

# Attachment E

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Gail Hatter  
 Senior land use specialist  
 Anthony Lombardo and Associates  
 144 W. Gabilan Street  
 Salinas, CA 93901  
 Dear Gail,

December 15, 2019

Based on the application for an after-the-fact Demolition permit for the McDonald Residence at 30560 Aurora del Mar in Otter Cove and review of the site plan for the project, I visited the site on December 12, 2019. I have completed biological assessments for this project on two previous occasions in the past 7 years. Beyond the demolition of the house and removal of landscape screen plantings in the upper most portion of the property I find no changes on site that would affect my original assessment.

The current site plan shows 3 areas that Monterey County has requested clarification and explanation for with an updated biological report to include the discussion and support for the retention of these improvements in those areas They are:

#### Development within Open Space Easement

1. A wood retaining wall and portions of an asphalt parking area on the eastern portion of the subject property partially within the drawn Conservation/scenic easement
2. A set of landings and steps on the western portion of the property, within the drawn Conservation/scenic

#### Development in HOA property

3. A portion of a concrete block wall and flatwork on the northern portion of the subject property extends into an adjacent parcel (APN 243-331-006-000).

I will address these 3 areas separately based on my observations of the Site, focusing primarily on the potential biological impacts of keeping or removing the improvements.

1. The wood retaining wall between the asphalt parking area and the uppermost (eastern) portion of the



*Figure 1: View looking N NE at upper retaining wall between parking area and conservation easement area.*

property provides stabilization of the slope above the parking area right at the entry from the driveway all the way to the northern property line above a stand of planted Monterey Cypress trees. This parking area has been in place since at least the mid-eighties. A large percentage of this parking area is not within the conservation easement and is being legally utilized as a parking area. Removal of the retaining wall would serve no biological benefit as it would destabilize the slope and require further grading and sloping of the

upper conservation easement area to reach equilibrium without burying the trunks of the mature Monterey Cypress. Since I first visited the site in 2012, a large quantity of nonnative landscape planting has been removed from this area, leaving the exposed retaining wall, and the LP tank has been installed in the northern portion of the asphalt pad. As a transition between the parking space and the conservation easement the wall provides a structural benefit and boundary and allows for future restoration on the upper slope with no detriment to the soil structure or potential establishment of native plant community. I do not see a net biological gain to be made by removing all or even part of this wall structure.

2. The two flights of wooden stairs and three concrete landing pads, extending from the westerly most section of the patio, are shown to be within the Conservation easement drawn for the project in 2012. The concrete pads are mortared to bedrock granite. They are within storm splash zone but outside of normal high tide line. The only vegetation growing near them is *Carpobrotus* or what is commonly called ice plant, an introduced species

from South Africa that has been used to stabilize dunes and rights-of-way up and down the Coast of California. It has proven to be too successful and has literally buried native species on bluffs and dunes throughout the Central Coast. The *Carpobrotus* is now and has been for at least 40 years, the dominant plant in this ocean bluff setting. It is unfortunate that it has proven to be detrimental to the native species while being the only remaining plant to have a foothold on the rock face here.



Figure 2: View looking w SW at flights of stairs and concrete landing pads at edge of proposed conservation easement area.

It appears that this stairway, significantly predates the development of conservation easement boundaries. Removal of the concrete pads would likely require a jackhammer and like the retaining wall in the upper part of the property, would offer no biological benefit. Forceful breaking out of the concrete would possibly degrade the rock below it and destabilize it hastening weathering and erosion. There is nothing biologically sensitive that these stairs and landing pads are impacting by remaining in place and there is no meaningful restoration of native ocean bluff scrub habitat that could be implemented that would be likely to survive on the exposed granite were the stairs to be removed.

3. In the most northerly part of the property, it appears that the original development of a retaining wall and concrete slab for the house encroached upon HOA property beyond the property line of APN 243-





*Figure 3: View looking east at stake indicating property line which cuts diagonally across image from lower left to upper right and runs through the far left of the retaining wall*

retaining wall currently supports the root systems of several Monterey Cypress that provide some screening between the neighboring house and the Mr. McDonald's former and future house. The HOA open space between the two home sites is, like most of the surrounding area, completely dominated by the nonnative vegetation. Removal of the north end of the retaining wall would (again) destabilize the slope and the Monterey Cypress tree roots unnecessarily and only create more opportunity for invasion of the nonnative species which could not be controlled with any amount of restoration in this small area if the nonnatives were left unchecked on the neighboring HOA property. Given the age of the wall and the trees above it and the obvious benefit of the screening for both homesite, perhaps a compromise could be reached between Mr. McDonald and the HOA to keep the retaining wall in its entirety. Beyond the Civil implications, I do not see a biological benefit to removing the wall as it currently exists.

Once the Demolition permit is cleared and designs finalized for a new structure, the completion of a restoration and planting plan for the areas within the Conservation easement in support of the coastal development plan can occur.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Pat Regan



*Figure 4: Close up of retaining wall running past property line. white marker lower left*

331-003. To remedy this oversight Mr. McDonald may need to find a creative option other than simply dismantling part of the wall and slab.

As with the remainder of this property the "improvements" consisting of the retaining wall and house slab are at least 34 years old, and time has allowed for the significant growth of the Monterey Cypress on the uphill side of the retaining wall and the invasion of ice plant (*Carpobrotus* sp.) and Pride of Madeira (*Echium* sp.) on the HOA property (APN 243-331-006) north of the property line. The far northern end of the

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