

Trinidad Tsunami Sign Proposal and Planning Commission Discussion

The City has received a proposal to place tsunami warning signs in five locations on City property and six locations in the harbor area on Trinidad Rancheria property. These are the standard warning signs that you probably have seen in other locations along that coast. Some of the signs warn people when 'leaving' and 'entering' a tsunami zone, and others warn people that they are within a tsunami hazard zone and provide direction to run to higher ground in case of an earthquake. The design of the signs has been developed by Caltrans in order to standardize them throughout the State. The sign locations, five within City property (two signs at each location), and six sites (eight signs total) on Rancheria property, have been determined through a collaborative effort between the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services (OES), Trinidad Rancheria, Cal-Trans, HSU and City staff. The project actually originated when Ken Thraillkill was still the Trinidad Police Chief, and he represented the City at local OES meetings. These same signs are being placed all up and down the California Coast, and the signs have been paid for by the State OES. The North Coast District of State Parks recently received a permit waiver for 'de minimus' development from the Coastal Commission to place signs along State Park trails and accessways.

The permitting and review of the signs is not straightforward. At least a couple of the proposed signs could be exempt from any permit requirements. However, some require a Coastal Development Permit, some require Design Review, some require a Use Permit and some require a combination of the preceding. In addition, the signs within the Harbor Area may require a Coastal Development Permit (CDP), but because that is an area of deferred certification, the CDP would have to be issued directly through the Coastal Commission. Specific descriptions of each of the proposed signs and permit applicability along with photos are included below.

At their special meeting of January 23, 2013, the City Council considered whether to move forward with processing the required permits for these signs as a property owner and the applicant. Some controversy and objections to the signs were expressed at the Council meeting. The Council did not hear public comments specific to the signs themselves, as that was outside the scope of the agenda item. However, due to the sensitivity of some of the locations, and the community interest in signs, the Council requested that the Planning Commission hold a public discussion on the signs and provide a recommendation as to what signs, if any, should be included in a formal permit application process. Therefore tonight's Planning Commission action should be a determination as to what signs the City should move forward with installing with appropriate permits.

Tsunami Sign Descriptions

Applicable Regulations

Trinidad LCP

§17.56.160 (Signs) does not address street signs. But subsection A.5 allows “*public safety and directional signs not exceeding two square feet*” in any zone without the need for design review. This applies to all ‘entering’ and ‘leaving’ signs @ 1.25. sq. ft.

§17.56.160.A.2 allows “*Identifying sign and/or public bulletin board for a church, school or other public or religious use, which may be indirectly lighted, not exceeding thirty-two square feet in area and located on the premises, provided that it is no closer than ten feet from any property line.*” This type of sign is allowed in any zone, but requires design review approval. This would seem to include the larger ‘hazard zone’ signs in the harbor area.

§17.72.070 (Coastal Development Permits (CDP)) contains no explicit exemption for signs. Though the signs could be considered to be included within subsection C.2: “*Any construction, enlargement, alteration, repair, moving, improvement, removal, conversion or demolition of any building or structure less than any of the following:...*” However, the CDP exemptions do not apply in Open Space or Special Environment zones, which several of the signs are located in.

Coastal Act / Regulations

A CDP exemption in the Coastal Act for placement of signs on existing signposts / structures:

§30610. *Notwithstanding any other provision of this division, no coastal development permit shall be required pursuant to this chapter for the following types of development and in the following areas:...*

b) Improvements to any structure other than a single-family residence or a public works facility; provided, however, that the commission shall specify, by regulation, those types of improvements which (1) involve a risk of adverse environmental effect, (2) adversely affect public access, or (3) involve a change in use contrary to any policy of this division. Any improvement so specified by the commission shall require a coastal development permit.

However, there are exceptions to the exemptions within the regulations:

§13253 (Improvements that require permits) subsection (b)(1) states: “*Improvement to any structure if the structure or the improvement is located: on a beach; in a wetland, stream, or lake; seaward of the mean high tide line; in an area designated as highly scenic in a certified land use plan; or within 50 feet of the edge of a coastal bluff*” Most of the ‘entering’ and ‘leaving’ signs will fall under this exception, and therefore require a CDP.

Individual Signs

A1 – A4: 24” x 24” (4 sq. ft.) ‘Hazard Zone’ signs

These signs are intended to inform people that they are currently in a tsunami hazard zone, and are proposed to be located around the harbor parking area. Proposed locations include: (1) the bottom of Edwards Street on the ‘Welcome to Trinidad Bay’ sign; (2) the beginning of the formal parking area on an existing light pole; (3) on the southern edge of the parking lot in front of the employee parking area near the public restroom; and (4) at the end of the harbor parking area near the bait shop. These signs require design review approval from the City because they are more than 2 sq. ft. in size. The Coastal Commission retains jurisdiction over Coastal Development Permits (CDP) in the harbor area and so they would need to issue either a CDP or a permit waiver. Note that the Coastal Commission has already issued a ‘*de minimus*’ permit waiver for the tsunami signs that were proposed by the State Parks North Coast District.



