia (*Collinsia multicolor*), and Santa Cruz microseris (*Stebbinsoseris decipiens*).

The Green Trail between Sloat Road and Spanish Bay Road through the dune area was not surveyed because the area has been the subject of extensive prior study. Prior CNDDB special-status plant species recorded in the Spanish Bay dunes or in adjacent dunes at Asilomar State Beach include:

- Menzies' wallflower (*Erysimum menziesii*),
- sand gilia (*Gilia tenuiflora var. arenaria*),
- Tidestroms' lupine (*Lupinus tidestromii var. tidestromii*),
- Jones Layia *(Layia jonesii)*
- Monterey spineflower (*Chorizanthe pungens var. pungens*),
- Kellogg's horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata ssp. sericea*),
- Hutchinson's larkspur (*Delphinium hutchinsoniae*), and
- beach layia (*Layia carnosa*),

Potentially suitable habitat is also present in the dunes for the following other special-status plants: Monterey Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja latifolia*), coastal dunes milk vetch *(Astragalus tener* var. *titi),*Yadon's wallflower *(Erysimum menziesii* spp. *Yadonii)*, robust spineflower (*Chorizanthe robusta var. robusta*), coast wall flower (*Erysimum ammophilum*), and Seaside bird's beak (*Cordylanthus rigidus spp. littoralis*).

Special Status Wildlife Species

Based on the habitat present, a review of the sources of information used for the analysis of biological resources in the Draft EIR (see Draft EIR Appendix E), and review of the list of potential special-status wildlife species for the Del Monte Forest (see Appendix E.4), thirteen special-status wildlife species were determined to be present or have suitable habitat adjacent to the Green Trail between Congress Road and Spanish Bay Road

Two wildlife species have been documented along or adjacent to the Green Trail Sloat Road and Spanish Bay Road:

- black legless lizard *(Anniella pulchra nigra)*, and
- white-tailed kite *(Elanus leucurus)*.

Suitable habitat for the following three species is present in the Spanish Bay Dunes adjacent to the Green Trail, although these species have not been documented as present to date: Smith's blue butterfly (*Euphilotes enoptes smithi)*, silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra)*, and California horned lizard *(Phrynosoma coronatum frontale)*.

Suitable habitat for the following two species is present in Sawmill Gulch and its riparian and wetland areas, although these species have not been documented as present to date: California red-legged frog *(Rana aurora draytonii)*, and southwestern pond turtle *(Clemmys marmorata pallida)*.

Suitable habitat for the following six species is present in the Monterey pine forest and riparian areas along Sawmill Gulch, although these species have not been documented as present to date: pallid bat *(Antrozous pallidus)*, ringtail *(Bassariscus astutus)*, Monterey ornate shrew *(Sorex ornatus salarius)*, Monterey dusky-footed woodrat *(Neotoma fuscipes luciana)*, sharp-shinned hawk *(Accipiter striatus)*, and Cooper's hawk *(Accipiter cooperi)*.

The following three additional special-status species are periodically present in marine areas offshore Spanish Bay. These species were included as runoff from the trail might affect these species: southern sea otter *(Enhydra lutris nereis)*, California brown pelican *(Pelecanus occidentalis californicus)*, and western snowy plover *(Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus)*.