

# Midcoast Community Council

*An elected Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors*

*representing Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton, and Miramar*

P.O. Box 248, Moss Beach, CA 94038-0248

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June 12, 2013

The Honorable Jackie Speier  
US House of Representatives  
(via email)

**Subject: Pillar Point Harbor dredging and your 5/24/13 letter to Coastal Commission**

Dear Representative Speier:

We take this opportunity to try to present a more complete picture of the Pillar Point Harbor dredging issue. While the Midcoast Community Council did not comment on the dredging permit application, many members of the community, as well as councilmembers, are closely following this and other harbor issues. Everyone is in agreement that the boat launch ramps should be maintained and operable for the many recreational users who trailer their boats to Pillar Point Harbor. Fortunately, Coastal Commission staff has proposed a scaled back and conditioned project that seems acceptable to all parties.

Regarding Homeland Security concerns expressed in your letter, it should be pointed out that the Coast Guard does not have a presence at Pillar Point Harbor (due to budgeting constraints even before the recent sequester), and if they did, their vessel would be maintained in a berth or along the dock, ready to go, as are the Pillar Point Harbor Patrol vessels.

The most urgent public concern about this particular dredging event was not so much to promote any particular alternate disposal site, but about the overuse of the inner harbor beach (aka "Perched" Beach) for this purpose, and the desire to save it from being completely destroyed as a beach. This area used to be part of the sweep of natural sandy beach that made up the shoreline before Pillar Point Harbor was built. Even after construction of the outer breakwater, the public enjoyed this natural beach in the 60's and 70's. Incrementally, since the 80's, so much dredge material has been placed there that its function as a beach has been compromised. Most of the former sandy sloped beach is now a flat vegetated raised area with a steep drop-off to the remaining narrow sandy shore. With each dredging event the former beach evolves closer to the filled, paved and developed area that the Harbor District envisions for it, without any public input regarding that result.

At many public meetings the community has expressed clear opposition to development of the inner harbor beach and loss of its current use for outdoor gatherings and quiet-water beach-launching activities such as kayaks and paddleboards. It is an idyllic setting and ideally located near parking, Coastal Trail, and highway crossing signal. This important public beach access location can still be saved if the current reduced-scale dredging episode includes final grading to restore the gentle slope from the Coastal Trail down to the shoreline, and if the area is then closed to future dredge disposal.

Most people have been unaware there is a potential alternative dredge disposal site within the harbor that can be funded entirely by the Harbor District, and would not involve the Marine Sanctuary. The West Shoreline Trail is a popular recreational trail and provides critical emergency vehicle access to the west breakwater and Mavericks beach. Ongoing erosion threatens a 700-ft

section of the trail. The Harbor District owns this land, has given the repair top priority, done an engineering study with cost estimates, and budgeted \$365,000 to armor the shoreline. It is frustrating to learn that this project has been inexplicably on hold, with no discussion of alternatives and no permitting efforts, during the entire time of the current dredging permit application.

A useful information resource to help keep in touch with community concerns is the MCC website, [www.MidcoastCommunityCouncil.org](http://www.MidcoastCommunityCouncil.org). In addition to journal posts that can be subscribed to, it contains Issues Pages, including one on "Harbor/Shoreline".

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

s/Laura Stein, Chair  
Midcoast Community Council

Enc. 5/24/13 letter from Jackie Speier to CCC

Cc: Brian Perkins, Senior Advisor to Congresswoman Speier  
San Mateo County Harbor Commission  
Supervisor Don Horsley  
Coastal Commission staff Nick Dreher and Madeleine Cavalieri