

SWCA

RAGGED POINT INN AND RESORT

SUPPLEMENTAL VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

September 2016

PREPARED FOR

Ragged Point Inn and Restaurant
19019 Highway 1, Unit 1
Ragged Point, CA 93452

PREPARED BY

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**Ragged Point Inn and Resort
Supplemental Visual Impact Assessment
San Luis Obispo County, California**

Prepared for

Ragged Point Inn and Restaurant

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Ragged Point, CA 93452
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SWCA Project No. 30082

September 26, 2016

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1 INTRODUCTION

This supplemental report analyzes the potential visual effects of the proposed revisions to the project design for the re-development of the Ragged Point Inn and Resort (project) on Highway 1 in San Luis Obispo County, just south of the Monterey County line (refer to Figure 1). The project was redesigned subsequent to submittal of the previous Visual Impact Assessment prepared by SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA), dated February 24, 2016. Refer to Chapter 2, Revised Project Description, of this supplemental report for revised conceptual plans and description of the project. The baseline visual context, regulatory setting, project visibility, and viewer sensitivity sections of the previous Visual Impact Assessment are still valid and may be referred to when reading this supplemental visual analysis. The revised project description, conceptual plans, photo-simulations, and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) analysis included in this supplemental assessment supersede those provided in the previous Visual Impact Assessment.

Figure 1. Project Location Map



2 REVISED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The following is the revised project description, which proposes to substantially remodel/reconstruct the existing Ragged Point Inn and Resort development in five phases (refer to Figure 2, Project Phasing Plan). The conceptual project plan is shown in Figure 3, Project Concept Site Plan.

2.1 PHASE 1 – CLIFF HOUSES

Cliff House Phase Components

South

- Addition to, and partial remodel of, an existing five-bedroom residence and garage; add eight new motel guest rooms.
- Addition to, and partial remodel of, an existing two-story, eight-bedroom motel (Building I); add two motel guest rooms.
- Guest recreational patios, roof decks, and spa area.
- New parking area construction and replacement of existing parking areas at western portion of site; add 28 new parking stalls with 16 existing parking spaces reconfigured.

North

- Demolition of existing gas station.
- Existing parking lot paving removal and replacement with permeable pavement.
- Remodel of existing gas pumps to a middle 20th century style.
- New gas station and convenience store.
- Two new retail store buildings.
- New public bathrooms.
- New motel with six guest rooms on two floors.
- Guest recreational patio and spa area.
- Extensive landscaping of public areas and private guest rooms.

Cliff House North and Commercial Buildings

- Demolition of existing gas station.
- Existing parking lot paving removal and replacement with permeable pavement.
- Remodel of existing gas pumps to a middle 20th century style.
- New Gas Station and convenience store.
- Two new retail store buildings.
- New public bathrooms.
- New motel with six guest rooms on two floors.
- Guest recreational patio and spa area.
- Extensive landscaping of public areas and private guest rooms.

Cliff House South – Statistics

- Footprint of existing residence and addition: 7,400 square feet (sf).
- Footprint of existing motel building and addition: 2,975 sf.
- Landscaping, walkways, and patios: 28,000 sf.
- New parking lots and roadway: 6,700 sf.
- Existing parking lots and roadway replacement: 11,400 sf.
- Total area of cliff house disturbance: 56,475 sf.
- Twenty-six new full-size parking stalls.
- Two new handicapped parking stalls.
- Three new motorcycle parking stalls.
- Ten new motel guest rooms (5,500 sf of new construction).

Cliff House North – Statistics

- Footprint of new buildings: 6,200 sf.
- Landscaping, walkways, and patios: 14,000 sf.
- Existing parking lots and roadway replacement: 16,000 sf.
- Total area of creek-top disturbance: 36,200 sf.
- Fourteen existing full-size parking stalls.
- Four existing Recreational Vehicle parking stalls.
- Six new guest rooms.

2.2 Phase 2 – Employee Housing

Employee Housing Phase Components

- Resort operations and maintenance building.
- Centralized resort laundry building.
- Business office building.
- Guest recreational patio and spa areas.
- Employee housing complex consisting of five studio apartments, one one-bedroom apartment, and outside patio/bbq area.
- Four new motel guest rooms.
- Landscaping.
- New Parking area construction (Parking Areas 4, 5, and 6) and renovation of existing parking areas at southern portion of site. Seventeen new parking stalls added, with 28 existing parking spaces reconfigured.

Employee Housing – Statistics

- Footprint of existing motel building and new building: 11,400 sf.
- Landscaping, walkways, and patios: 40,000 sf.

- New parking lots and roadway: 4,000 sf.
- Existing parking lots and roadway replacement: 16,000 sf.
- Total area of employee housing disturbance: 71,400 sf.
- Sixteen new full-size parking stalls.
- Three new motorcycle parking stalls.
- Six covered full-size valet parking stalls in operations building.
- Four new motel guest rooms (1,500 sf of new construction).

2.3 Phase 3 – Waterfall

- New meadow loop road serving new north resort.
- Full-service restaurant building with extensive exterior dining and lounge terraces at grade and upon restaurant roof terrace and gardens.
- Fast food restaurant.
- Revitalized public plaza.
- New motel with 12 guest rooms on two floors.
- Extensive landscaping of public areas and private guest rooms.

Waterfall – Statistics

- Footprint of new buildings: 19,640 sf.
- Existing parking lot and roadway replacement: 13,000 sf.
- New perimeter roadway: 5,000 sf.
- Landscaping, walkways, and patios: 34,000 sf.
- Total area of waterfall disturbance: 71,600 sf.
- Twenty-six existing full-size parking stalls.
- Three existing motorcycle parking stalls.
- One existing full-size handicap parking stall.
- Thirteen new compact parking stalls.
- Twelve new motel guest rooms.

