





chapter eight

CONSERVATION

The purpose of the Conservation Element is to address the conservation, enhancement, and sustainable use of Seaside's natural resources including cultural and paleontological resources. This element also provides guidance to preserve, and protect cultural resources that include buildings and structures, historic landscapes, archaeological sites, artifacts and documents that collectively represent Seaside's rich and diverse history. Sensitive biological resources, such as the native plants and wildlife species that occupy the coastal zone and former Fort Ord lands. The City is committed to protecting and improving natural habitat, protecting scenic views, and broadening support of conservation and preservation of its cultural resources.

Statutory Requirements

The Seaside Conservation Element meets state of California requirements for the Conservation Element as defined in Sections 65302(d) and 65302(e) of the Government Code, and California Coastal Act requirements. State law requires all general plans to contain a Conservation element, which addresses the “conservation, development and utilization of natural resources.” A Conservation Element must contain goals and policies to protect and maintain state natural resources such as water, forests, soils, wildlife and minerals, and prevent wasteful resource exploitation, degradation and destruction. It must also contain goals and policies for managing open space areas, including undeveloped lands and outdoor recreation areas.

The Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) was a small multi-governmental body composed of elected local, state, and federal officials that was responsible for the closure and reuse planning of the former Fort Ord military base. Fort Ord, encompassing 45 square miles of land across the Monterey Peninsula, was closed for military use in 1991. FORA was established in 1994 with a legislatively-mandated mission to oversee replacement land use, remove physical barriers to reuse, and protect identified environmental resources within the former Fort Ord until 2020. FORA was legislatively terminated on June 30, 2020, and responsibilities related to habitat management and conservation were transitioned to the cities of Seaside, Monterey, and Marina. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is also responsible for management of the former Fort Ord, as well as some other lands within the city.

California Coastal Act

This Element is consistent with the LCP and contains goals and policies related to intergovernmental coordination, protection of scenic views, enhanced coastal access, and identifying and preserving environmentally-sensitive habitat.

Former Fort Ord



Seaside Beach.

Setting the Scene

Open space provides significant opportunities to support biological resources. Seaside’s coastal dune system, the Laguna Grande and Robert’s Lake estuarine complex, and former Fort Ord lands support a variety of high-quality habitat areas and special status species.

Environmentally Sensitive Habitat

In existing Seaside neighborhoods, the land consists almost entirely of developed areas, including some small parks with predominantly landscaped and ornamental vegetation. A small area of natural coastal habitat is present where the Seaside boundary meets the Pacific Ocean. Wetland habitats also occur in Seaside, including

estuarine and marine wetlands along the coast; freshwater wetlands, riverine, and a lake at the Laguna Grande–Robert’s Lake complex; and small freshwater ponds and emergent wetlands mostly on the former Fort Ord lands. Former Fort Ord lands generally contain higher-quality, contiguous habitats and the majority of the special status species in Seaside are within its boundaries.

Figure 36 displays the major vegetation communities and other land cover types present in the City. Vegetation

communities range from coastal marsh areas to areas with dense forest cover. Figure 37 shows rivers, creeks, streams, and flood corridors within Seaside. Wetlands and non-wetland waters provide habitat for a variety of special status plant and animal species.

Federal or state listed species are most likely to occur in undeveloped or aquatic habitats in Seaside. Along the coast, these include bank swallow (*Riparia riparia*), snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*), Smith's blue butterfly (*Euphilotes enoptes smithi*), Monterey gilia (*Gilia tenuiflora* ssp. *arenaria*), Seaside bird's-beak (*Cordylanthus rigidus* ssp. *littoralis*), and Monterey spineflower (*Chorizanthe pungens* Benth. var. *pungens*). Inland and near aquatic resources, such as the Laguna Grande and Robert's Lake complex, California red legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) may occur. California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*), Contra Costa goldfields (*Lasthenia conjugens*), and Monterey spineflower are known to occur on former Fort Ord. Additionally, Federally designated critical habitat for Monterey spineflower occurs on former Fort Ord lands and coastal parks bordering the west side of the City. These coastal parks also include federally designated critical habitat for snowy plover. Several other special status species have the potential to occur in natural habitats, including burrowing owl, black legless lizard, western pond turtle, and prairie falcon.

