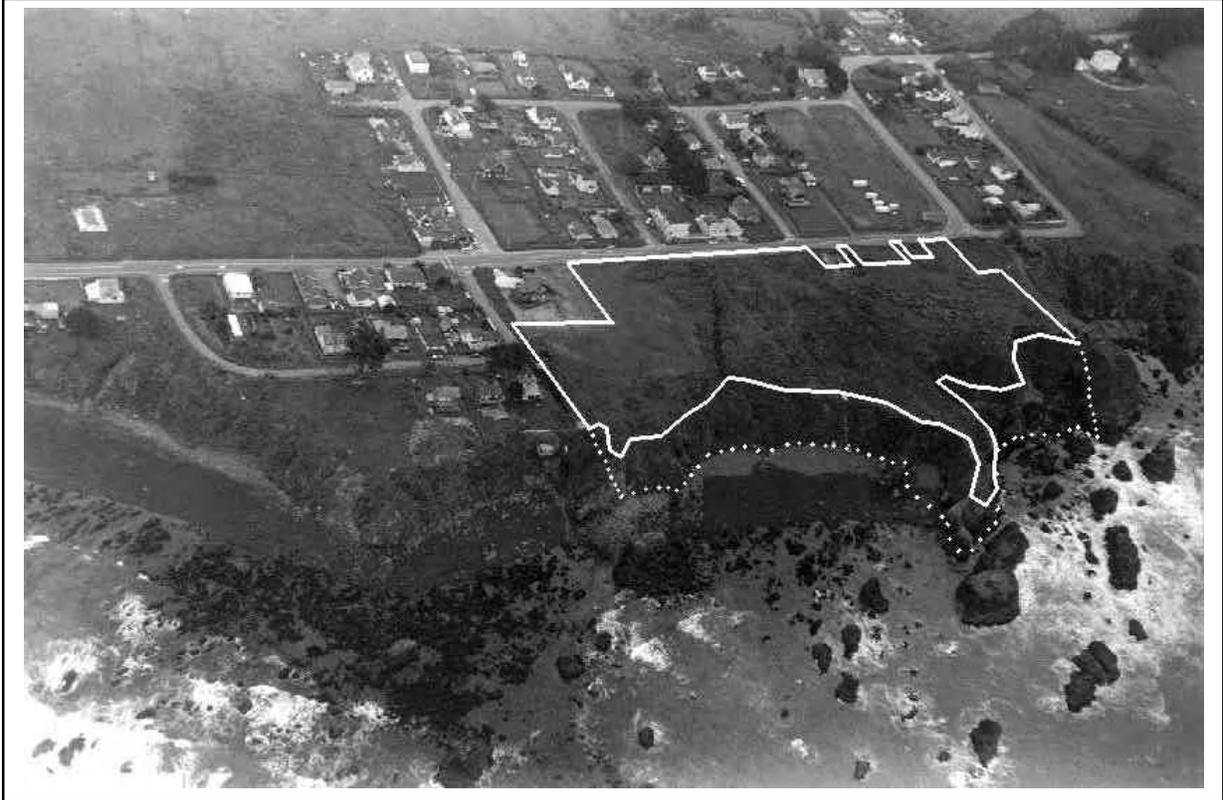


Westport Headlands Management Plan



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**Revision Approved
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INTRODUCTION

The Westport headlands consist of approximately nine acres of oceanfront property in the center of the rural village of Westport. As the front porch of the community, this undeveloped land provides residents and visitors with dramatic views of the Pacific Ocean and valuable recreational opportunities. The property was acquired in 2000 by Westport Village Society, Inc. (WVS), a non-profit corporation, to preserve and facilitate public coastal access to this property with a generous grant from the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC). A Management Plan for the property was developed and approved by the WVS and SCC in March 2001.

Since that time, various alternatives for improving public access have been considered and more specific plans have been designed with substantial public and SCC input. This revision of our original plan reflects those changes and provides our vision for managing this property for the public benefit. We first discuss our management philosophy and then describe the property and its natural and historical values. From there we move on to consider specific management issues, with goals identified for addressing each one. Lastly, we consider ongoing maintenance requirements and the wherewithal needed to achieve our goals and ensure long term viability for this undertaking.

MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

The WVS was organized in 1992 to foster the preservation, enhancement, and interpretation of the natural and historic environment in and around the village of Westport, as well as to support local charitable and educational projects. The acquisition of the headlands property was consistent with the broad vision of the corporation as stated in its *Bylaws*, which specify among other purposes that the non-profit corporation is:

- (2) To acquire, hold and manage land and interests in land, including "qualified conservation contributions" and open space easements in and around the village of Westport, California as a "qualified organization" under Internal Revenue Code 170(b), including (but not limited to) contributions and acquisitions intended to:
 - (a) preserve land areas for outdoor recreation and education of the general public;
 - (b) protect relatively natural habitat of fish, wildlife, plants, or similar ecosystems;
 - (c) preserve open spaces (including farmland and forest land) where such preservation is for the scenic enjoyment of the general public or pursuant to clearly delineated Federal, State, or local governmental conservation policy, and will yield a significant public benefit; or,
 - (d) preserve historically important land areas or certified historic structures.

Our management philosophy for the Westport headlands springs from those broad objectives, an agreement with the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC), and valuable public input received during and following purchase of the headlands property. In an agreement with the SCC, we committed to "hold the lands or, provide nondiscriminatory public access consistent with the protection and conservation of either coastal or other natural resources or both." We also agreed that we shall not restrict or deny public access to the property except as specified in a management plan and that we shall erect a sign or signs to identify the public access.

Our management philosophy for the headlands property is to balance permanent protection of its scenic, community, and environmental qualities and special character with enhancement of public access, recreational, and educational opportunities. Most activities that have occurred historically, including walking; viewing native plants, birds, whales, and other wildlife; fishing; access for small boat launching; community events; picnicking; contemplation; and the general enjoyment of the scenic beauty of the site will continue to be encouraged. Some additional uses such as historical and environmental interpretation may also be promoted to the extent that they can be pursued safely without jeopardizing or degrading existing values. Specific goals stemming from this general philosophy are identified below as they pertain to particular management issues.



THE HEADLANDS PROPERTY

The headlands property is located in the heart of the rural village of Westport on the Mendocino County coast, about 15 miles north of Fort Bragg (Exhibit 1). It comprises roughly nine acres of oceanfront land extending from Highway 1 to the Pacific Ocean and fronting on Omega Street at the north (Exhibit 2). The property comprises four lots (Assessor's Parcels 013-320-01, 013-300-61, 013-300-62, and 013-300-63) and has a street address of 38950 North Highway 1.

The headlands have always played a significant role in the life of the town, a community that encompasses residents of the village and surrounding coastal areas. Initial settlement of the town in the 1860s depended on the use of the headlands for lumber milling and the shipment of cargo and passengers from two wharves. As roads replaced transportation by ships and the town's lumber mill declined the property gradually reverted to bare land. Its importance then became increasingly linked to its scenic, recreational, and subsistence fishing values. Those values have continued to assume larger importance as tourism has expanded in the late twentieth century. Existing conditions and resource values are briefly described here as they have a bearing on the development of long term management principles and practices for the property.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Most of the property is relatively level, consisting of a coastal terrace formation with an average elevation of about 80 feet above mean sea level and a slope of less than 5%. The western boundary of the property drops fairly precipitously to the beach and ocean below with a slope of more than 50%. The virtual absence of tree cover on the property affords dramatic whitewater views of offshore rock formations from Highway 1 and the rest of the village of Westport. A beach borders the northern half of the ocean frontage and remains above the maximum high tide line for much of the year. Numerous near shore and offshore rocks provide intertidal and rocky shoreline habitat with dramatic whitewater action.