B1 – B4: 22” x 18” (2.75 sq. ft) ‘Hazard Zone’ signs

These signs not only warn people that they are in a tsunami zone, but also provide instruction to run for higher ground in case of an earthquake. These signs are proposed to be placed back-to-back in the middle of the main harbor parking area, and will be mounted on existing light poles where signs already exist. Though smaller than the other ‘Hazard Zone’ signs, these signs still require Design Review approval because they are more than 2 sq. ft. in size. Like the other hazard zone signs, the Coastal Commission would have jurisdiction over issuance of a CDP if one is required.



C1-C5: 12” x 15” (1.25 sq. ft.) paired (back-to-back) ‘Entering’ and ‘Leaving’ signs

These signs are proposed to be placed on roads and trails that provide direct access to the coast in order to warn users that they are about to enter or leave a tsunami zone. They are public safety signs and are not intended to additionally mark or identify trails. Most of the locations have been chosen based on the location of existing structures that will be used to mount the signs rather than at the specific elevation of any expected tsunami run-up. The reason for this was to avoid the necessity to install any new

structures in the ground. These signs all fall under Zoning Ordinance §17.56.160.A.5, which allows public safety and directional signs less than 2 sq. ft. in size in any zone without a requirement for Design Review. However, some of the proposed locations require other approvals as described below.



C1: Located on the Trinidad Head access road

These signs are proposed to be located within an 'Open Space' (OS) zone, and are proposed to be placed on an existing sign post. The OS zone (§17.16.030) allows "pedestrian trails ... including improvements to existing facilities" with approval of a Use Permit. Because there are no CDP exemptions in the OS zone, these signs also require a CPD, which would be processed concurrently with the Use Permit.



C2: Located on Edwards Street, near the intersection with Van Wycke Street

This sign pairing is proposed to be located within the Edwards Street right-of-way and has no associated zoning. The proposed location photo shows the sign on the south side of the street, but it could possibly be placed on the north side to minimize potential view impacts. These are the only signs that would require a new support post where one does not currently exist. The post is proposed to be 9 ft. tall in order to provide a 7 ft. safety clearance for pedestrian traffic. City street signs are not subject to planning review or CDP requirements. These signs would fall under the CDP exemptions (§17.72.070.C.2) for "any construction, enlargement, alteration, repair, moving, improvement, removal, conversion or demolition of any building or structure less than any of the following criteria." The City Council generally discusses any new street signage at a public meeting, but no permit is required. However, to allow for public input, they are being included for discussion as part of the overall proposal.



C3: Located at the top of the Galindo Trail, at the bottom of Galindo Street

These signs are proposed to be mounted on an existing 'doggie pot' structure in an undeveloped portion of the Galindo Street right-of-way near its intersection with Van Wycke. The street right-of-way extends all the way down to the harbor area, but the lower half is developed as a pedestrian trail. Similar to C2, there is no zoning associated with the proposed location of this sign. It does not appear that these signs would be within 50 ft. of the bluff edge and so would also fall under the CDP exemptions (§17.72.070.C.2) for *“any construction, enlargement, alteration, repair, moving, improvement, removal, conversion or demolition of any building or structure less than any of the following criteria.”* Therefore, these signs do not require any Planning Commission approval, but have been included for public discussion.