Protecting biological resources in and around the City is important to the regional efforts to define and preserve the character of the Monterey Bay. Several agencies, organizations, and City departments are involved in the preservation of biological resources in Seaside, including the following:

- **Seaside Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan and Coastal Implementation Plan** provides the specific goals, policies, and proposed implementation actions that govern land and water use in the city's coastal zone. The plan addresses marine resources, including Laguna Grande, Robert's Lake, and environmentally sensitive habitat areas.
- **Installation-wide Multi-species Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for former Fort Ord** was issued in 1997 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to manage unique habitats and diverse special status species on former Fort Ord lands, formerly managed by the FORA. The HMP established guidelines through a set of management requirements, identifies habitat reserve areas for conservation, and provides methods for restoration and monitoring for each habitat reserve area.
- **Fort Ord Installation-Draft Wide Multispecies Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)** provides a framework for HCP permittees, including the City of Seaside, for ensuring conservation of special status plant, animal species, and the natural communities that support them on former Fort Ord lands formerly managed by FORA. The HCP serves as the primary conservation planning document for non-federal recipients of Fort Ord lands following the legislative termination of FORA in 2020. The HCP establishes guidelines that seek to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts on endangered and threatened species. Development applications within the HCP area would need to show compliance with the HCP goals and objectives, including preparation of an impacts analysis and demonstration of avoidance of any species takings for species covered by the HCP.

Night Skies

The urban environment in Seaside is uniquely proximate to regional parks and open spaces, including the Fort Ord National Monument, the Fort Ord Dunes State Beach, and the Monterey Bay shoreline. Excessive artificial light, also known as light pollution, can adversely affect the beauty of nighttime skies and stargazing, directly impact migration and reproduction of wildlife, disrupt sleep patterns in humans, and consume excessive energy. The sources of light pollution in Seaside may include exterior and interior building lighting, advertising, commercial properties, offices, factories, streetlights, vehicular lighting, and illuminated sporting events.³⁷ Limiting outdoor lighting below the horizontal protects dark skies for the public, wildlife, and the Monterey Institute for Research in Astronomy.