2.4 Phase 4 – White Rock Cove

White Rock Cove Phase Components

- Demolition of existing motel units E, F, and G (housing 17 hotel guest rooms) at southwest portion of property.
- New construction of 19 motel guest rooms (net gain of two motel guest rooms).
- Outdoor recreational venue area adjacent to existing pavilion.
- Landscaping, walkways, and patios.

White Rock Cove – Statistics

- Footprint of existing motel buildings E, F, and G to be demolished (not included in area disturbance): 8,250 sf.
- Footprint of Phase 4 motel building: 7,200 sf.
- Landscaping, walkways, and patios: 15,000 sf.
- Total area of White Rock Cove disturbance: 22,200 sf.
- Zero additional parking added this phase.
- Replacement of 17 existing motel guest rooms with 19 all-new motel guest rooms, roof terraces, and boardwalk; net gain of two guest rooms (17,000 sf of new construction).

2.5 Phase 5 – Spa

Spa Phase Components

- Two exterior spas with terraces.
- Reflection pond with eternity edge facing ocean.
- Massage center with therapy rooms and dressing areas.
- “Relaxarium” including a spa, steam bath, cold water plunge, ice fountain, lounge areas, and four dressing rooms.
- Lush landscaping on terrace level of Relaxarium.
- Reclaimed meadow in place of old wastewater treatment plant.

Spa – Statistics

- Footprint of new buildings and roof terrace: 4,400 sf.
- Landscape, patios, and walkways: 60,000 sf.
- New parking lot and roadway: 18,000 sf.
- Total area of spa disturbance: 82,400 sf.
- One new full-size handicap parking stall.
- Five new full-size parking stalls.

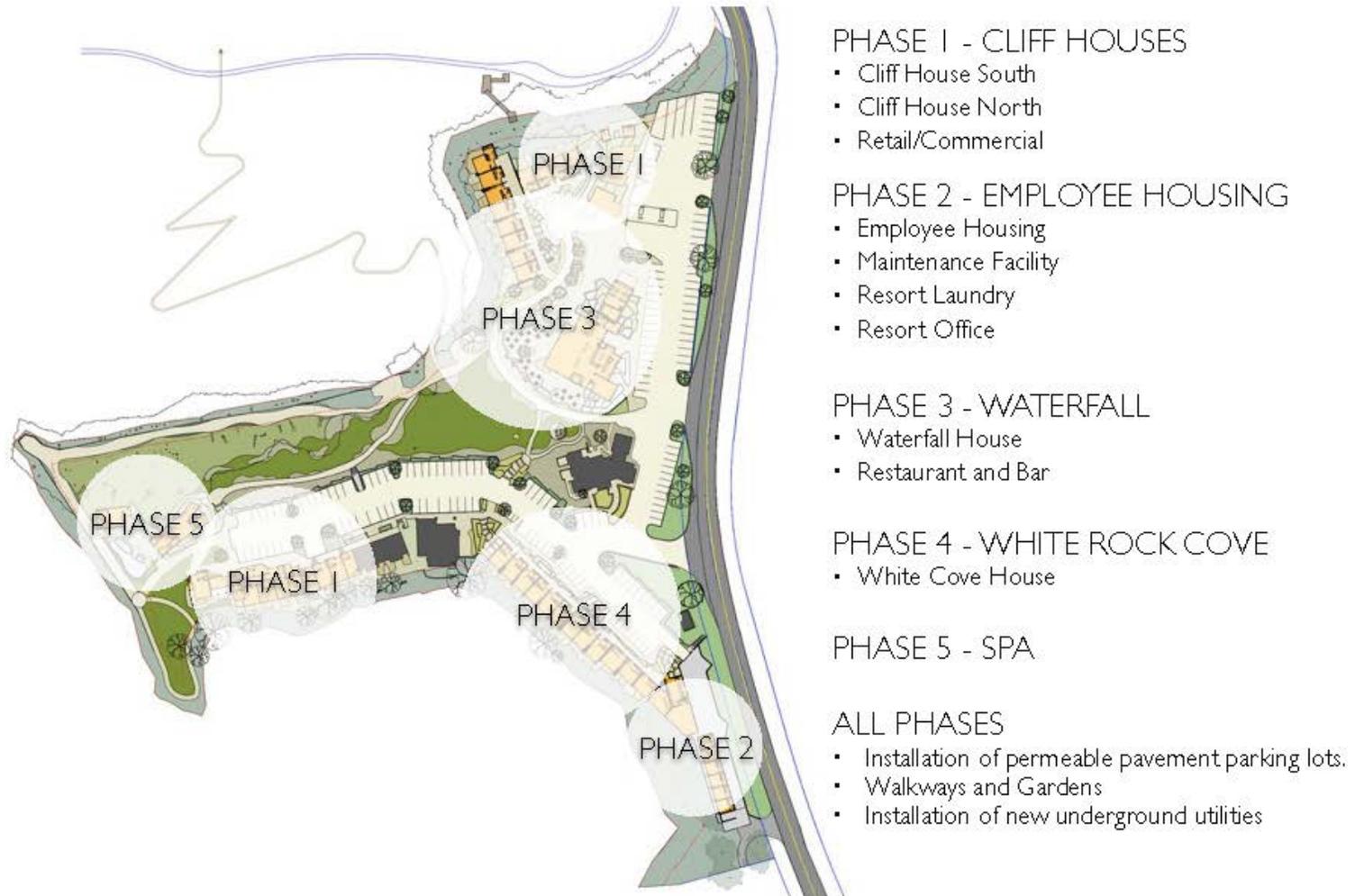
Resort Amenities Added

- Two exterior spas with terraces.
- Reflection pond with eternity edge facing ocean.
- Massage Center with therapy rooms and dressing areas.
- Relaxarium including a spa, steam bath, cold water plunge, ice fountain, lounge, areas and four dressing rooms.
- Two new wedding venues.
- Roof terrace on Relaxarium.
- Reclaimed meadow in place of old wastewater treatment plant.

