



## TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMISSION INFORMATION REPORT

DATE: August 22, 2013

AGENDA OF: September 16, 2013

DEPARTMENT: Public Works

SUBJECT: Cowell Beach / Update

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RECOMMENDATION: For Information Only

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**BACKGROUND:** Cowell's Beach (Cowell's) is one of the most popular beaches in Santa Cruz; however, over the last several years it has frequently been posted as "unsafe" due to high bacteria concentrations in the near shore waters. There are a number of potential sources of the high bacterial concentrations at the beach:

As soon as we determine what might help to improve the beach we move on it as quickly as possible. The current work schedule to improve Cowell's Beach is as follows:

1. Fix gutter seep on Pacific that is still "hot" by diverting to sanitary sewer. Work is scheduled to be performed after Labor Day as this is a high pedestrian traffic location. Work will be completed by October 25th. To eliminate impacts from this gutter seep the outlet from the catch basin that this gutter drains has been plugged this summer so that all gutter flow at this location is contained. We will keep this catch basin plugged until the "diversion" project is complete. We have inspected all of the properties in this area and have found no additional private sewer lateral problems.
2. The storm drain manhole at end of Bay Street has had high bacterial levels. We have plugged the outlet from that manhole and are following up with more testing including human marker testing. The manhole will remain plugged for the rest of the summer.
3. The County and Stanford University are performing human marker testing at 10 locations throughout the summer and into the fall. Locations include Cowell's Beach, several manholes on Neary-to-Cowell's pipeline and several locations in Neary Lagoon. Test results are not yet available.
4. We are submitting an application for installing a gate to shut off Neary Lagoon from the beach. We will need Coastal, Fish and Game, railroad permissions and maybe the Army Corps of Engineers. The project is schedule to receive a coastal permit at the City Zoning Administrator meeting on September 18. We hope to install the gates in November.

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Water quality data this summer at Cowell's Beach is mixed. Overall the test results used by the "Heal the Bay" annual "Beach Report Card" report are better than last year when the Cowell's Beach west of the wharf site was listed on the Report's "Beach Bummer List." As an example, single sample tests for enterococci exceed posting limits 8 of 23 tests taken last summer. This summer the limit has been exceeded 7 times of the 34 tests. The Beach Report uses a complicated system to rank beaches so it is impossible to tell if the Cowell's Beach west of the Wharf site will be off the "bummer" list but test results are better so Staff is hopeful.

Next summer with the gates installed (item 4 above) and the fix to the gutter seep (item 1 above) should result in even better water quality at the beach.

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