Figure 36: Vegetation Communities and Land Cover Types

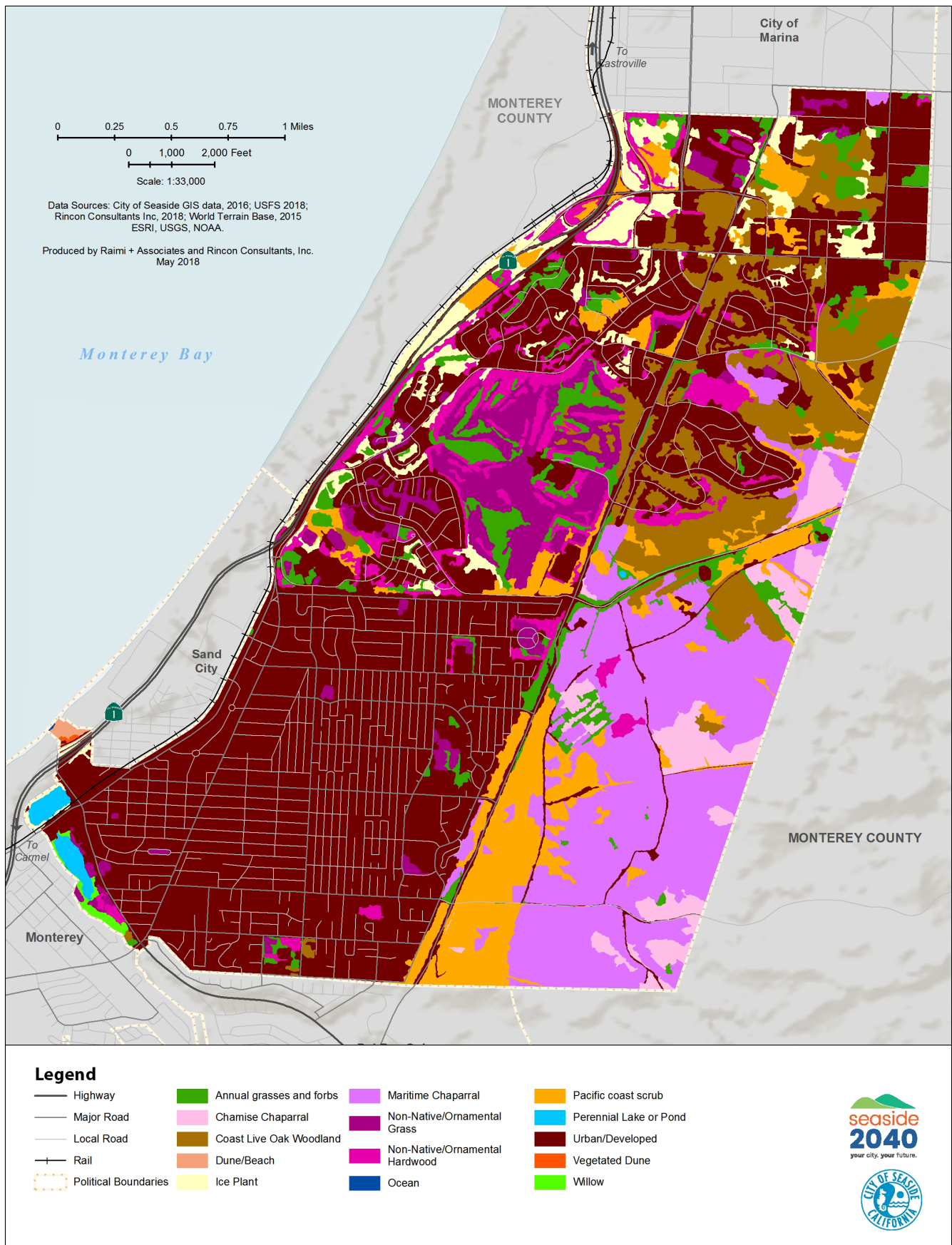
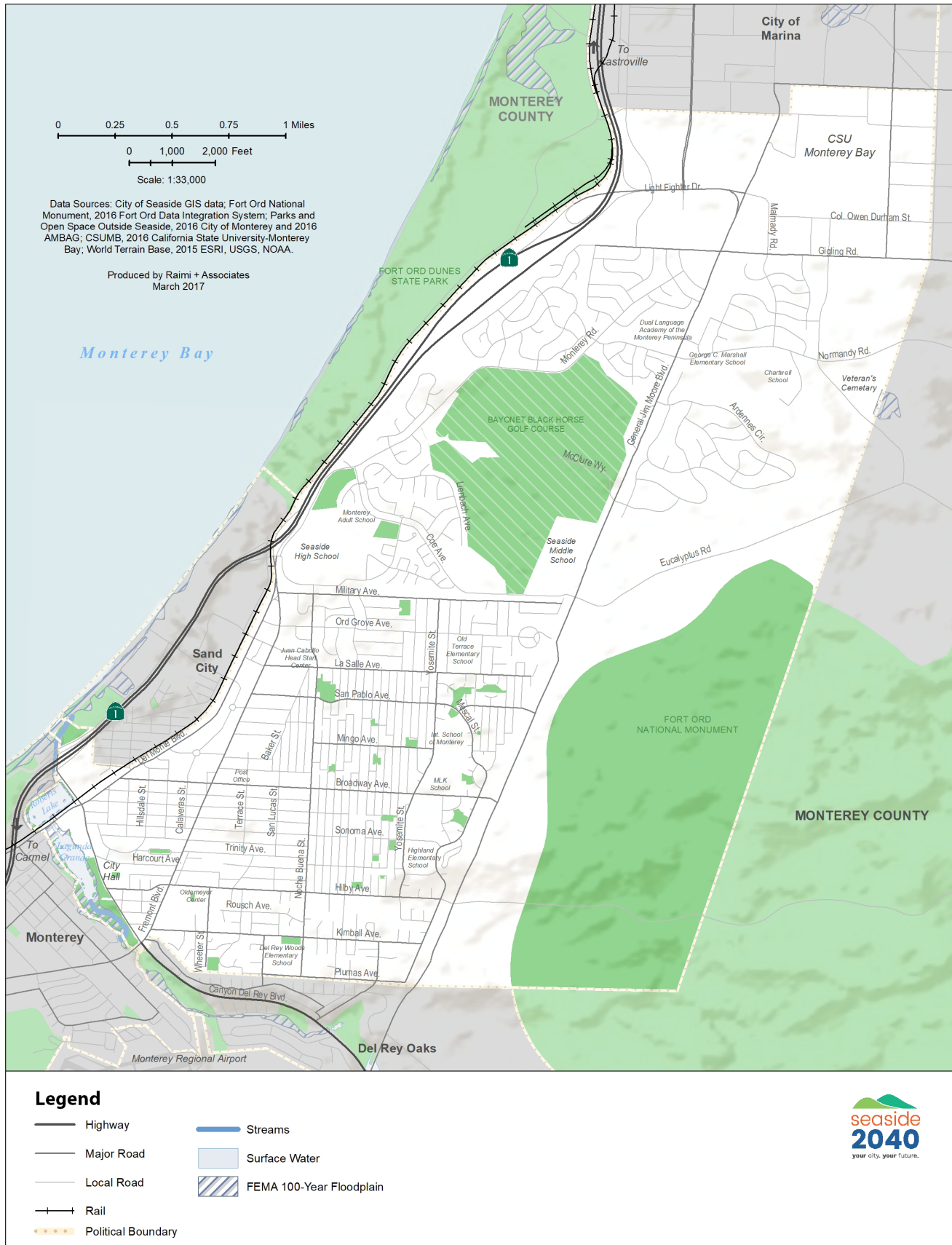