Figure 2. Project Phasing Plan

PROJECT PHASES

RAGGED POINT INN & RESORT

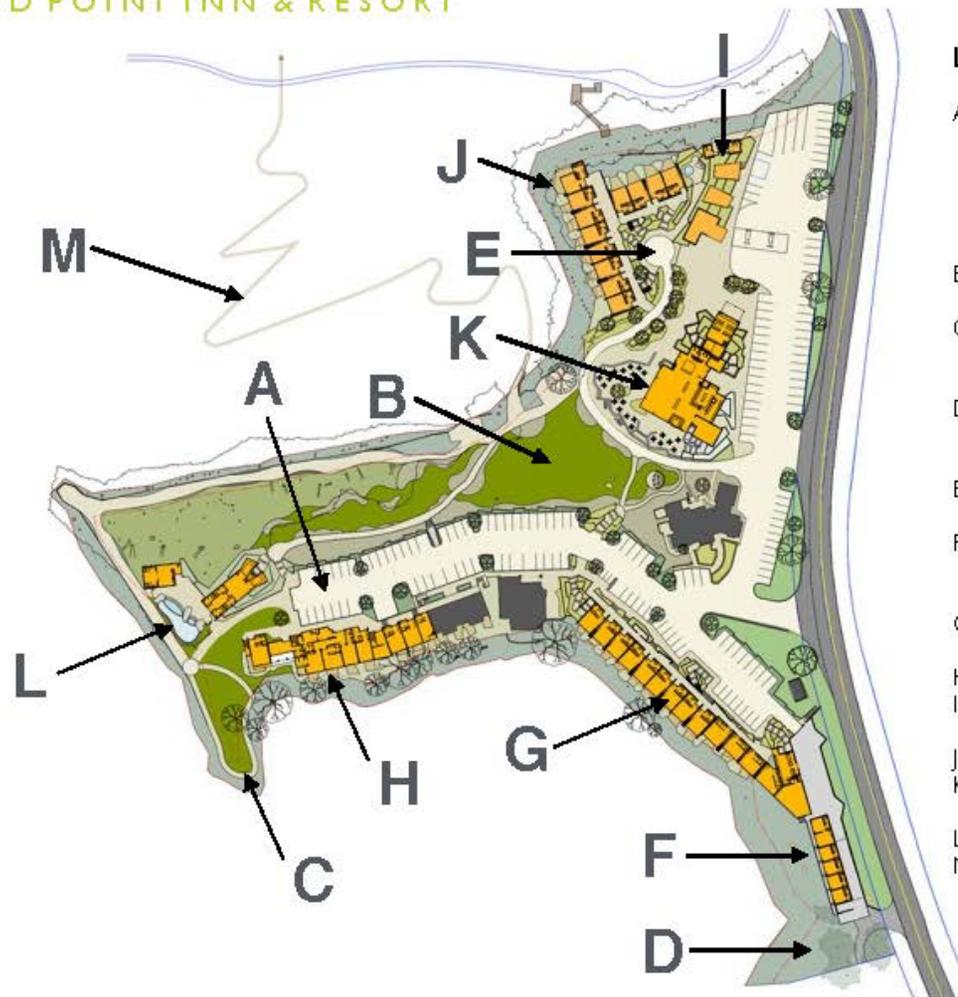


Source: Richard LeGros, Architect

Figure 3. Project Concept Site Plan

FUTURE GROUND LEVEL SITE PLAN

RAGGED POINT INN & RESORT



LEGEND:

- A. All existing water impervious asphalt paving at parking lots to be removed and replaced with water permeable pavers. 50 new public parking stalls added. Cisterns to be installed below parking lot paving to collect rain and landscape irrigation water for reuse.
- B. All turf to be replaced with native drought tolerant plantings.
- C. Existing waste water treatment plant to be removed and replaced with new gardens and pedestrian pathways.
- D. New waste water treatment plant to treat water to tertiary level. Reclaimed water to be used for landscape irrigation.
- E. Enlarged public plaza with new loop access road.
- F. New employee housing maintenance and operations building, resort offices, and resort laundry.
- G. Existing motel buildings replaced with new resort guest rooms.
- H. Cliff House South to be remodeled.
- I. New gas station, retail space, and public bathrooms.
- J. New guest resort and Cliff House North.
- K. New expanded restaurant and bar with extensive exterior dining patio.
- L. Day Spa
- M. Coastal access trail to be improved.

Source: Richard LeGros, Architect

3 VISUAL ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The revised project was field reviewed on September 4 and 13, 2016. Previously identified Key Viewing Areas (KVAs) were initially used to analyze the visual effects of the revised project. In addition, other viewpoints along Highway 1 were reviewed to see if the revised project would cause potential impacts not addressed in the previous report. It was determined that the previous KVA locations were still valid and provided the best representation of the project (refer to Figure 4, Key Viewing Area Location Map). Field studies were conducted both on-foot and from a moving vehicle. Accuracy of the revised photo-simulations was verified using field measurements and the known dimensions of existing structures and site features. Revised photo-simulations are shown in Figures 5 through 16.