The only standing structure on the property is an old storage shed near the south end, which will be removed. An existing hand dug well lined with concrete is present near the center of the project and it has been temporarily covered. A permanent cover is planned. A subdrain installed by the prior land owner extends from the center of north edge of the property to the seasonal stream at the point where it reaches the bluff edge. The perimeter of the property is currently fenced with barbed wire on steel posts and some interior fencing also remains. Two vehicular entry points are present along Highway 1 and another exists on Omega Street. Access to these gates is presently controlled by chains or pole barriers and is maintained for emergency vehicular entry and special event access only. The property is regularly visited by the public for fishing, abalone diving, whale and bird watching, beach walking, picnicking, swimming, and other recreational activities. This access occurs on paths that begin at the three entry points and are kept mowed to facilitate pedestrian use. One trail that formerly extended onto the peninsula in the central portion of the property has been blocked by a log barrier to discourage use of this dangerous route.

RESOURCE VALUES

Several studies have documented environmental conditions on the headlands property and certain characteristics warrant active management to ensure they are preserved. Areas of special concern are delineated in Exhibit 3. A seasonal watercourse extends from a Caltrans culvert on Highway 1 opposite the Lost Coast Inn to the coastal bluff, effectively bisecting the headlands property. This stream varies from 3 to 6 feet deep and averages 3 feet in width during wet weather. Wet conditions also prevail in winter months along the edge of the property fronting on Omega Street. A bluff retreat rate is estimated at two inches per year in a geotechnical investigation for the property by Olsborg and Sitton (2003), and slides are present in many locations along the bluff margin. The slides are induced mainly by terrestrial water transport, rather than wave action. The prior land owner installed a subdrain north of the seasonal watercourse to limit bluff retreat in the north portion of the property.

A botanical survey by Teresa Scholars (2001) identified four plant communities on the property. They consist of Coastal Strand, North Coast Bluff Scrub, Coastal Terrace Prairie, and Riparian Scrub/Wetland associations. Only one species of special concern was found, the rare and endangered Mendocino Paintbrush (*Castilleja mendocinensis*). Wetland areas are also considered fragile, and merit special consideration. Both are delineated in Exhibit 3. To avoid impacts to this areas species of special concern and the wetland areas, Scholars recommends keeping trails in their current locations, maintaining those trails with mowing, and developing a program to manually remove invasive plants, particularly Himalaya berry and teasel.

An archaeological survey by Van Bueren (2000) identified three loci believed likely to contain legally important historic era archaeological remains. In addition, five other locations containing other historic archaeological remains were identified. The loci that require protection are differentiated from those that may be managed with discretion in Exhibit 3. Potential threats to archaeological sites include looting and erosion. Protection of the three important loci can best be accomplished by routing access away from those areas and allowing brush cover to remain. Other archaeological features that may be managed with discretion include the remains of two historic wharves and a lighter hoist mechanism are considered worthy of interpretation as evidence of the town's historic past.

A modified Phase I environmental site assessment by Dannatt and Hughes (1999) found no evidence to suggest any hazardous wastes exist on the property. That study was based on historical research and interview data and concluded that no wood treatment or other industrial processes were known to have taken place on site. It was also concluded that no off site sources of pollution are likely to have migrated onto the property.

ISSUES AND GOALS

The Westport Headlands property will be managed in a manner consistent with the general philosophy stated earlier an agreement executed with the State Coastal Conservancy in connection with the acceptance of a grant used to purchase the property. We first address access, visitor facilities, resource conservation, and maintenance and safety issues. Plans for access improvements are provided in Exhibit 4. The human and financial resources needed to carry out this plan and ensure long term viability of the project are considered in a concluding section.

PUBLIC ACCESS

Our goal is to provide safe and convenient access to the headlands property and adjacent beaches for residents and visitors. This will include access to the bluff top for mobility-impaired visitors. We may also provide access to the beach for a limited number of small fishing boats to maintain that historical use by the local population and day use by canoes and kayaks will be allowed. All access except emergency, maintenance, special event, and boat launching and retrieval will be non-motorized. All access will be developed in a manner that avoids degrading the scenic qualities of the property and conserves critical environmental resources. As such, improvements will be low profile and sited to avoid conflicts with environmentally sensitive locations. Specific access issues are addressed below.