Figure 37: Rivers, Creeks, Streams, Flood Corridors, and Open Water Areas



Scenic and Visual Resources

Seaside is situated along the Pacific Ocean and Monterey Bay Peninsula, central to federal, state, and regional parks and open space that provide stunning views from a variety of locations throughout the city. Laguna Grande Regional Park and Robert's Lake are visible from Highway 1 and local streets, providing a scenic natural landscape upon entering or leaving the southern limits of the city. The elevation of Seaside gradually increases from west to east, with expansive views of the Monterey Bay coastline, Monterey Peninsula's coastal cities, and surrounding mountains.

Both natural and man-made landscape features contribute to perceived visual character and the scenic attractiveness of an area's landscape. Natural landscape features in Seaside include the Pacific Ocean, coastal dunes and mountains, natural habitats, lakes, and topography. Man-made landscape features in Seaside include public roadways, coastal trails, streetscape features, such as lighting, street furniture, and water features, and urban structures. The City has identified several prominent viewsheds in Seaside, as shown in Figure 38, that should be enhanced and protected as redevelopment and development takes place. These viewsheds include:

- **Broadway Avenue:** Views down this roadway include expansive views of the ocean and Monterey Bay as well as residential and some institutional uses.
- **Highway 1:** Views west of Highway 1 include Monterey Bay and shoreline, coastal sand dunes of Fort Ord Dunes State Park, coastal mountains, and city views of the Monterey Peninsula. Views east of Highway 1 include Laguna Grande Regional Park and Robert's Lake.