Figure 4. Key Viewing Area Location Map



 Location and direction of Key Viewing Area (KVA) and associated photo-simulation.

4 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Consistent with the previous Visual Impact Assessment, this supplemental report identifies which specific criteria contribute most to the existing quality of each view, and if change would occur to that criteria as a result of the project. If a change in visual criteria is identified, the change is analyzed for its potential effect on the existing scenic character. This analysis is combined with the potential number of viewers, their sensitivities and viewing duration in order to determine the overall level of impacts.

4.1 California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines

The State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G(b) states that affirmative answers to the following questions indicate potentially significant impacts to visual resources:

- 1a. Does the project site have significant visual resources by virtue of surface waters, vegetation, elevation, slope, or other natural or man-made features which are publicly visible?
- 1b. If so, does the project have the potential to degrade or significantly interfere with the public's enjoyment of the site's existing visual resources?
- 2a. Does the project have the potential to impact visual resources of the Coastal Zone or other visually important area (i.e., mountainous area, public park, urban fringe, or scenic travel corridor)?
- 2b. If so, does the project have the potential to conflict with the policies set forth in the Local Coastal Plan, the Comprehensive Plan or any applicable community plan to protect the identified views?
3. Does the project have the potential to create a significantly adverse aesthetic impact through obstruction of public views, incompatibility with surrounding uses, structures, or intensity of development, removal of significant amounts of vegetation, loss of important open space, substantial alteration of natural character, lack of adequate landscaping, or extensive grading visible from public areas?

In consideration of the guidance listed above, the project would be determined to have a significant effect on the visual environment if the effects exceed the significance criteria related to the following State CEQA Guidelines Checklist, and described further in Section 10, *Visual Impact Analysis*.

Will the project:

- a. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
- b. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?
- c. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?
- d. Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

5 VISUAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

The project is proposed on a sensitive site in terms of coastal and highway corridor aesthetic character. The parcel is adjacent to and highly visible from Highway 1, an Officially Designated State Scenic Highway and National Scenic Byway, and is within the Coastal Zone. The project site may also be considered as the southern gateway to the Big Sur Coast, an international tourist destination based on its exceptional scenic quality.

The high visual quality of the region is due to a combination of several elements, primarily the sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean, the rugged shoreline and beaches, bluffs and terraces, the dramatic topography, inland hills, and the patterns of native vegetation.

In addition to the natural features, the visual quality and character of the project setting is also influenced somewhat by the built and cultural environment. Scattered ranches and ranchland, occasional private residences, and visitor-serving development are also part of the Highway 1 Big Sur experience. Accordingly, this analysis considers both the natural setting and the existing development as part of the visual baseline.

5.1 The Project's Effect on Scenic Vistas

Scenic vistas are generally defined as high-quality views displaying good aesthetic and compositional value that can be seen from public viewpoints. If the project substantially degrades the scenic landscape as viewed from public roads, or in particular designated scenic routes, or from other public or recreation areas, this would be considered a potentially significant impact on the scenic vista. Scenic vistas related to the viewing experience associated with this project include views of the Pacific Ocean, the beach and shoreline, bluffs and cliffs, mature trees and other native vegetation, and the hillsides and ridges inland from Highway 1.

The project would be seen along an approximately 0.4-mile section of Highway 1. From the previously described northern viewpoints at turnouts along southbound Highway 1, the proposed project improvements would not affect ocean views or any other components of the existing scenic vista. Closer to the project site, new employee housing is proposed immediately south of the existing southernmost hotel units. This currently undeveloped area provides direct ocean views from Highway 1 in both the north and southbound directions. The proposed new employee housing would be built into the existing hillside, at an elevation lower than Highway 1. The roof of the employee housing building would be flat, and would be planted to resemble a meadow. As a result, as seen from Highway 1, the employee housing would only affect the lowest portion of the ocean view, and the ocean horizon line would remain visible above the buildings.

The project also proposes to remodel, renovate, and/or demolish and rebuild the majority of the existing hotel room buildings within the resort. As part of these alterations, the massing of some of the hotel room buildings in the southern portion of the property would change. Where the reconfigured hotel rooms would extend above the heights of the existing buildings, views of the ocean are already compromised by existing trees along the bluff top.

The revised project description states that it would “develop underutilized open space and ocean view corridors into exterior seating and dining areas for the public’s use.” This area between the existing restaurant and hotel reception building currently provides an open view corridor through the property from Highway 1 to the ocean. The potential construction or placement of support buildings, equipment, shade structures, or other upright elements taller than 8 feet in this area would interfere with ocean views from the highway.

Impact 1 **The proposed increased development of the existing exterior dining areas and adjacent open space may limit ocean views as seen from Highway 1. This ocean view blockage from a public roadway would result in potentially significant direct long- and short-term impacts to the existing scenic vista.**

MM-1 *Prior to issuance of a conditional use permit for the project, the applicant shall submit plans and elevations to the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building for review and approval. The plans and elevations shall show the following:*

- a. The proposed renovation and/or re-development of the outdoor dining area between the existing restaurant and hotel reception building shall not result in the permanent construction or seasonal placement of any elements taller than 8 feet above existing ground level.*

Residual Impacts

This measure restricts the heights of new elements in the proposed expanded outdoor dining area and adjacent open space. Implementation of this measure would preserve ocean views through that portion of the project site, and would result in visual impacts to the scenic vista considered to be significant but mitigable (CEQA, Class II).

