

Coastal Commission endorses closure, rope for Children's Pool

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On June 13, 2019 the California Coastal Commission unanimously endorsed extending the guideline rope and seasonal closure of La Jolla's Children's Pool for 10 more years.

The Coastal Commission's decision overrode a call by opponents of the 10-year extension for a far shorter time period with more conditions.

The Coastal Commission also disagreed with permit-extension opponent's claim that the public historically accessed a ramp leading down to the pool. Commissioners agreed with a staff report suggesting that the non ADA-compliant ramp has only been used for emergencies and maintenance, would cost too much and take up too much space to build and would be flooded during high tides.

"The unanimous vote by the Coastal Commission to renew the 10-year permits for the guideline rope and the annual pupping season closure reinforces how successful this elegant compromise is for seal protection and beach access," said Adrian Kwiatkowski, Seal Conservancy executive director. "Together they work."

"I'm very pleased," concurred Dr. Jane Reldan of the Seal Conservancy. "With the five-month closure of the beach and seven months of the guideline rope, there is no more conflict at Casa Beach. People can view seals and go swimming in peace, which is what was hoped for."

But not everyone saw that way. Particularly not La Jolla pro-beach access advocates, who've argued the de facto seal rookery at Children's Pool violates the intent of the pool trust, which they interpret as calling for preserving the pool in perpetuity as a safe wading area for children while guaranteeing access for numerous users including anglers and divers.

Representing the La Jolla Community Planning Association making land-use

recommendations to the City, Mike Costello said, “Photos of the ramp road going from the upper level to the beach show it’s been there since the ‘40s and has been used by pedestrians for beach access.”

Ken Hunrichs of Friends of Children’s Pool argued government has shirked its responsibility to properly maintain the pool and provide public access to it.

“We oppose criminalizing beach use, which is what is being done here,” Hunrichs argued. “The extension should be granted for a two-year maximum, with enforced conditions calling for water- and sand-quality improvements, as well as access for the disabled. Access for fishing and other uses must be maintained.”

During board comments, Orange County Commissioner Karl Schwing said, “Studies have shown installing an ADA-compliant ramp would be a sizable undertaking, and that there weren’t any significant water-quality issues which will continue to be monitored without conditions being imposed.”

Added Schwing, “The summer rope barrier isn’t prohibiting public use of the beach.”

Concluded Coastal Commission chair Steve Padilla: “I appreciate the staff’s work and that people feel passionate about this. We have a natural proclivity to want to ensure our exclusive dominion over nature. I’m concerned about the City’s level of enforcement. It’s important, as we go forward, that we keep a close eye on this to ensure people aren’t choosing to engage in poor behavior.”

Source: http://www.sdnews.com/view/full_story/27651547/article-Coastal-Commission-endorses-closure--rope-for-Children-s-Pool?instance=sdnews

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