Foot Trails—All existing paths shown in Exhibit 2 will continue to be mowed as necessary to maintain pedestrian access and several access improvements will also be constructed, as described here and as shown in Exhibit 4. Stairs to the beach will be constructed of non-treated wood supported on concrete piers. A footbridge will provide access across the seasonal watercourse and will also be constructed of non-treated wood on concrete abutments. An at-grade trail made of a mixture of native soil and cement will provide access to a viewing deck from a handicap parking space at Omega Street. Existing trail closures will be maintained with log barriers and advisory signs. Problems such as erosion and creation of informal paths will be monitored and addressed.

Boat Launching—The vertical pedestrian accessway (stairs) will be constructed in a manner that will allow raising and lowering small boats to the beach. Informal day use by hand-carried small craft such as kayaks and canoes will be allowed and seasonal permits for larger vessels up to 1000 pounds also may be granted if liability issues can be resolved. A mechanical winch will be installed and secured for use by permittees only. Permit conditions will nominally include: one entry and one exit per permit per season with boats towed from the highway to the stairway/chute behind a lawn tractor or similar small vehicle; agreement to store boats in a designated area south of the base of the stairs; agreement to other conditions of use; payment of a facility maintenance fee; and signature of a liability waiver statement.

Non-Pedestrian Access—A bike rack will be installed near the northeast corner of the Headlands, as shown in Exhibit 4. However, foot trails will not be made suitable for bikes. No separate facilities for horses are planned and equestrian use is considered incompatible with other existing uses. Since equestrian use has not occurred for many years, we do not foresee a need to physically exclude horses. Motorized vehicles will be allowed on the property only for emergency access, maintenance tasks, special events, and permitted boat launching (if allowed). Restrictions will be enforced through access control measures detailed below, as well as by permit conditions and regular monitoring.

Parking—A single handicapped parking space will be constructed at the Omega Street entry. Informal street parking throughout the town is considered adequate for present use. Visitors parking on side streets can use the crosswalk at the corner of Abalone Street to cross Highway 1 safely. Parking needs will be reviewed and addressed if necessary as use levels increase.

Access Control—A combination of fencing and log barriers will be used around the property perimeter to exclude vehicles. Motorized entry will be restricted to three existing gates shown in Exhibits 2 and 4. Access through those gates will be controlled with closely-spaced removable 24 inch posts and signs. Fences will be smooth wire on 4 foot “T” stakes along borders with neighboring properties and along inland margins where foot traffic is to be excluded to protect sensitive environmental values. Horizontal log barriers will replace wire fence along property margins where foot access is allowed (see Exhibit 4). Eventually some wire fencing may be replaced with split-rail fencing for a better appearance. Permits will be issued for special events.

VISITOR FACILITIES AND ALLOWED USES

Our intent is to maintain or enhance existing uses and support other activities including picnicking, sports, and special events that have minimal visual and environmental impact. A small handicap-accessible viewing platform will be constructed, viewing benches and a picnic table may be installed, trash and recycling facilities will be installed and maintained, and signage will enhance appreciation of natural and historic features and advise visitors about rules and dangers. Restrooms will be developed only as needed. The location of the proposed platform and signage are shown in Exhibit 4. Further details are provided below.

Signs and Interpretation—Welcome signs will be posted at the three entry points. The signs will explain rules, identify the WVS and SCC, and provide emergency contact information.

Other signs will warn of dangers and advise visitors regarding use restrictions at specific locations. The sign included in the viewing platform will initially interpret the Coast Yuki, Beal's Landing, subsistence fishing, and whales. More interpretation may occur in the future. All interpretive panels and signs will be located to minimize aesthetic intrusion.

Trash—The small, informal trash receptacles we have are working for now. When more trash handling is needed, we will place one receptacle near the top of the stairway and one near the north edge of property near the proposed handicapped parking. Containers will be small and enclosed in wood. Regular maintenance will take place.

Special Events—Special Events on the headlands shall be considered on a case by case basis. Determining factors shall include amount of people, tenting, and staging, and use of the property, keeping in mind noise, parking and traffic control. Permits may be issued and insurance or a liability waiver may be required. The area north of the stream will be regularly mowed to facilitate use for special events, sports, and picnicking.

