

COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO
Department of Regional Parks

For the Agenda of:
February 21, 2014

To: American River Parkway Advisory Committee
From: Department of Regional Parks
Subject: Letter Regarding Bridge Street Monopine Tower
Contact: Mary Maret, Senior Natural Resource Specialist, 875-4918

Overview

A Use Permit has been requested to allow a wireless communication facility which includes a monopine tower in the viewshed of the Fair Oaks Bluff and portions of the upper Sunrise areas of the American River Parkway. The facility would serve an area of the community that currently has inadequate signal strength.

Recommendations

Endorse the attached letter to the Community Planning Advisory Council of the Sacramento Community Development Department, Planning and Environmental Review Division.

Measures/Evaluations

Not applicable.

Fiscal Impact

None.

BACKGROUND

The views from the Fair Oaks Bluff and of the Old Fair Oaks Bridge offer some of the most scenic and photographed landscapes in the area. The same bluff also creates a “shadow” effect, resulting in inadequate signal strength for cell phone and other electronic communications, in the lee of the bluff.

The proposed wireless communication facility at 11315 S. Bridge Street is expected to improve signal strength in the affected areas south of the Fair Oaks Bluff. The facility includes a monopine tower, which would be visible from the bluff, and portions of the upper Sunrise Area of the American River Parkway. The overall height of the monopine tower to the top of the branches would be approximately 75-feet tall. The facility would be located outside of the Parkway Combining Zone.

DISCUSSION

This proposed tower project would likely alleviate communication problems for the community, Park Rangers, and County Sheriffs who patrol the Sunrise access area of the American River Parkway. Much of the Sunrise access area (between Jim’s Bridge and the Parkway eastward

adjacent to the Gold River neighborhoods), is considered a “dark spot” of poor signal strength for the community at large and impacts patrol vehicles’ vital communications, including mobile digital terminals and their cell phones.

The Sacramento County American River Parkway Plan (ARP Plan) includes recommendations for minimizing impacts from uses and facilities adjacent to the Parkway.

Relevant Land Use Policies include:

7.19 Jurisdictions shall use their authority to reduce, eliminate, and/or mitigate potential adverse impacts upon the Parkway caused by adjacent land uses and activities.

Relevant Visual Impacts Policies include:

7.23 Levees, landscaping, or other man-made or natural buffers should be used to separate, buffer or screen the Parkway visually from adjoining land uses, unless the adjacent land uses are indistinguishable from the Parkway.

7.24 In order to minimize adverse visual impacts on the aesthetic resources of the Parkway, local jurisdictions shall regulate adjacent development visible from the Parkway. These local regulations shall take into account the extent to which the development is visible from the Parkway. Regulations may include tools to address design, color, texture and scale, such as:

- a. Setbacks or buffers between the Parkway and the development.*
- b. Structures to be stepped away from the Parkway or limits on building scale.*
- c. Screening of structures visible from the Parkway with landscaping, preferably native vegetation or other naturally occurring features.*
- d. Use of colors and materials including non-reflective surfaces, amount of glass, and requiring medium to dark earth tone colors that blend with the colors of surrounding vegetation, particularly in sensitive bluff or river’s edge locations.*
- e. Guidelines to discourage intrusive lighting and commercial advertising.*

The tower would be visible from within the American River Parkway, particularly within the viewshed of the Fair Oaks bluff, which offer some of the most scenic and photographed landscapes in the area. The monopine version of the tower would disguise the tower, by blending color and shape with other conifers in the view, minimizing, but not completely eliminating its visual impact. Upon closer examination, many viewers would see that the monopine tower is not a real tree.

MEASURES/EVALUATIONS

Not applicable.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

Respectfully submitted,

JEFFREY R. LEATHERMAN, DIRECTOR
Regional Parks

Attachment A: Letter from Chief Ranger

Attachment A

Regional Parks Department
Jeffrey R. Leatherman, Director



Divisions
Administration
Golf
Leisure Services
Maintenance
Rangers
Therapeutic Recreation Services

County of Sacramento

To: Director Leatherman
Fr: Chief Ranger Lumsden
Date: January 29, 2014
Re: Radio coverage near Sunrise Access

Both Ranger patrol vehicles and Sheriff's patrol vehicles are equipped with mobile digital terminals (MDT's). Communications depend on both the two way radios and these MDT's. The MDT's communicate via the use of an AT&T air card. We have found that our MDT's do not function due to poor signal strength in a large portion of the Sunrise Access area of the American River Parkway. Our assumption has always been that we are effectively in the lee of the bluff thereby creating a "dark" spot. Our cell phones also do not operate in this area.

Specifically this area encompasses the park road that stretches east adjacent to the Gold River neighborhood to just west of the PCA bridge.

The installation of a cell tower south of these bluffs could alleviate both the MDT issue and possibly our cell phone issue.

Respectfully,

Stan Lumsden
Chief Ranger