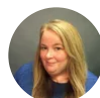


**NEWS**

# Ventura gets \$16M to move crumbling path, parking lot farther from crashing waves

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The beachside city of Ventura will get \$16.2 million to finish a decades-old project to relocate a crumbling bike path and parking lot farther from crashing waves.

Called managed retreat, the project at Surfers Point will give the shoreline room to move inland and push back the damaged path and eroding parking lot at the Ventura County Fairgrounds.

Earlier this month, the California Coastal Conservancy signed off on \$16.2 million for the work, the second phase of a project that started over a decade ago.

“We are really happy to see that we are finally going to get it constructed,” said Paul Jenkin, Ventura campaign coordinator at the Surfrider Foundation.

He and others at Surfrider started advocating for the project back in the 1990s. The bike path – built too close to the ocean – had already started eroding, he said.

A typical response may be to protect the asphalt by building a sea wall. But experts have long advocated against the temporary fix – one that can exacerbate the problem.

“If left alone, the beach would move back in response to sea level rise,” Jenkin said. “That’s what we have been able to accomplish at Surfers Point.”

The project moves the publicly owned bike path and parking lot around 65 feet inland to prevent more erosion, said Cody Stults, the city's project manager and an associate engineer.

## Restoring a beach

Crews also will bury a cobble berm – more resilient than sand or dirt alone – and restore sandy dunes.

“The idea is to mirror natural conditions as much as we can, while also providing stable long-term protection to city infrastructure,” Stults said.

A coalition of groups and agencies started developing the concept in the 1990s. The first phase of the project stretched around 1,000 feet east from the mouth of the Ventura River and was completed around 2012.

Back then, the project was one of the only ones like it in the state, said Kara Kemmler, project manager at the coastal conservancy.

“I still think it is pretty rare,” she said.

She called the first phase a model and a success – one that has stood up to several big storms over the past decade.

In 2016, a storm pummeled the Pierpont area of Ventura, inundating some beaches. Spots with the reconstructed dunes at Surfers Point also had some erosion but then naturally built back up again the following summer, Jenkin said.

## Preserving Surfers Point

Meanwhile, parts of the bike path and fairgrounds parking lot not yet relocated continued to crumble.

Officials say a combination of factors adds to the problem – building too close to the ocean, sea-level rise, natural ebbs and flows of drought and floods, and the barrier created by Matilija Dam upstream.

Plans call for going out to bid for the second phase later this year, said Peter Sheydayi, the city's assistant public works director. The second phase includes an additional 800 feet along the shoreline.

Construction is expected to start in fall 2024 – after the summer rush and the fair wraps up – and be completed the following spring.

“We’re gaining parking and public access,” Jenkin said. “We're gaining a much more natural beach and a much nicer experience for people who go to the beach there.”

At the same the, the project also preserves an important surf spot, he said.

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