

# Ending Avila



Photo of a concert at Avila Beach Resort by Jim Miers



Photo looking towards Avila Beach by Carole and Alex Mintzer

The Avila Beach Golf Resort is seeking to create the largest permanent beachfront entertainment, hospitality, and lodging facility in California, featuring nine event venues, five bars, and seven restaurants.

The permits sought would allow year-round unlimited events with up to 1,000 guests, with no restrictions on multiple events on the same day at numerous venues and golf course sites. In addition, it would allow twelve one-day events of up to 3,000 guests and five events of up to 5,000 guests every summer, with no limit on the number of event days. There would be two designated concert venues – one with a guest capacity of 1,000 and one with a capacity of 5,000. Seven additional event venues would have guest capacities ranging from 469 to over 1,000 with a total event capacity of over 11,000 and a total visitor capacity over 13,000 including lodging guests and employees.

The 30-day comment period on the scope of review for the proposed Avila Beach Resort Development Plan ended Jan. 3. There was obviously a lot to comment on. (Don't worry if you missed it: There will be additional opportunities to comment when the project goes before the County Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors, and the California Coastal Commission.)

We won't attempt to reproduce here the Sierra Club's 42 pages of comments, but we will attempt to give some idea of what's at stake both for the local coastal environment and the continued existence of the town of Avila Beach in any recognizable form.

The project's initial study – a preliminary environmental checklist that precedes a full Environmental Impact Report – tells the tale. Of all the project's numerous likely environmental impacts, some could be mitigated by measures that would reduce the harms below a level of significance. However, other impacts – “Class 1” in the hierarchy of environmental review – cannot be reduced in significance no matter what or how many mitigation measures are attempted. In other words, with all feasible mitigations in place, they will remain significant. The Avila Beach Golf Resort's expansion plan has a staggering number of these.

In the Class 1 category of unfixable impacts, the project would:

- have a substantial **adverse effect on a scenic vista**
- create a new source of substantial **light or glare** which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area
- have a substantial **adverse effect**, either directly or through habitat modifications, **on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species**.
- cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource and an archaeological resource and **disturb human remains**
- cause a substantial **adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource** listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources or in a local register of historical resources
- result in substantial **soil erosion** or the loss of topsoil
- be located on a geologic unit that is unstable or would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site **landslide**, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse
- expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving **wildland fires**
- impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan, and result in **inadequate emergency access**
- create or contribute **runoff water** which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff
- generate a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient **noise levels** in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance

-conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the **circulation system, including transit**, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities

-require or result in the **relocation or construction of** new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications **facilities**, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects

-require the installation or maintenance of associated **infrastructure** (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment

-expose people or structures to **significant risks**, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes

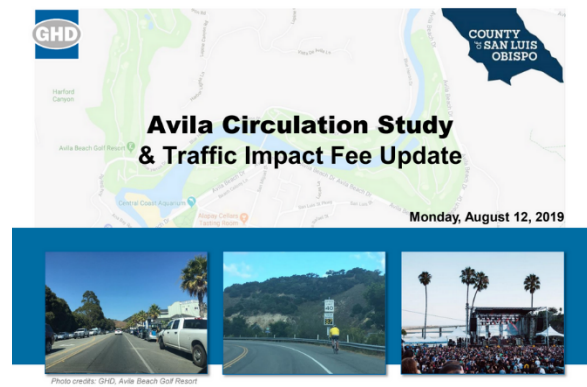
-have the potential to substantially **degrade the quality of the environment**, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory

-have impacts that are individually limited, but **cumulatively considerable, environmental impacts**. (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)

-have effects that will cause **substantial adverse effects** on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

The Environmental Checklist should include but understandably missed one potential “cumulatively considerable” impact because it wasn’t on the radar when the document was prepared: The impact from the potential development of a deep water port just down the road to service offshore windfarms, and all the additional traffic, consisting of port employees and semi-trucks hauling equipment, down the very same road the Avila Golf Resort’s proposed plan anticipates clogging with thousands of revelers year round.

The next step is... We’ll keep you posted.



**Spoiler alert: It’s bad already.**