

Sunny Cove

EIR finds no impact likely from county's controversial storm drainage project

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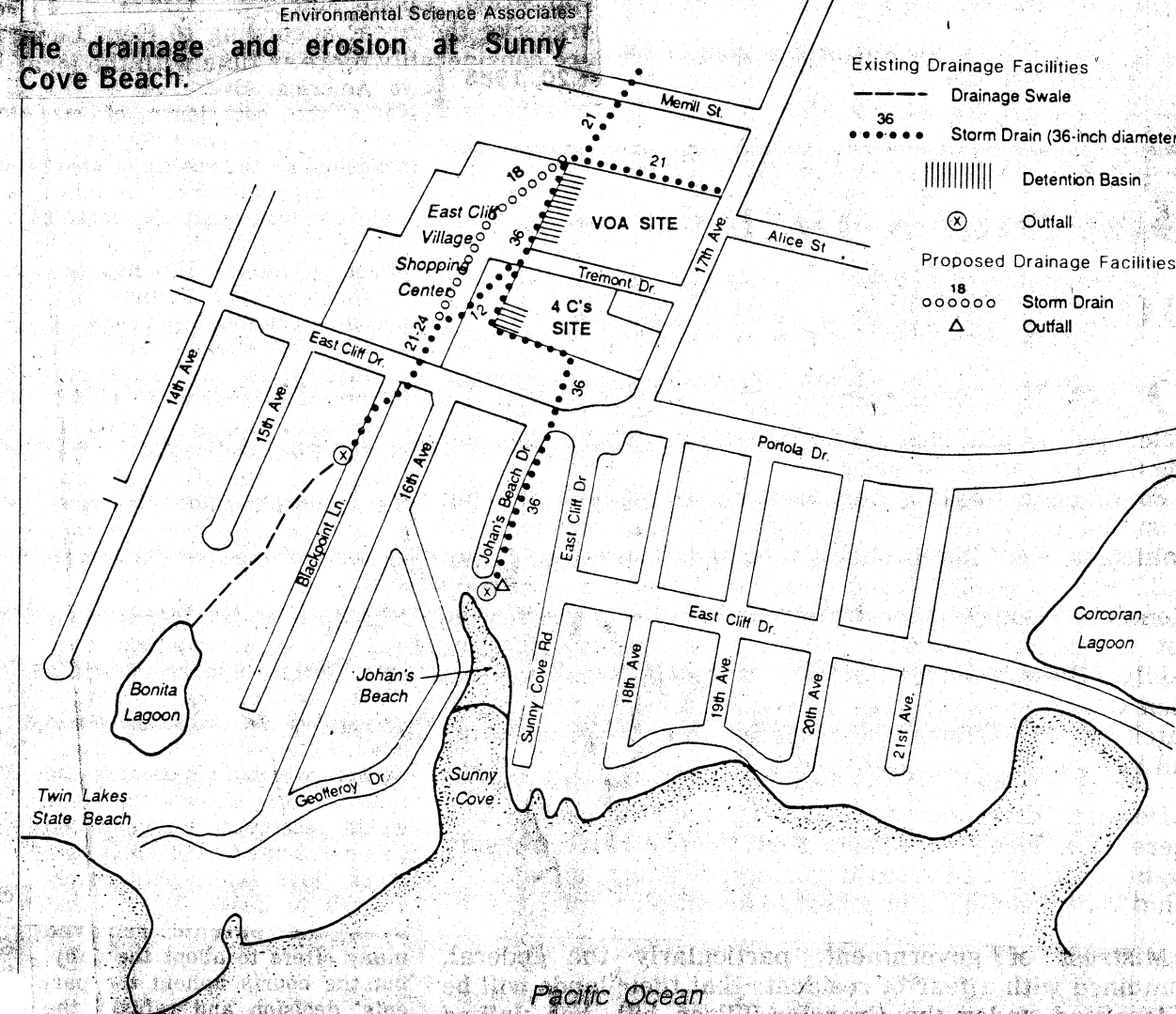
No significant impact on the environment would result from the county's proposed \$90,000 worth of modifications to an illegally installed storm drainage system in the Sunny Cove area of Live Oak, according to a draft Environmental Impact Report released last week.

The \$19,000 EIR, available for public review until Sept. 26, was ordered completed nearly a year ago by the county Planning Commission, following an appeal by a group of Sunny Cove neighbors citing potential ill effects in beach erosion, noise, energy consumption, visual aesthetics and maintenance costs.

The drainage issue has been controversial in the Sunny Cove neighborhood since late 1984. That's when a storm drain was constructed on the beach to drain runoff from a low-income senior housing project being developed by the non-profit Volunteers of America, at 17th Avenue and East Cliff Drive.

Neighbors were outraged when they discovered a 36-inch concrete pipe spewing runoff onto the privately owned Sunny Cove Beach; the runoff cut a channel into the sand about 40 feet wide and four feet deep.

Map shows holding basins and storm drains planned by county to deal with the drainage and erosion at Sunny Cove Beach.



It was then discovered that the county Public Department had issued a permit and allowed the storm drain to be placed on Sunny Cove — or Johan's — Beach without the necessary California Coastal Zone permit.

The California Coastal Commission on Feb. 15 ordered the drain closed because of neighbors' concerns and the county's failure to obtain approval. Since then, the only water draining through the pipe has been storm water that once ran down the cliff from the streets.

Runoff from the area surrounding the VOA project, which used to flow onto Sunny Cove Beach, was diverted to an old 12-inch concrete pipe under Polivio's Restaurant and the parking lot of the East Cliff Village Shopping Center. That pipe connects to a 24-inch pipe which passes under East Cliff Drive near Blackpoint Lane and discharges into a drainage ditch between the lane and 15th Avenue. It then empties into Bonita Lagoon, which is part of Twin Lakes State Beach east of Sunny Cove.

However, because of the limited capacity of the 12-inch pipe, two temporary detention basins were built to handle last winter's overflow: A 28,000-cubic-foot basin on the site of the VOA site and a 23,000-cubic-foot basin on the site of a 26-unit townhouse project by developer Hal Shores, of which 22 units have been built. Construction of the other four units has been approved but put on hold to make room for the basin.

The county's proposed project would allow part of that basin to be filled, so that the remaining units could be constructed. In its place would be