5.2 The Project's Effect on Specific Scenic Resources as seen from the State Scenic Highway

A scenic resource is a specific feature or element with a high degree of memorability or landmark characteristics that contributes to the high visual quality of the corridor. From along Highway 1 in the project vicinity, the Pacific Ocean, the rugged cliffs and shoreline, inland hills, vegetated creek ways, and mature Monterey cypress trees are considered scenic resources. The project would result in a significant impact if it were to damage or have a substantial negative effect on views of any of those specific resources as seen from Highway 1, an Officially Designated State Scenic Highway.

As mentioned in the previous section, because the proposed new employee housing south of the southernmost existing hotel room buildings would be built into the hillside, ocean views as seen from Highway 1 would be minimally affected. In addition, the reconstruction of the existing southernmost hotel buildings would alter the building massing but would not cause a net decrease in ocean views.

As mentioned in the above discussion of Scenic Vistas, the revised project description states that it would “develop underutilized open space and ocean view corridors into exterior seating and dining areas for the public’s use.” The potential construction or placement of support buildings, equipment, shade structures, or other upright elements taller than 8 feet in this area would interfere with ocean views from the highway.

Impact 2 **The proposed increased development of the existing exterior dining areas and adjacent open space may limit ocean views as seen from Highway 1. This ocean view blockage would result in potentially significant direct long and short-term impacts to a scenic resource as viewed from an Officially Designated State Scenic Highway.**

Implementation of mitigation measure MM-1 would reduce potential impacts to scenic resources as seen from the State Scenic Highway.

Residual Impacts

The mitigation measure identified under Impact 1 restricting the height of new elements in the proposed expanded outdoor dining area and adjacent open space would also reduce impacts for Impact 2 by preserving ocean views through the center of the project site. As a result, visual impacts to scenic resources would be considered significant but mitigable (CEQA, Class II).

5.3 The Project's Effect on the Existing Visual Character and Quality of the Site and its Surroundings

The visual character of the project site and its surroundings is defined by the balance of built and natural elements. The larger landscape surrounding the Ragged Point Inn and Resort is dominated by a rugged, natural beauty. The dramatic meeting of land and sea creates memorable panoramas of the highest quality. The Ragged Point Inn and Resort serves as an unofficial southern gateway to the Big Sur Coast. This gateway effect is strengthened by the fact that the basic type of landscape changes at Ragged Point, from the more rolling hills, plateaus, and grazing land typical of San Luis Obispo County, to the steeper, more rugged terrain seen in Monterey County to the north. The great number of tourists and visitors traveling Highway 1 are likely to view the Ragged Point Inn and Resort as a sort of commercial landmark on the southern Big Sur Coast. These factors underscore the sensitivity of the Ragged Point Inn and Resort as an influence on the visual character of not only the project site but on the overall Coast Highway traveling experience as well.

Currently the primary character-defining features of the project site as seen from Highway 1 include:

- The generally low profile, semi-rustic buildings, and open layout of the existing development.
- The parking lots fronting the highway, including associated vehicles and people.
- Pedestrians and visitors utilizing the existing dining plaza and the property in general.
- The landform of the property as it extends out toward the west beyond the adjacent coastline.
- The grove of large-scale Monterey cypress trees along the northern portion of the resort.
- Other mature trees and landscape vegetation throughout the property.
- Views of the Pacific Ocean from Highway 1.

As seen from Highway 1, the existing visual elements of the site usually combine in a harmonious view of both developed and natural features. The built character of the existing project site is evident and mostly unavoidable due to the close proximity of development to the highway. The architectural style of the existing development however is generally low profile, with wooden siding, stone accents, modified gable and hipped-roof forms and wood shingles, making the development generally compatible with the rural character of the setting. This, combined with the visual dominance of the large cypress trees and the availability of ocean views through the site, allows the existing development to be generally visually subordinate to the larger natural viewshed. During the busy tourist seasons, however, this visual balance is disrupted by the increased clutter of vehicles filling the parking lot, and by the visibility of crowds of visitors.

The project proposes an extensive alteration of the existing Ragged Point Inn and Resort property including numerous new structures, the reconstruction of several other existing buildings, new and expanded uses and activities, new outdoor gathering plazas, and a number of reconfigured infrastructure elements. A fundamental result of these alterations would be an inherent increase in the built character of the site. In general, the proposed development would appear larger in scale, larger in overall footprint, and denser than the existing resort. The architectural style of the proposed structures is utilitarian in

appearance, with emphasis on large unadorned planes and angular geometries. Most of the new buildings feature second floors achieved by one or more cubic modules with slant roofs extending above the main form of the structures. Although no specific proposed materials or color schedules were available at the time of this report, the photo-simulations show exteriors that appear to be tan concrete or stucco, with orange-red or stained wood trim, doors, and entry overhangs. The proposed architectural style and materials of the buildings would be unsympathetic with the natural and rural context of the coast, and would serve to draw attention to the built characteristics of the site by making the structures more noticeable. In addition, the vertically protruding sections of the new and reconstructed hotel room buildings along the southernmost portion of the property would reduce views to the Pacific Ocean as seen from Highway 1.

Some extent of mature trees and other vegetation would be removed to accommodate the new construction and extensive remodeling. Although revegetation areas are identified in the project description, it would take decades for the visual benefits of the larger trees to be replaced. In the meantime, a substantial reduction in the vegetated character of the site would occur. This effect would further emphasize the visual perception of the site as one of more intense development.