- **Laguna Grande Regional Park and Robert's Lake:** Views of Laguna Grande Lake and Robert's Lake and the emergent wetland and riparian vegetation along their shores are visible from Del Monte Boulevard, Highway 218/Canyon Del Rey Boulevard, and Highway 1.
- **Bayonet and Black Horse public golf courses:** Views looking west from the golf course include Monterey Bay, coastal mountains, and city views.
- **Ancient sand dunes that run east, west, and across General Jim Moore Boulevard:** Views of the Monterey Bay, coastal mountains, and city views are prominent along the ridgelines west of General Jim Moore Boulevard at the top of Broadway Avenue, San Pablo Avenue, La Salle Avenue, Ord Grove Avenue, and Coe Avenue. East of General Jim Moore Boulevard, views of the former Fort Ord lands and the surrounding mountains are also visible.
- **CSUMB campus:** Views looking west from the campus.

These important viewsheds are identified to be protected as new development or redevelopment occurs in Seaside, and should be considered during the planning and approval phases of development.

Highway 1 is an officially designated State Scenic Highway, traversing over two miles of Seaside's western boundary. Highway 1 offers views of the coastal dunes in Seaside, Monterey Bay, and the Peninsula, surrounding mountains to the east, and the wetlands and channels of Laguna Grande Park and Robert's Lake.

Figure 38: Prominent Viewsheds and Scenic Highways



Cultural Resources

Seaside has long acknowledged its cross-cultural history and the importance cultural resources play in retaining the City's sense of place.

Cultural resources are objects or structures that relate to previous human use of the area and include archaeological resources and historic built-environment resources. Cultural resources may be designated as historic by National, State, or local authorities by meeting the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR), or for local significance.

According to the California Historical Resources Information System, a total of six cultural resources have been recorded within the city, including two pre-contact archaeological sites, one historic-age building, and three historic-age engineering structures. According to the Office of Historic Preservation, one of these resources, the Monterey Branch of the Southern Pacific Railroad, is listed on the CRHR. At this time, there are no other resources listed on the CRHR, nor as California Historical Landmarks or Points of Interest and no resources are listed on the NRHP. However, the city has not undergone a city-wide inventory or survey. This means that there may be undiscovered resources present in Seaside.

Areas identified by the 2004 General Plan as archaeologically sensitive include the drainage area along the southern border of Seaside, the area of active sand dunes along the coast, and lands east of General Jim Moore Boulevard on the former Fort Ord lands. Many buildings within the city have surpassed 50 years of age, the threshold recommended by the California Office of Historic Preservation for consideration as historical resources. The City does not currently have a historic context statement, a document that would identify the important themes relevant to the history and development of the built environment of Seaside. The City recognizes the need to develop a context statement that establishes periods of significance for important themes, while identifying significant property types to inform the recordation and evaluation of historic-age buildings and structures within the city.

In accordance with Assembly Bill 52 and Senate Bill 18, the City of Seaside notified California Native American tribes of the proposed General Plan and invited them to participate in consultation. The City prepared and mailed

letters in accordance with Assembly Bill 52 and Senate Bill 18. Consultations with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, Costanoan Rumsen Carmel, Esselen Tribe of Monterey County, Indian Canyon Mutsun Tribal Band of Costanoan, and Ohlone/Costanoan-Esselen Nation occurred in 2017 and 2018. Additional details from the consultation are included in the Tribal Cultural Resources section of the General Plan Environmental Impact Report.

Paleontological Resources

Paleontological resources (fossils) are fossilized remains of plants and animals found below the earth's surface. Fossils are afforded protection by federal, State, and local environmental laws and regulations. Seaside is underlain by five mapped geologic units: Alluvium, sand, older dune deposits, marina terrace, and eolian facies of the Aromas Sand.