Benches and Tables—Portable benches will be maintained until permanent viewing benches are constructed at several locations along the bluff edge near established pedestrian trails. These benches will be set back from the bluff edge to minimize erosion. Benches may include memorials. They will be made of wood, and will be low and unobtrusive. A portable picnic table will be placed in the mowed area west of the Hill houses for picnicking.

Restrooms—Restrooms are not needed at this time. If restrooms seem to be needed in the future the community and neighbors will be consulted. Any structure will be wood sided. It will probably be located near north boundary, out of Hwy 1 view; but other sites will be considered. A plan for maintenance will be in place before installation.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION

Important archaeological resources, endangered plants, and wetland/riparian areas will be protected by routing trails away from those areas and discouraging entry. Areas requiring protection are shown in Exhibit 3. Brush will be left in sensitive archaeological zones to discourage entry and looting. We will encourage native plant growth and take active measures to remove invasive plants, particularly Himalaya berry and teasel. Vegetation management will be accomplished manually, as well as with motorized equipment. No herbicide use will occur. Reestablishment of native plant communities will be encouraged. Proposed trail and vertical access improvements are expected to reduce erosion and bluff loss problems. There is no plan to install additional drainage improvements. However, the need for drainage improvements may be reconsidered if erosion accelerates. To preserve the scenic character of the property, all future improvements will be made as inconspicuous and compatible with the natural appearance of the property. Improvements will also seek to blend in with the overall scenic character of village. Views across the property will be maintained to allow viewing the beach, surf, and offshore rocks. Development that would block ocean views will be avoided. Remaining interior cross-fencing will be removed to improve the appearance of the property.

SAFETY AND MAINTENANCE

The bluff edge, abandoned well, shed, and a former foot bridge pose safety problems that will be addressed in several ways. Warning signs will be placed to advise visitors to stay back from the bluff edge. The temporary cover over a hand dug well will be replaced with a permanent cast concrete cover with an access hole. The shed will be removed. A barrier log and trail closure sign will be maintained to discourage access to the foot bridge onto an off shore rock. Shared boundaries with improved neighboring properties will be mowed seasonally to provide fire breaks. Signs at the three entry points will advise visitors to call 911 in an emergency and fire, emergency, and law enforcement personnel will be able to access the property through those gates.

Regular maintenance will entail trash removal, mowing, invasive plant control, and issuing permits for seasonal boat use and special events. Maintenance of the property and improvements will be carried out initially by volunteer work parties organized by the WVS. The WVS work parties will monitor the site weekly, gather litter, make repairs, and monitor any problems that may develop. As development and use of the property increases, the WVS may employ staff or contract for services to address ongoing maintenance issues. Regular monitoring will also be required to ensure uses are consistent with allowed activities and to notice and address any problems that develop.

WHEREWITHAL

Permits are being processed to construct the public access improvements described in this plan and maintenance is presently being conducted by volunteers on an as-needed basis. Construction will be accomplished with a combination of an SCC grant and volunteer labor by WVS work parties. The SCC grant will cover materials, as well as services that cannot be easily accomplished by volunteers such as construction of foundations for the stairway and paving of parking and vehicular entries. Construction may begin as early as the summer of 2004, with completion anticipated within a year. The financing, human resources, and monitoring needed for long term achievement of the objectives in this plan are discussed below.

