

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

June 10, 2010

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Final Open-Space Agreement for UCSB's 68-Acre South Parcel Announced by University, Land Trust for Santa Barbara County

UC Santa Barbara and The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County have announced that the 68-acre tract of coastal university property known as the South Parcel has been permanently set aside as open space under a conservation easement agreement. Final documents related to the action were recorded this week.

The South Parcel open space is a key part of a collaborative project to preserve more than 650 acres along 2.25 miles of coastline between Isla Vista and the Sandpiper Golf Course known as the Ellwood-Devereux Coast Open Space and Habitat Management Plan. The plan's goal is to protect and enhance the Ellwood-Devereux Coast and provide for public access compatible with the conservation of regionally significant coastal resources. The university and local governments have worked with nonprofit conservation organizations including The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County, The Trust for Public Land, and Friends of the Ellwood Coast on several land preservation and restoration projects. These projects include the Sperling Preserve at Ellwood Mesa, the Coronado Butterfly Preserve, Coal Oil Point Reserve, and the South Parcel.

"The proposal to preserve coastal land and natural habitat, which our campus was a partner in developing, offers tremendous potential benefit to the region's population, while helping our campus meet its housing goals," said UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang. "Housing for members of our campus community is a UC Santa Barbara priority, but we also have long recognized that access to coastal natural resources is a major priority for all who live in our beautiful region. Preserving this magnificent stretch of coast will be a legacy that we all can be proud of, and I am pleased that our South Parcel is now permanently set aside as open space."

Plans for the South Parcel open space include restoration of native wetland and riparian grassland, coastal scrub habitat, and improved public trails. "What was a dream of protecting and restoring the Ellwood-Devereux Coast is now becoming a reality," said Michael Feeney, executive director of The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County. "Many people worked hard for many years -- our community should be proud and thankful."

This visionary plan was first announced in 2001, when the university agreed to shift some sites for its proposed affordable workforce housing away from the coastal bluffs, to what is known as the North Parcel. While the project began as a plan for 236 housing units, it ultimately was reduced to 161 units as the campus addressed environmental issues as well as concerns raised by neighbors in the community. The California Coastal Commission unanimously approved the revised UCSB plan to build faculty housing on the 26-acre North Parcel.

The university is now about to begin construction on the first phase of Ocean Walk at North Campus, with 22 for-sale units of affordable workforce housing for faculty members. These 22 units -- eight single-family detached residences and 14 two-story townhouse units -- are all located along the southwest side of Marymount Way, east of Phelps Creek in Goleta. While most of the work on this initial phase should be completed within 10 to 12 months, the on-site habitat restoration along Phelps Creek, initiated almost three years ago by the university's Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration (CCBER), will be ongoing. CCBER will also begin habitat restoration on the South Parcel, concurrent with the start of North Campus housing construction. Public access through North Campus will be maintained throughout the project.

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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.