As a result of the expanded and new uses proposed by the revised project, it is expected that the resort would have an increase in the number of vehicles and people on-site. The revised project proposes additional parking areas and spaces, which would expand the percentage of the view occupied by asphalt and vehicles, and would result in a commensurate increase in visual clutter.

Impact 3 The project would cause a noticeable change to the visual environment of the site and its surroundings due to an increased built, commercial appearance; a reduction of vegetated character; and minor loss of ocean views. The developed aspect of the project site would become substantially more noticeable and visually dominant as seen from Highway 1 and would distract from the views of the larger natural landscape. As a result, the project would cause potentially significant direct long- and short-term impacts to the visual character of the site and its surroundings.

Implementation of mitigation measure MM-1 would partially reduce potential impacts to the visual character of the site and its surroundings, in addition to the following measures.

MM-2 *Prior to issuance of a conditional use permit for the project, the applicant shall submit building exterior materials and color schedule samples to the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building for review and approval. The schedule samples shall show the following:*

- a. Exteriors of all new and remodeled buildings, walls, and other structures shall be predominantly natural or natural-appearing materials such as wood or stone. Metal may be used if it has an aged patina.*
- b. Exterior colors of all new and remodeled buildings, walls, and other structures shall be muted earth-tones. Trim and minor accents are excluded from this requirement.*

MM-3 *Prior to issuance of a conditional use permit for the project, the applicant shall submit a Tree Preservation Plan to the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building for review and approval. The Tree Preservation Plan shall be prepared by a certified arborist and shall show the following:*

- a. *All mature Monterey cypress and other native trees on site shall be saved and protected.*
- b. *Delineation of all existing trees on site, differentiated by species and size.*
- c. *Areas where the construction of the proposed structures and other project elements would potentially conflict with the health or cause the potential removal of trees.*
- d. *Identification of specific measures and recommendations, including potentially modifying structures and/or construction techniques, to protect existing mature trees.*
- e. *Delineation of all areas where protective measures such as exclusionary fencing and other strategies must occur.*
- f. *An implementation and monitoring program to achieve the tree protection goals of this measure.*

MM-4

Prior to issuance of a conditional use permit for the project, the applicant shall submit site plans and landscape plans to the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building for review and approval. The site plans and landscape plans shall show all existing, new, or expanded parking lots to be visually screened from Highway 1 as follows:

- a. *The landscape plans shall be developed and signed by a licensed landscape architect.*
- b. *The parking lots shall be visually screened by either horticulturally-appropriate shrubs, a combination of shrubs and a fence, or shrubs and an earthen berm. If fencing is used it shall be made of natural materials such as wood or stone.*
- c. *The screening shall be a minimum of 3 feet tall and a maximum of 4 feet tall at maturity and shall not be placed within the highway right-of-way nor impede safe ingress/egress from the site.*
- d. *Vegetation within the parking lot screen planting areas shall be maintained in perpetuity. Vegetation within the screen planting area that die shall be replaced.*

MM-5

Prior to issuance of a conditional use permit for the project, the applicant shall submit utility plans to the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building for review and approval. The utility plans shall show the undergrounding of all utility poles and overhead lines on site. The utility undergrounding must be implemented by completion of Phase 4 of the project.

Residual Impacts

These measures would result in a project more visually compatible with the rural coastal environment by preserving existing trees, making the new and re-constructed buildings less visually dominant, partially screening the parking lots, and undergrounding existing overhead utility poles. Implementation of these measures would substantially maintain the vegetative character of the site and would minimize the proposed increase of built characteristics of the project. The cumulative effect of these measures would

result in visual impacts to the existing character of the site and surroundings to be considered significant but mitigable (CEQA, Class II).

5.4 Project Light or Glare Affecting Day or Nighttime Views in the Area

The project would result in a significant impact if it subjects public viewing locations to a substantial amount of point-source lighting visibility at night, or if project illumination results in a noticeable spillover effect into the nighttime sky, increasing the ambient light over the region. The placement of lighting, source of illumination, and fixture types combined with viewer locations, adjacent reflective elements, and atmospheric conditions can affect the degree of change to nighttime views. If the project results in direct visibility of a substantial number of lighting sources, or allows a substantial amount of light to project toward the sky, significant impacts on nighttime views and aesthetic character would result.

Although no lighting plans were available at the time of this report, it is anticipated that because of the project's expanded size, new multi-story configurations, public safety requirements, and its proximity to Highway 1, an increase of night lighting would be seen from the surrounding area. Unshielded light sources or bright-lights reflected on exterior walls would result in potential impacts. The larger buildings, bright interior and exterior lights, large windows and wall openings, outdoor dining areas, and parking and pedestrian areas may result in highly visible illumination as seen from Highway 1 and the surroundings. Fog is a common atmospheric condition of the area and increases the "glow-effect" as potentially seen from great distances. Daytime reflection and seasonal glare from south facing surfaces would be highly noticeable.