Holocene-aged deposits are generally considered to have low potential for yielding significant fossils because the geological units are too young (i.e., less than about 5,000 years) to contain fossils, but Holocene deposits can be as old as 11,700 years. Thus, paleontological sensitivity increases with depth where deeper sediments may exceed 5,000 years. Pleistocene-aged geologic units have a well-documented fossil record throughout California and the western United States, and the Pleistocene deposits in the City of Seaside (older dune, marine terrace, and eolian facies of the Aromas Sand) are considered to have high paleontological sensitivity. Though no known fossils have been recorded in Seaside, substantial finds in the Carmel River basin suggest that future, more conscientious studies may reveal more. The most likely study areas (the oldest part of Seaside along Del Monte Boulevard and Canyon del Rey) have already been overbuilt with very little screening.

Goal C-1: Sensitive species and habitat protected on former Fort Ord lands.

Intent: The Fort Ord HMP provides a framework for applicants, including the City of Seaside, to conserve and manage special status species, animal communities, and habitat areas on former Fort Ord lands. This goal aims to implement those plans locally identifying and managing habitat areas and species.

Policies:

- **Habitat Management Plan.** Continue to partner with local, regional, and federal agencies to implement the programs outlined by the HMP. Provide BLM evidence of habitat protection measures for lands not under HMP resource conservation or management requirements.
- **Loss of sensitive species.** Minimize the loss of sensitive species and critical habitat areas in areas planned for future development.
- **Habitat management areas.** Continue to protect habitat management areas on former Fort Ord land, identifying habitat areas, planning carefully to avoid significant impacts, and implementing more restrictive development standards adjacent to these areas.
- **Oak woodlands.** Continue to partner with regional and local agencies to designate oak woodlands and linkages, encourage the preservation and management of oak woodland and linkages, and connect them to other parks, open spaces, and active open space corridors. The City shall actively manage and monitor the oak woodlands area.
- **Habitat restoration.** Restore habitat areas where habitat has been disturbed by activities within the plan area of the FORA HMP in development of a future Seaside East Specific Plan.
- **Inland water resources.** Protect and enhance creeks, lakes, and adjacent wetlands by eradicating non-native vegetation and restoring native vegetation.
- **Zoning.** During development of Specific Plans within the FORA HMP area, map and designate habitat management areas to be protected from future development, where appropriate.
- **Interpretive signage.** In coordination with the BLM and other partners, incorporate interpretive signage in habitat management areas that educate community members and visitors about the unique biological resources on former Fort Ord lands.
- **Wetlands.** The City shall preserve, enhance and protect wetland areas, and evaluate areas proposed for new development during the site planning process to determine whether wetlands or other jurisdictional waters occur. In the event that wetlands are present, the City shall require that they either be avoided or compensatory mitigation implemented so that there is no net loss to wetland resources as a result of development on the site. Wetland mitigation plans on Former Fort Ord lands should be coordinated through the Coordinated Resource Management Planning program (CRMP) as required by the HMP where applicable.

Goal C-2: New development supports the preservation or enhancement of the City's natural resources.

Intent: This goal fosters sustainable development practices that provide protection to sensitive habitats and species and accessible resources for the enrichment of residents.

Policies:

- **Clustered development.** Cluster new development on former Fort Ord lands to minimize impacts, preserve habitat management areas, and protect high-visibility ridgelines, steep slopes, wetlands, and waterways. Standards to cluster development should be developed as part of a future Seaside East Specific Plan.
- **Integrating oak woodland.** Work with developers to promote an understanding of existing oak trees and previously-identified oak woodland linkages as they design new developments. Encourage compliance with State and County regulations as part of development review process.
- **Development review.** When projects are adjacent to or contain natural habitat or undeveloped area, require projects to submit analysis showing the existing habitat, on the proposed plan, potential impacts to special-status species and sensitive natural communities or other biological resources (including nesting birds), and measures to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate impacts, as necessary.
- **Development near habitat management areas.** Require new development adjacent to habitat management areas to minimize new impervious surface, minimize light pollution, and emphasize native landscaping.
- **Hillside protection.** When grading is necessary, encourage grading for new development that complements the surrounding natural features.
- **Low-impact development.** Require new construction and redevelopment projects to use low-impact development techniques to improve stormwater quality and reduce run-off quantity.
- **Dark sky lighting standards.** Require new construction or modifications to existing development and public facilities to adhere to: dark sky lighting standards or the control of outdoor lighting sources by shielding light in the downward direction and limiting bright white lighting and glare.
- **Dark sky education.** Promote dark sky education in the community to promote responsible lighting and dark sky stewardship.
- **Native species.** Encourage new development to support a diversity of native species and manage invasive species.
- **Invasive species.** Prohibit the planting of plant species on the California Invasive Plant Inventory.
- **Stormwater area and wetlands.** Incorporate wetland features into stormwater control facilities to the extent practicable.
- **Water quality.** Incorporate water quality and habitat enhancement in new flood management facilities.
- **Green streets.** When feasible, explore opportunities for green streets, and using natural processes to manage stormwater runoff. When green street demonstration areas are identified, include unobtrusive educational signage.
- **Habitat protection area.** Establish a habitat protection area, including criteria for defining the area, during the creation of a specific plan for Seaside East.
- **Habitat preservation.** Support the preservation of open space and sensitive habitat, minimizing the impacts of land uses on public lands, including:
 - Oak woodlands and linkages.
 - An open space buffer between future development and the National Monument.
 - Open space corridors that support natural vegetation communities, scenic vistas, and sensitive habitats.

Goal C-3: A City that protects, conserves, and enhances the natural beauty and resources within the coastal zone.

Intent: Seaside's coastal zone provides important habitat for special status species. Habitat areas and wildlife can be negatively affected by certain types of development and human activity, as well as erosion from sea level rise. This goal aims to preserve and protect natural resources in the coastal zone through careful management, including eradication of non-native vegetation, and restoration of native vegetation.

Policies:

- **Partnerships.** Promote local and regional cooperation and partnership, including the US Army, Caltrans, and California State Parks, to help protect and manage Seaside's natural resources in the coastal zone.
- **Protect critical habitats.** Preserve, protect, and improve open space areas to the greatest extent possible to improve on existing limited habitats outlined by the Local Coastal Plan.
- **Beach habitat.** Work with local and regional agencies to ensure beaches can function as a quality habitat for permanent and migratory species.
- **Coastal zone.** Protect the coastal zone west of State Highway 1 from habitat degradation due to increased access, erosion, and pollution due to remnant outfall pipes.
- **Highway 1.** Preserve the unique public views visible from the Highway 1 corridor between Fremont Boulevard and the northern boundary of the city. Adhere to Municipal Code Section 17.22.040.
- **Riparian corridors.** Encourage the restoration and protection of riparian corridors at Laguna Grande and Roberts Lake.

Goal C-4: Pollutant discharge managed to minimize adverse impacts on water quality in the Monterey Bay, Robert's Lake, Laguna Grande and other bodies of water.

Intent: To reduce the negative environmental impacts of storm water runoff on the Monterey Bay, Robert's Lake, Laguna Grande, and other bodies of water improves local habitat.

Policies:

- **Low-impact development practices.** Require new construction and redevelopment projects to use of low-impact development techniques to improve stormwater quality and reduce run-off quantity, including improving soil health, providing soil cover and water-wise planting and irrigation, installing permeable pavements, and building bio-retention areas to reduce runoff quantity.
- **Storm water runoff.** Enforce the reduction of storm water runoff consistent with local storm water permits.
- **Storm water facilities.** Incorporate storm water facilities into the design of parks and open spaces, using natural processes to capture, treat, and infiltrate storm water to the extent feasible.
- **Stormwater wetland network.** Incorporate wetland design that enhances the use of existing wetlands, improves ecosystem services and supports stormwater control.

Goal C-5: An abundant, robust urban forest that contributes to Seaside’s quality of life as it combats the effects of climate change.

Intent: Urban forestry is essential to the city’s path towards greater sustainability. Seaside urban forest enhances its environmental quality and the mental and physical health of its residents, while bringing significant economic benefits through increased property values. Urban forestry will make the city more resilient to the impacts of extreme heat associated with climate change.