C4: Located at the top of the Axel Lindgren Memorial Trail

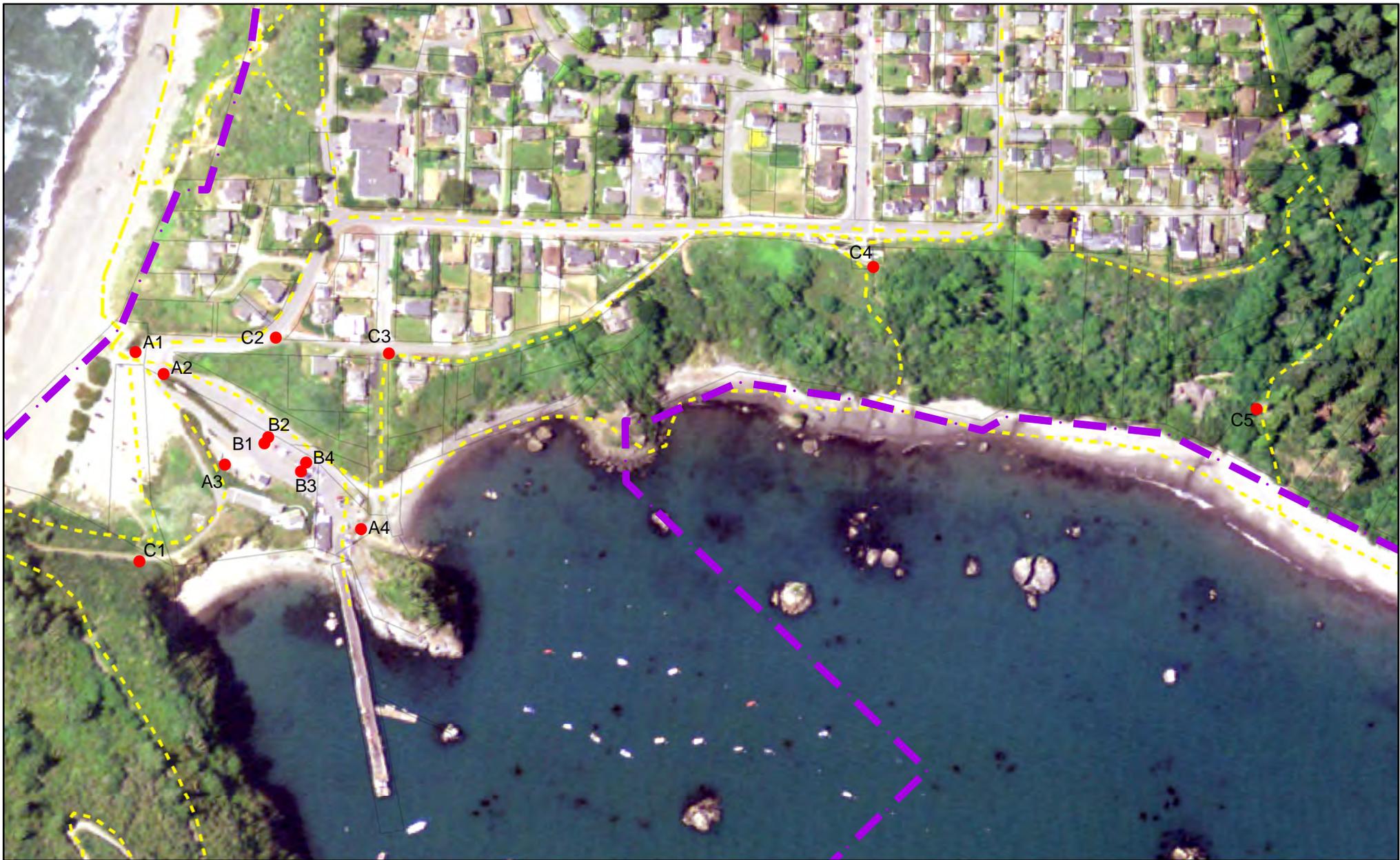
This pair of signs is proposed to be placed on the existing fence at the top of the Axel Lindgren Memorial Trail. This location is on land designated as 'Open Space' (OS) within the Tsurai Study Area. Therefore, Policy 69 applies, which states in part: *“There shall be no disturbance, vegetation removal or construction ... without the approval of the lineal descendants of Tsurai, Trinidad Rancheria, City of Trinidad, and the State Historic Preservation Officer.”* In addition, the OS zone (§17.16.030) allows *“pedestrian trails ... including improvements to existing facilities”* with approval of a Use Permit. Because there are no CDP exemptions in the OS zone, and these signs are proposed within 50 ft. of the edge of a bluff, they also require a CPD, which would be processed concurrently with the Use Permit.



C5: Located at the intersection of the Parker Creek and Groth Lane Trails

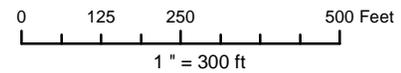
These signs are proposed to be located within a public access easement on private property zoned Special Environment (SE). The site is located outside the Tsurai Study Area and the 12.5 acre Coastal Conservancy easement. There is an existing sign post in the proposed location, but a taller post would need to be installed in order to accommodate the tsunami signs. These signs can be angled so that they can be seen from both the Parker Creek and Groth Lane trails. The City's Coastal Development Permit exemptions (§17.72.070.C) do not apply in the SE zone; therefore a CDP is required. The SE zone (§17.20.030) allows "pedestrian trails ... including improvements to existing facilities" with approval of a Use Permit, which would be processed concurrently with the CDP.





Proposed Sites for Tsunami Signs

- Proposed Tsunami Sign sites
- Trails
- Trinidad City limits
- City parcels



Sites approximate.
 Mapped for 03/20/2013 Trinidad
 Planning Commission meeting.

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