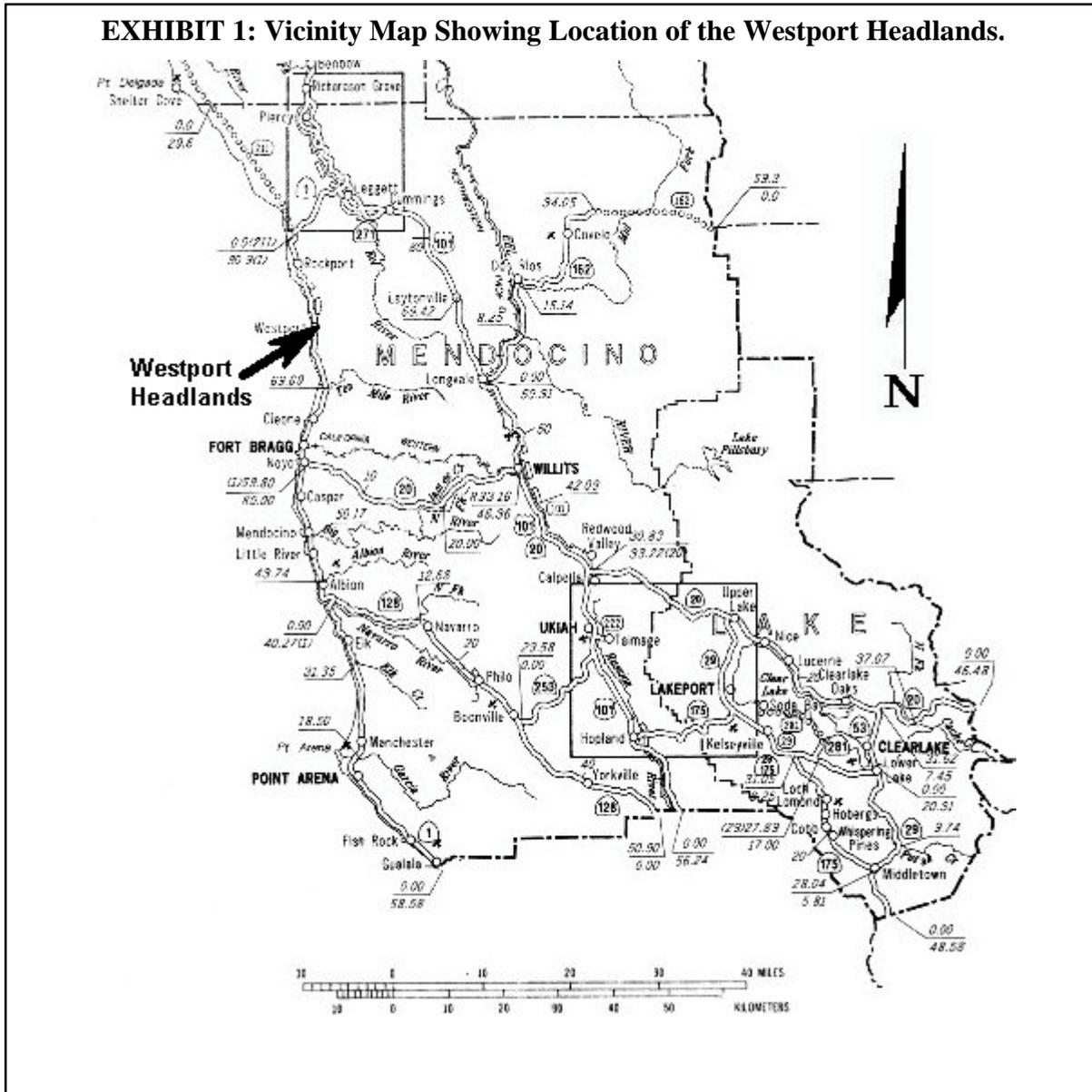
Financing—We plan to continue to develop a dedicated endowment fund for maintenance of the Headlands. Costs for maintaining the property can be anticipated to include liability insurance, mowing expenses, trash removal expenses, and contingency costs for dealing with problems. These costs currently run about \$5000 per year and those costs can be expected to steadily rise with inflation and increasing use of the property. Our goal is to pay for these ongoing costs from the interest on the endowment, leaving the principal untouched.