Policies:

- **Resources.** Provide the appropriate resources to maintain and expand the urban forest.
- **Maintenance.** Encourage the maintenance of trees on public and private property.
- **New plantings.** Require new development to include the planting and maintenance of trees (on both sides of the street when applicable) as well as on private properties.
- **Protected tree species.** Preserve protected tree species, (e.g. native oaks) whenever possible during site redevelopment.
- **Managed plantings.** Require newly planted trees to be appropriate for a specific location and based on height, canopy coverage, shading, and maintenance requirements.
- **Select planting.** Encourage the planting of native, non-invasive, and drought-tolerant landscaping and trees. Encourage landscape plantings to use tree species native to an area when adjacent to natural plant communities and habitat management areas.
- **Edible landscapes.** Encourage the planting of edible landscapes and fruit trees, and consider urban orchards in City parks or public spaces where feasible.
- **Sustainability in forest management.** Manage urban trees to achieve the City’s environmental sustainability goals for water and energy conservation, stormwater management, habitat protection, and climate resilience.



Examples of low impact development practices.

Goal C-6: Scenic vistas, views, and highways are protected and enhanced.

Intent: Views and scenic vistas help define the scenic value of Seaside. This goal seeks to protect prominent viewsheds in Seaside by protecting views, supporting the enhancement of natural resources, and landscape design.

Policies:

- **Views.** Protect public views of significant natural features, such as the Monterey Bay, the Pacific Ocean, the surrounding mountains, and other prominent viewsheds, as identified in Figure 38. Review all major redevelopment projects to ensure they will not significantly obstruct views from the public right-of-way of these major scenic resources.
- **Highway 1.** Preserve the unique public views visible from the Highway 1 corridor between Fremont Boulevard and the northern boundary of the city.
- **Landscape design.** Require new public and private landscape installations to consider access to vistas from the public realm and encourage landscape design that protects or enhances those views.
- **Signage and infrastructure.** Encourage signage, infrastructure, and utilities that do not block or detract from views of scenic vistas.
- **Light pollution.** Preserve skyward nighttime views and lessen glare by minimizing lighting levels along the shoreline by continuing to follow dark sky guidelines.

Goal C-7: A strong sense of cultural resources and historical places.

Intent: To help preserve, conserve, enhance, and educate the public about Seaside's multi-cultural and historical assets. The City celebrates its diverse cultural, ethnic and faith-based communities. To achieve this, the City will promote educational resources and integrate cultural and historical resources as part of coordinating land use and community design decisions.

Policies:

- **Cultural and historic resources.** Establish a known list of cultural and historic resources in the city.
- **Historic preservation.** Work with State and Federal agencies, such as the State Office of Historic Preservation, to administer federally and state mandated historic preservation programs that further the identified evaluation registration and protection of Seaside's irreplaceable resources. Support efforts to memorialize significant people, places, and events in the history of Seaside through public art and plaques. Consider the creation of a Historic Context Statement document.
- **Cultural Tourism.** Promote historic places and cultural tourism as an economic development strategy and way to bolster civic pride.
- **Wayfinding.** Increase historical and cultural facility visibility through signage and wayfinding.
- **Historical resource development.** Work with local organizations to continue to document and educate the public about the history of Seaside.
- **PR program.** Expand the PR program to ensure that Seaside will be recognized as the second most populous city in Monterey County with a fully-documented history and a unique culture.
- **Oral histories.** Support the record of life-stories of citizens who play a vital role in cultural preservation and raise consciousness of local history in the community at large and **safeguards Seaside's unique heritage.**
- **Black History Month.** Expand the local history and Black History Month exhibits in Avery Gallery, Oldemeyer Center and other public spaces as part of a program to inform the area population about Seaside's past and make our city more appealing to potential businesses and home-buyers.
- **Memorials.** Memorialize significant people, places and events in the history of Seaside with more plaques, road signs, public art and walking tours.