

# BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES DESCRIPTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Meeting Date: April 6, 2026

## PROJECT: Pebbly Beach Landfill Capacity Expansion

**Project No.:** PRJ2023-003499-(4)

**Permit No.:** SEA-CUP RPPL2024005997, CDP RPPL2024005996

**APN:** 7480-045-900

**Address:** 1 Dump Road, Santa Catalina Island

**SEA:** Pebbly Beach Canyon SEA

**USGS Quad:** Santa Catalina East

**Project Applicant:** City of Avalon

**Project Biologist:** Brenda Eells, Rincon Consultants

**Staff Planner:** Tyler Montgomery

**Staff Biologist:** Karla Moreno

## GENERAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project proposes to extend the life of the Pebbly Beach Landfill on Santa Catalina Island through the construction of a 20-foot-high mechanically stabilized earthen (“MSE”) wall at the bottom of the existing landfill footprint. This will allow for additional waste filling behind the wall to a final grade of 305 feet above mean sea level. All of the proposed additional capacity for waste filling is contained within the existing permitted waste footprint. This additional capacity will extend the life of the landfill to approximately 2048 at current fill rates. The landfill is the primary destination for trash generated on Santa Catalina Island. A Significant Ecological Area Conditional Use Permit (“SEA-CUP”) is required, as the project will intensify an existing use that is partially within the Pebbly Beach Canyon Significant Ecological Area (“SEA”). A coastal development permit (“CDP”) is also required for the proposed development within the Coastal Zone. The site is south of the City of Avalon and encompasses approximately 7.7 acres of land within Assessor’s Parcel Number (APN) 7480-045-900 with an approximate 5.6-acre waste disposal footprint. The shoreline is located approximately 230 feet to the east at the bottom of a coastal bluff with an approximate height of 180 feet above sea level. The site is accessed by Dump Road and Quarry Access Road, which are paved private roadways to the east.

## **SITE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES AND HABITAT**

The Pebbly Beach Landfill is located immediately southeast of the City of Avalon on Santa Catalina Island. The landfill was previously a rock quarry and currently is the landfill surrounded by a private road and a 150-foot tall coastal bluff ending at the Pacific Ocean to the east, native chaparral above a rock wall that starts at the limit of the waste disposal footprint to the south and southwest, and developed areas to the north and northwest.

Approximately 3.78 acres of the waste disposal footprint is within the Pebbly Beach Canyon SEA. The entire waste disposal footprint is mapped as Developed, Ruderal and Landscaped, primarily composed of landfill waste, disturbed unpaved roads to facilitate access and operation of the landfill, and scattered species including Mexican fan palm (*Washingtonia robusta*), mission cactus (*Opuntia ficus-indica*), tree of tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*), castor bean (*Ricinus communis*), wild mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*), ice plant (*Carpobrotus edulis*), and Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*). The landfill site is significantly disturbed with some ornamental vegetation at the base of the site where the Materials Recovery Facility is located. The south and southwest limits of the waste disposal footprint end at a rock wall that has sparse and scattered native chaparral on the wall and intact chaparral above the rock wall. This vegetation community is about 0.05 acres of Toyon Shrubland Alliance (*Heteromeles arbutifolia* Shrubland Alliance) and other native species which include Lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*), California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), bush monkey flower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*), and black sage (*Salvia mellifera*).

One special status plant species, decumbent goldenbush (*Isocoma menziesii* var. *decumbens*) has a moderate potential to occur but was not observed within the study area. Five special status wildlife species have a potential to occur, with the Santa Catalina Island Fox (*Urocyon littoralis catalinae*) having a moderate potential to occur, however the island fox was not observed within the study area.

## **PROJECT IMPACTS TO SEA RESOURCES**

The proposed MSE wall will be constructed fully within the existing disturbed waste disposal footprint which will not create any new impacts to the surrounding vegetation or the Pebbly Beach Canyon SEA. No vegetation removal is proposed. Grading and construction impacts would be associated with the building of the 20-foot tall MSE wall. The wall will be built in three phases, increasing the volume of the landfill to a grade elevation of 305 feet above mean sea level and an extended lifespan of 27.5 years or to the year 2048.

Potential impacts to resources from construction and operation would be limited to wildlife species.

### **Landscape, Fuel Modification, and Off-Site Brush Thinning:**

The proposed MSE wall will be located entirely within the existing landfill footprint and therefore no new fuel modification will be required.