Impact 4 **The project would cause an increase in night lighting glare and light trespass into the surrounding area resulting in potentially significant direct long- and short-term impacts to nighttime views.**

MM-6 *Prior to issuance of a conditional use permit for the project, the applicant shall submit a lighting plan to the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building for review and approval. The lighting plan shall be prepared using guidance and best practices endorsed by the International Dark Sky Association. The lighting plan shall address all aspects of the lighting, including but not limited to all buildings, infrastructure, parking lots and driveways, paths, outdoor dining area, recreation areas, safety, and signage. The lighting plan shall also consider effects on wildlife in the surrounding area. At a minimum, the lighting plan shall include the following:*

- a. The point source of all exterior lighting shall be shielded from off-site views.*
- b. Light trespass from exterior lights shall be minimized by directing light downward and utilizing cut-off fixtures or shields.*
- c. Lumination from exterior lights shall be the lowest level allowed by public safety standards.*
- d. Exterior lighting shall be designed to not focus illumination onto exterior walls.*
- e. Bollard style and ground-level lighting shall be used where feasible.*
- f. "Bright white" colored light shall not be used for exterior lighting.*

- g. Any signage visible from off-site shall not be internally luminated.*

Residual Impacts

Implementation of these measures would minimize potential lighting glare and trespass impacts as seen from the surrounding area. As a result, visual impacts based on new source of light or glare would be considered significant but mitigable (CEQA, Class II).

5.5 Cumulative Impacts

The discussion of cumulative impacts relates to the potential for the project to contribute to an aggregate change in visual quality from the surrounding public viewing areas, taking into consideration existing as well as proposed development.

The north coast of San Luis Obispo County has undergone a certain amount of visual change within the last several years, mostly in the San Simeon and Piedras Blancas areas. New development is proposed by California State Parks surrounding the old Piedras Blancas Motel, and continuing improvements and access points for the California Coastal Trail will also be seen from Highway 1. In Monterey County to the north, little visual change is evident from Highway 1, other than an expansion of commercial use in the Gorda/Willow Springs area and occasional minor driveway and fencing improvements along the route.

As mentioned previously, the project's proximity to Highway 1 and its memorability as the southern gateway to Big Sur increase its potential to influence the aesthetic quality and character of the area. This change in visual character, when experienced along with other recent and proposed projects, could contribute to a potential emerging perception that the north coast of San Luis Obispo County is undergoing a visual change toward increasing development.

As a result, the noticeable alteration of the project, caused by its increased built characteristics, combined with the tree removal and the minor reduction of ocean views, when experienced in conjunction with other projects along Highway 1 would result in cumulative adverse visual impacts.

Impact 5 The noticeable alteration of the project site, caused by its increased built character, combined with tree removal and the minor reduction of ocean views, when experienced in conjunction with other projects along Highway 1 would result in potentially significant cumulative adverse visual impacts.

Implementation of mitigation measures MM-1 through MM-6 would reduce potential cumulative impacts.

Residual Impacts

Implementation of the measures identified in this study would result in cumulative visual impacts to be considered significant but mitigable (CEQA, Class II).

5.6 SUMMARY

SWCA prepared a Visual Impact Assessment, dated February 24, 2016, for the original project based on project concept plans dated March 2014 and a project description dated September 1, 2014, provided by the project applicant. Subsequent to the preparation of the original Visual Impact Assessment, substantial revisions were made to the project. The project revisions included some degree of change to the majority of the site layout and buildings proposed by the original design.

The previous Visual Impact Assessment identified the following primary visual impacts associated with the original project:

- Construction of new employee housing in the area south of the existing hotel rooms at the southern portion of the property would substantially eliminate the most noticeable ocean views through the property as seen from Highway 1.
- Increasing the heights of the existing hotel room buildings in the southern-most portion of the property would partially obscure ocean views from Highway 1.
- The potential construction or placement of support buildings, equipment, shade structures, or other upright elements taller than 8 feet in the area between the existing restaurant and hotel reception building area would interfere with ocean views from the highway.
- The proposed architectural style and materials of the proposed buildings would be unsympathetic with the natural and rural context of the coast, and would serve to draw attention to the built characteristics of the site by making the structures more noticeable.
- Some extent of mature trees and other vegetation would be removed to accommodate the new construction and extensive remodeling. Although revegetation and landscaping areas are identified in the project description, it would take decades for the visual benefits of the larger trees to be realized. In the meantime, a substantial reduction in the vegetated character of the site would occur. This effect would further emphasize the visual perception of the site as one of more intense development.
- As a result of the project's expanded and new uses, the resort would have an increase in the number of vehicles and people on-site. The project proposes additional parking areas and spaces, which would expand the percentage of the view occupied by asphalt and vehicles, and would result in a commensurate increase in visual clutter.
- Because of the project's expanded size, new multi-story configurations, public safety requirements, and its proximity to Highway 1, an increase of night lighting would be seen from the surrounding area.

The following revisions to the original project however have minimized certain previously identified visual impacts. These project revisions primarily address and improve the availability of ocean views as seen from Highway 1:

- The proposed new employee housing would be built into the existing hillside, at an elevation lower than Highway 1. The roof of the employee housing building would be flat, and would be planted to resemble a meadow. As a result, as seen from Highway 1, the employee housing would only affect the lowest portion of the ocean view, and the ocean horizon line would remain visible above the buildings.
- The project also proposes to remodel, renovate, and/or demolish and rebuild the majority of the existing hotel room buildings within the resort. As part of these alterations, the massing of some of the hotel room buildings in the southern portion of the property would change. Where the reconfigured hotel rooms proposed by the revised project would extend above the heights of the existing buildings, views of the ocean are already compromised by existing trees along the bluff top, therefore minimizing the effect on existing ocean views.

Other visual impacts identified in the previous Visual Impact Assessment relating to rural and vegetated character, visual clutter, and night lighting would not be substantially reduced as a result of the proposed project revisions. Implementation of the mitigation measures listed in this report would however reduce those impacts to a less than significant level.

Table 1 below summarizes the visual impacts associated with the original project as identified in the previous Visual Impact Assessment in comparison to the visual impacts associated with the revised project, discussed in this report.