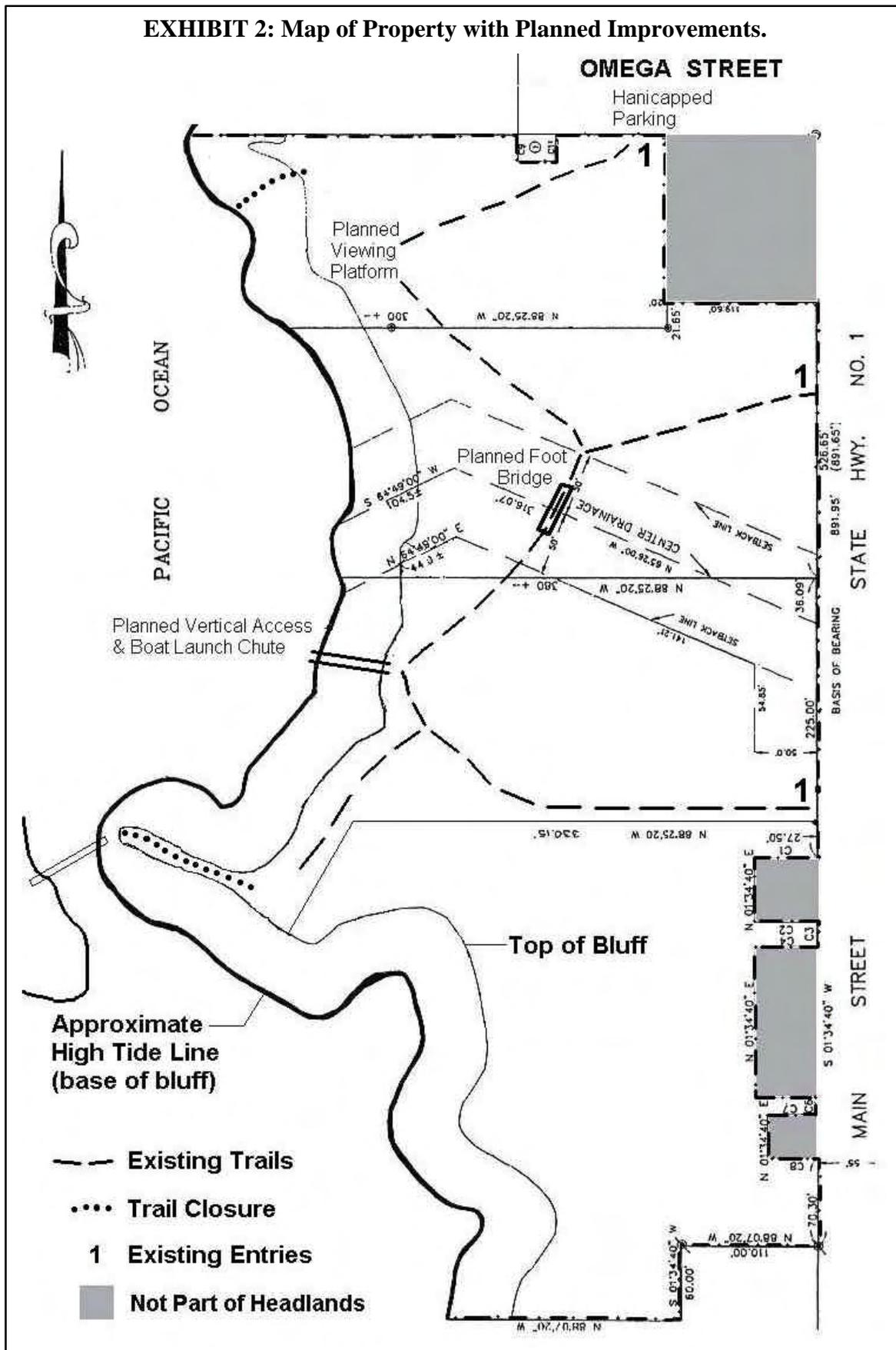
Human Resources—Our intention is to develop a broad pool of loyal, satisfied volunteers. We will work to develop the skills of volunteers in management and maintenance. We will also continue to maintain relationships with expert consultants including environmental specialists, other land trusts, and an attorney.

