

Expansion of marine lab at UCSC clears key hurdle

Long Marine Lab

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BUT STATE HAS CAVEAT:
PRESERVE WETLANDS

By Tom Ragan

Santa Cruz Sentinel

UC-Santa Cruz's Long Marine Lab will probably expand by 12 acres in the next few decades, beginning with a new wing for the Center for Ocean Health in three years and the addition of a new coastal biology and ecology building after that.

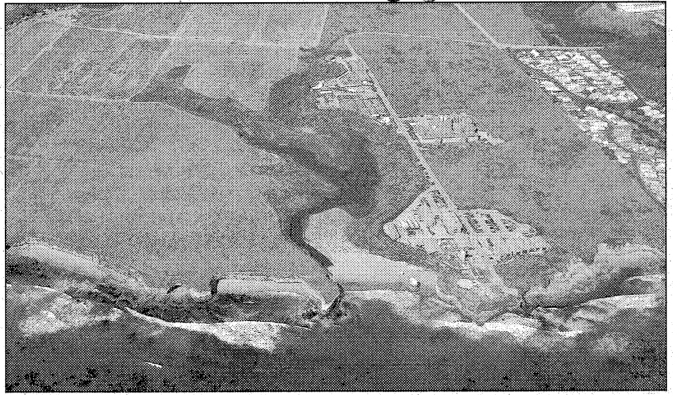
Thursday, the California Coastal Commission signed off on a development plan that gives the University of California campus permission to build what is being called the Marine Science Campus at Terrace Point. But there's a catch: The university must ensure some beach access and that the development doesn't destroy the nearby wetlands.

"Hey, nobody's going to argue with their stated goals. I'm in favor of ocean research," said Don Stevens, a Santa Cruz resident and member of the Coalition to Limit University Expansion.

"But don't you think it's kind of ironic that their mission is to preserve and protect our coastal resources, and at the same time they want to develop on what is a valuable coastal resource?"

The plan has been in the works for eight years. It's been the subject of several public hearings and protests because of its ecologically sensitive location and because of concerns about traffic on Delaware Avenue.

Although Santa Cruz is suing the university over its



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A view of the Santa Cruz coastline shows the Long Marine Lab, bottom right, and the land to the north where University of California-Santa Cruz officials hope to expand it.

Long-Range Development Plan — which calls for an additional 4,500 students and several new facilities on campus by 2020 — the city never took a stance on the Long Marine Lab expansion, given its reputation as one of the premier marine research facilities in the country, Mayor Ryan Coonerty said.

"The city had a few small concerns, mostly access for fire vehicles," he said.

Because the plan was submitted to the coastal commission and includes modifications suggested by commission staff members, it must also be approved by the UC Regents, after which it can receive final certification from the Coastal Commission on June 13.

Gary Griggs, director of the Institute of Marine Science and Long Marine Laboratory, said he was pleased with the vote, and added that UCSC was going to

work to address the commission's changes by mid-June, when the approval takes effect.

"We couldn't have asked for more. This was a big project. This wasn't just a single house," Griggs said. "But we managed to work out all the issues. It took eight years, but we got it right."

Some obstacles included convincing the public that wildlife corridors and sensitive habitats in the area would not suffer as a result of the expansion, and that docents would be allowed to give tours of the nearby Younger Lagoon Reserve.

The 100-acre site currently has research and education facilities on 16 acres, including Long Marine Lab, the Seymour Marine Discovery Center, and research laboratories of the National Marine Fisheries Service and the California Department of Fish and Game.