Table 1. Comparison of Impacts – Original and Revised Project

Impact Associated with the Original Project and Identified in the Previous Visual Impact Assessment	Related Change to Impact (if any) Resulting from the Revised Project
Impact 1 – The Project’s Effect on Scenic Vistas	
Construction of new employee housing in the area south of the existing hotel rooms at the southern portion of the property would substantially eliminate the most noticeable ocean views through the property as seen from Highway 1.	The proposed new employee housing would be built into the existing hillside, at an elevation lower than Highway 1. The roof of the employee housing building would be flat, and would be planted to resemble a meadow. As a result, as seen from Highway 1, the revised employee housing would only affect the lowest portion of the ocean view, and the ocean horizon line would remain visible above the buildings.
Increasing the heights of the existing hotel room buildings in the southern-most portion of the property would partially obscure ocean views from Highway 1.	Alterations to the massing of some of the hotel room buildings in the southern portion of the property would change. However, where the reconfigured hotel rooms shown in the revised design would extend above the heights of the existing buildings, views of the ocean are already compromised by existing trees along the bluff top.
The potential construction or placement of support buildings, equipment, shade structures, or other upright elements taller than 8 feet in the area between the existing restaurant and hotel reception building area would interfere with ocean views from the highway.	The revised project description states that it would “develop underutilized open space and ocean view corridors into exterior seating and dining areas for the public’s use.” With the revised project, the potential construction or placement of support buildings, equipment, shade structures, or other upright elements taller than 8 feet in this area would still interfere with ocean views from the highway.
Impact 2 – The Project’s Effect on Scenic Resources as seen from the State Scenic Highway	
The impacts identified for <i>Impact 2</i> are the same as those listed above under <i>Impact 1</i> .	The changes to <i>Impact 2</i> resulting from the revised project are the same as those listed above for <i>Impact 1</i> .
The construction of certain proposed new or remodeled project elements would have a direct adverse effect on existing views of the Pacific Ocean. Ocean view blockage would be caused by the proposed construction of new employee housing south of the southernmost existing hotel room buildings, the reconstruction of those existing hotel buildings themselves, and the development of the garden dining area between the existing restaurant and hotel reception buildings.	

Table 1. Comparison of Impacts – Original and Revised Project

Impact Associated with the Original Project and Identified in the Previous Visual Impact Assessment	Related Change to Impact (if any) Resulting from the Revised Project
<i>Impact 3 – The Project’s Effect on the Existing Visual Character and Quality of the Site and its Surroundings</i>	
The proposed architectural style and materials of the proposed buildings would be unsympathetic with the natural and rural context of the coast, and would serve to draw attention to the built characteristics of the site by making the structures more noticeable.	Impact of the revised project is substantially the same as the impact identified for the original project.
Some extent of mature trees and other vegetation would be removed to accommodate the new construction and extensive remodeling. Although revegetation and landscaping areas are identified in the project description, it would take decades for the visual benefits of the larger trees to be realized. In the meantime, a substantial reduction in the vegetated character of the site would occur. This effect would further emphasize the visual perception of the site as one of more intense development.	Impact of the revised project is substantially the same as the impact identified for the original project.
As a result of the project’s expanded and new uses, the resort would have an increase in the number of vehicles and people on-site. The project proposes additional parking areas and spaces, which would expand the percentage of the view occupied by asphalt and vehicles, and would result in a commensurate increase in visual clutter.	Impact of the revised project is substantially the same as the impact identified for the original project.
<i>Impact 4 - Project Light or Glare Affecting Day or Nighttime Views in the Area</i>	
Because of the project’s expanded size, new multi-story configurations, public safety requirements, and its proximity to Highway 1, an increase of night lighting would be seen from the surrounding area.	Impact of the revised project is substantially the same as the impact identified for the original project.
<i>Impact 5 - Cumulative Impacts</i>	
The noticeable alteration of the project site, caused by its increased built characteristics, combined with the tree removal and reduction of ocean views, when experienced in conjunction with other projects along Highway 1 would result in cumulative adverse visual impacts.	The noticeable alteration of the project site, caused by its increased built characteristics, combined with the tree removal and <i>minor</i> reduction of ocean views, when experienced in conjunction with other projects along Highway 1 would result in cumulative adverse visual impacts.

Figure 5. Key Viewing Area 1 – Existing View



Source: Richard LeGros, Architect

Figure 6. Key Viewing Area 1 – Photo-Simulation of the Revised Project



Source: Richard LeGros, Architect

Figure 7. Key Viewing Area 2 – Existing View



Source: Richard LeGros, Architect

Figure 8. Key Viewing Area 2 – Photo-Simulation of the Revised Project



Source: Richard LeGros, Architect

Figure 9. Key Viewing Area 3 – Existing View



Source: Richard LeGros, Architect

Figure 10. Key Viewing Area 3 – Photo-Simulation of the Revised Project



Source: Richard LeGros, Architect

Figure 11. Key Viewing Area 4 – Existing View



Source: Richard LeGros, Architect

Figure 12. Key Viewing Area 4 – Photo-Simulation of the Revised Project



Source: Richard LeGros, Architect

Figure 13. Key Viewing Area 5 – Existing View



Source: Richard LeGros, Architect

Figure 14. Key Viewing Area 5 – Photo-Simulation of the Revised Project



Source: Richard LeGros, Architect

Figure 15. Key Viewing Area 6 – Existing View



Source: Richard LeGros, Architect

Figure 16. Key Viewing Area 6 – Photo-Simulation of the Revised Project



Source: Richard LeGros, Architect

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