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Paul Desruisseaux

COUNTY AND UCSB ANNOUNCE JOINT PROPOSAL FOR ELLWOOD MESA AND DEVEREUX SLOUGH REGIONAL OPEN SPACE AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This news release about a joint UCSB and County of Santa Barbara proposal was issued by the County on August 8, 2001

Supervisor Gail Marshall and UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang have today announced a sweeping proposal for University and County cooperation to permanently protect 599 acres of coastal open space in the Ellwood Mesa and Devereux Slough area.

Covering 2.25 miles of undeveloped coastline between Isla Vista and Sandpiper Golf Course, this proposal would create by far the largest public coastal open space in the south coast urban area. The proposal would guarantee public access to this section of the coast and protect irreplaceable natural resources of statewide importance.

This unprecedented joint University-County cooperative effort would resolve 17 years of debate on how to balance development and open space protection in this sensitive coastal area.

The proposed Ellwood Mesa and Devereux Slough Regional Open Space Plan would protect the area's most sensitive resources and provide badly needed housing for members of the UCSB campus community all without increasing currently planned levels of development.

The resources that the proposed Open Space Plan would protect include unspoiled beaches, unique vernal pools, wetlands and grasslands and one of the state's largest Monarch butterfly groves. The plan also would provide some 10 miles of public hiking and biking trails.

The County and University have agreed to jointly propose one specific plan for this entire 993-acre area. This specific plan will resolve disputed developments on the "Monarch Point Reserve" property, the University's North and West Campuses, and the Goleta Union School District property on Phelps Road.

In preparing one specific plan, the University and County will be able to ensure comprehensive habitat protection and restoration, well-planned public access, and sound long-term management of these critical coastal resources.

By relocating currently planned coastal development to less than 95 acres away from the coast and next to existing urban areas the proposal would protect 599 acres of contiguous open space along the coast.

Under the proposal:

The private developers of the "Monarch Point Reserve" project would suspend processing of an application to build 123 homes near the coastal bluff at the end of Santa Barbara Shores Drive. This project has been subject to years of dispute, countless hearings, and four lawsuits.

The developers would instead apply to develop a substitute parcel on the northern part of the County park property, fronting Hollister Avenue.

The project would be subject to full environmental review and public hearings before the Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors, and the California Coastal Commission.

The University would suspend plans for developing 122 units of housing south of the Ocean Meadows Golf Course on land purchased in the early 1990s for construction of University housing.

The housing for members of the UCSB community would be relocated north of the golf course, on land that is adjacent to existing residential areas.

The entire package of development and preservation components would be analyzed in an Environmental Impact Report and reviewed in public hearings.

If approved by the Board of Supervisors and the Regents of the University, the plan would be submitted to the Coastal Commission as amendments to the County's Local Coastal Plan and the University's Long Range Development Plan. Preliminary discussion with senior staff of the commission have indicated a likely willingness on the part of the commission to take a new look at the area, and rearrange development and protection areas.

Coastal Commission Senior Deputy Director Chuck Damm told the County and the University:

"The Commission could recognize the potential of this joint project to better protect coastal resources when compared to a piecemeal approach."

Supervisor Marshall said:

"If the County can resolve the longstanding dispute over development at Santa Barbara Shores, help the University to relocate its workforce housing, and create such a substantial open space reserve for the future of Goleta, it will be a win overall for the community."

Said UCSB Chancellor Yang:

"Providing opportunities to members of our campus community to own housing in this region's challenging market is a priority for UCSB. But we also recognize that access to coastal natural resources is a major priority for all who live in this beautiful region. The proposal that we have developed with Santa Barbara County offers tremendous potential benefits to the region's population while helping us to meet our housing goals, and that is why we are so excited about it. We look forward to working with the county and the community in moving ahead with this proposal."

Marshall and Yang stressed that neither the County nor the University would go forward with the proposal unless and until environmental review and public hearings convinced them that this proposal offered the best way of achieving the complex goals of all the parties and complies with the protection policies of the Coastal Act.

The Board of Supervisors will conduct an informational hearing on the proposal August 21.

At the hearing, the Board will decide whether to allow the developer to apply for housing on part of the park land and direct its staff to proceed with preparing a specific plan and EIR on the proposal.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.