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## **State Parks review may stall desal testing**

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Cambria's desalination testing plans will likely be delayed as State Parks decides whether it will require further environmental review before granting permission for the Army Corps of Engineers to drill test beach wells on a state-owned beach at the mouth of Santa Rosa Creek.

The county also must give permission to pass through Shamel Park and drill on the adjacent county-owned beach. Plans for the Cambria Community Services District's proposed desalination project can't be laid out in detail until geotechnical tests are performed beneath beaches owned by county and state park agencies. The tests would confirm if wells under the beach near Shamel Park and Santa Rosa Creek could supply the desalination plant with enough seawater.

The testing is to "inform upcoming (federal environmental review) process to actually select an alterna-

tive," said Kathleen Anderson, Army Corps of Engineers project manager.

"We're in the area of possibilities right now. There's no point in spinning our wheels on a site that's not optimal."

In agreeing May 13 that the testing could go forward, the Coastal Commission said work would have to be done during September and October, a time of year when the nearby creek lagoon, habitat for several endangered species, is typically at its lowest level of the year.

The Army Corps, the district's project partner for the desalination plant because federal money is involved, sent requests for "right of entry" permits to the county and State Parks in early August.

Shaun Cooper, senior planner for County Parks, said county staff met with Army Corps, CCSD and contractor representatives at Shamel Park on Aug. 18. The access route to the proposed drilling sites was discussed, according to Anderson, who attended.

Cooper estimated it would probably take a couple of weeks for the county to make a decision on the right of entry.

State approval is likely to take longer. Nick Franco, State Parks local district superintendent, said Tuesday, Aug. 24, a detailed environmental analysis is necessary to meet California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) regulations. Franco said he hadn't yet had in-depth legal discussions with the department's counsel, but if CEQA review is required and the Corps must start work by the end of September to meet its environmental deadlines, "I'd say it's very unlikely that work on State Park lands could be done this year."

At least 14 speakers told California Park and Recreation Commission members at a meeting in Cambria Aug. 17 that State Parks should insist on having the CEQA review before considering the testing regime. According to Louis Nastro, the commission's executive director, the board has "no jurisdiction over the project in question," and that Franco will make the decision.