## **MITIGATION & MINIMIZATION MEASURES**

The proposed 20-foot MSE wall would be constructed entirely within the existing landfill footprint which would not create any new permanent impacts. There are six mitigation measures proposed in the report that would be implemented to avoid and minimize potential temporary construction impacts. The project is proposed to be constructed in three phases, with the construction activities of each phase taking place outside of the bird breeding season. Light and noise impacts to wildlife would be mitigated by limiting construction activities between 8:00 am – 5:00 pm during weekdays, with no anticipated weekend or nighttime work. To prevent inadvertent entrapment of wildlife during each construction activity phase, holes or trenches more than two feet deep will be inspected for trapped wildlife at the end of each workday and then be covered with plywood or provided with escape ramps and pipes greater than three inches in diameter will be capped when not in use.

## **SEA ORDINANCE CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS**

The following discussions list the required SEA Ordinance Findings, followed by Staff's assessment of the proposed Project's consistency with those findings. Pursuant to Los Angeles County Code Section 22.102.080.D, the applicant shall substantiate the following facts:

**1. The proposed development is highly compatible with the SEA Resources, including the preservation of natural open space areas and providing for the long-term maintenance of ecosystem functions.**

The increase in capacity and extension of operating life of the Pebbly Beach Landfill will not increase the development footprint of the existing landfill, and no additional infrastructure or accessory structures, other than an engineered retention wall within the landfill itself, are proposed. The intensity of existing landfill operations would not be increased beyond current use. A portion of the existing landfill is located within the mapped extent of the Pebbly Beach Canyon SEA. However, because no new development is proposed within the SEA, and no open space, natural habitat, or existing ecosystems are proposed to be developed, the Project would be compatible with SEA resources.

**2. The proposed development avoids or minimizes impacts to the SEA Resources and wildlife movement through one or more of the following:**

- a. Avoiding habitat fragmentation;**
- b. Minimizing edge effects; or**
- c. Siting development in the least sensitive location.**

The increase in capacity and extension of operating life of the Pebbly Beach Landfill will not increase the development footprint of the existing landfill, which is the least sensitive location for development, and no additional infrastructure or accessory structures, other than an engineered retention wall within the landfill itself, are proposed. The intensity of existing landfill operations would not be increased beyond current use. A portion of the existing landfill is located within the mapped extent of the Pebbly Beach Canyon SEA. However, because no new development is proposed

within the SEA, and no open space, natural habitat, or existing ecosystems are proposed to be developed, the Project would not contribute to habitat fragmentation or have significant edge effects.

**3. Important habitat areas are adequately buffered from development by retaining sufficient natural vegetation cover and/or natural open spaces and integrating sensitive design features.**

The increase in capacity and extension of operating life of the Pebbly Beach Landfill will not increase the development footprint of the existing landfill, and no additional infrastructure or accessory structures, other than an engineered retention wall within the landfill itself, are proposed. The intensity of existing landfill operations would not be increased beyond current use. A portion of the existing landfill is located within the mapped extent of the Pebbly Beach Canyon SEA. However, because no new development is proposed within the SEA, and no open space, natural habitat, or existing ecosystems are proposed to be developed, the Project would be integrated into its surroundings.

**4. The proposed development maintains ecological and hydrological functions of water bodies, watercourses, and their tributaries.**

No streams or watercourses are located within the vicinity of the Project.

**5. The proposed development ensures that roads, access roads, driveways, and utilities do not conflict with Priority Biological Resources, habitat areas, migratory paths, or wildlife corridors; and**

The Project is adjacent to Dump Road and Quarry Access Road, both of which are private roadways, and is connected to existing utilities. No new development of roads or utilities is proposed.

**6. The proposed development promotes the resiliency of the SEA to the greatest extent possible. For purposes of this finding, SEA resiliency is not promoted when the proposed development may cause any of the following:**

- a. **Significant unmitigated loss of contiguity or connectivity of the SEA;**
- b. **Significant unmitigated impact to a Priority Biological Resource;**
- c. **Removal of habitat that is the only known location of a new or rediscovered species; and/or**
- d. **Other factors as identified by SEATAC.**

The increase in capacity and extension of operating life of the Pebbly Beach Landfill will not increase the development footprint of the existing landfill, and no additional infrastructure or accessory structures, other than an engineered retention wall within the landfill itself, are proposed. The intensity of existing landfill operations would not be increased beyond current use. A portion of the existing landfill is located within the mapped extent of the Pebbly Beach Canyon SEA. However, because no new development is proposed within the SEA, and no open space, natural habitat, or existing ecosystems are proposed to be developed, the Project would be compatible