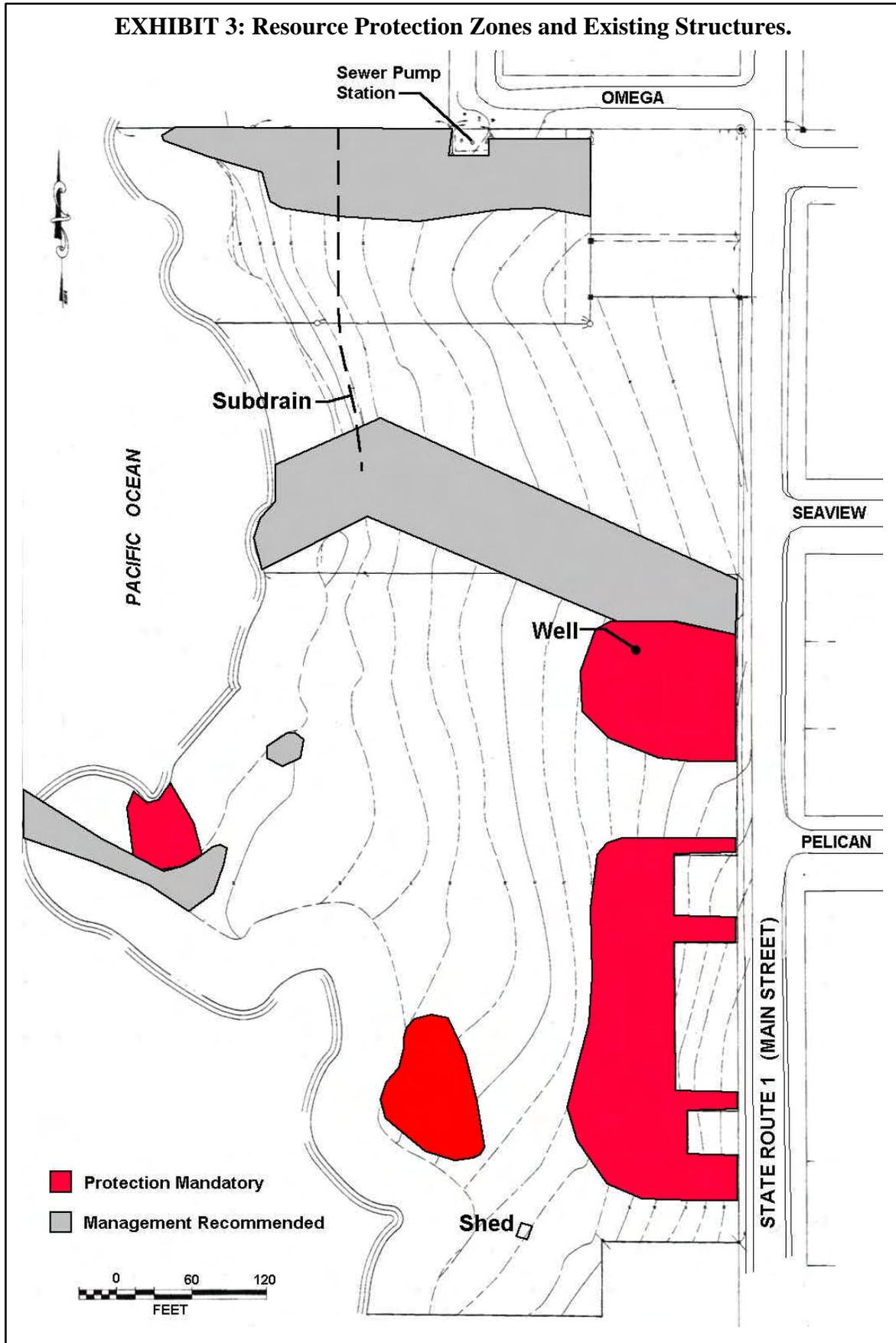
Monitoring—The WVS will prepare evaluation reports on odd numbered years on or before September 30 for presentation to the SCC and to WVS members at the annual meeting of the

Society. The evaluation will include estimates of user numbers; physical condition of the property; identification of any maintenance, safety problems, and complaints (and measures taken to address them); an explanation of the status of development; and whatever additional information is relevant to ongoing maintenance and improvement of public access.

EXHIBIT 1: Vicinity Map Showing Location of the Westport Headlands.







**Exhibit 4: Final Access Improvement Plans
Submitted as Mendocino County CDU Permit #22-03**

(These plans will be incorporated into the Management Plan
once final revisions are complete)