

Notice of Exemption**Form D**

To: X Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 212
Sacramento, CA 95814

County Clerk

County of _____

From: University of California, San Diego
Campus Planning, MC 0074
9500 Gilman Drive
La Jolla, CA 92093-0074

Project Title: SIO Mt. Soledad Research Station - EPCAPE Mobile Observatory Research

Project Location – Specific: SIO Mt. Soledad Research Station, 7071 Via Capri, La Jolla, CA 92037

Project Location – City: La Jolla

Project Location – County: San Diego

Project Description: UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO) proposes to demolish the 3,600-square-foot "Laboratory 1" building at 7071 Via Capri at its Mt. Soledad Research Station and use the existing concrete slab foundation as a platform, or "research pad", for flexible deployment of field research instruments for atmospheric and geophysical data collection and remote sensing/observation of ocean conditions. The planned Eastern Pacific Cloud Aerosol Precipitation Experiment (EPCAPE) would be the first research project to utilize the research pad starting in February of 2023, for a one-year term. The EPCAPE mobile observatory research project would temporarily place containers on the existing slab foundation to house and support sensitive research equipment.

Name of Public or Agency Approving Project: University of California, San Diego

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: University of California, San Diego

Exempt Status: (check one)

☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080 (b)(1); 15268);

☐ Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a);

☐ Emergency Project (Se. 21080(b)(4); 15269 (b) (c));

☒ Categorical Exemption. CEQA Section 15301: Existing Facilities and Section 15304: Minor Alterations to Land

Reason why project is exempt: The project is exempt from CEQA under Class 1: Existing Facilities because it consists of demolition and removal of individual small structures, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. In addition, the project is exempt under Class 4: Minor Alterations to Land because the project consists of minor temporary use of land having negligible or no permanent effects on the environment. None of the exceptions to an exemption apply per 15300.2.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Alison Buckley

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (858) 534-4464

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.

2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? ☐ Yes ☐ No **N/A**

Signature: Alison Buckley

Date: 7/7/2022

Title: Senior Environmental Planner
Dept. Name: Campus Planning

Governor's Office of Planning and Research

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DATE: July 7, 2022

CAMPUS: University of California, San Diego

PROJECT TITLE: SIO Mt. Soledad Research Station - EPCAPE Mobile Observatory Research

PROJECT LOCATION:



The existing Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO) Mt. Soledad Laboratory 1 (“Lab 1”) building is located at the top of Mt. Soledad in La Jolla, CA, along the north side of Via Capri. The property is owned by University of California San Diego. The project study area is limited to the western portion of the parcel that encompasses the Mt. Soledad Lab 1 building.

The 8,825 square-foot (sf) project site is bounded by an existing chain link fence on the south and west, and a temporary construction fence on the north and east. The project site consists of an approximately 3,600 gross-square-foot (gsf) Lab 1 building, 3,011 sf of asphalt paving, 4,434 sf of concrete building site pad, and approximately 1,380 sf of vegetation (see attached Demolition Plan).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Overview: UC San Diego’s SIO proposes to demolish the approximately 3,600 gsf Lab 1 building at 7071 Via Capri at its Mt. Soledad Research Station and use the existing concrete slab foundation as a platform, or “research pad”, for flexible deployment of field research instruments for atmospheric and geophysical data collection and remote sensing/observation of ocean conditions. The planned Eastern Pacific Cloud Aerosol Precipitation Experiment (EPCAPE) would be the first research project to utilize the research pad starting in February of 2023, for a one-year term. The EPCAPE mobile observatory research project would temporarily place containers on the newly exposed slab foundation to house and support sensitive research equipment. This research is supported by funding from the US Department of Energy (DOE) and the National Science Foundation (NSF).



Background: The SIO Mt. Soledad Lab 1 building is one of two buildings located at UC San Diego’ Mt. Soledad site (see Project

Site below). The Lab 1 building to be demolished was constructed in 1969 and used by SIO scientists for research until the early 2000s. It was condemned in 2017, at which time asbestos and lead abatement work was completed and the building was boarded up. It is currently considered an “attractive

nuisance” as there is consistent evidence of trespassing resulting in material theft, graffiti, and littering. The building is secured and surrounded by a chain link fence and accessed via a rolling gate from an asphalt driveway along Via Capri.

The laboratory building and site were not part of the campuswide historical survey for the 2018 Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) and were not included in the Historic Resources Report. As such, a Historical Evaluation Report was prepared which provides a summary of the existing building conditions and provide a historical evaluation based on California Register and National Register eligibility criteria.

PROJECT SITE



Purpose and Need:

UC San Diego’s SIO proposes to demolish the approximately 3,600 gsf Lab 1 building and use the existing concrete slab foundation as a platform, or “research pad”, for deployment of field research instruments for atmospheric data collection and remote sensing/observation of atmospheric conditions. The planned EPCAPE would be the first research project to utilize the research pad starting in February of 2023, for a one-year term. This research is supported by funding from the DOE and the NSF.

The University has determined that the building is dilapidated, is a public safety hazard and is past its useful life. The University is proposing to demolish the building to remove the public safety hazard and utilize an underutilized space for unobtrusive, temporary research needs at SIO.

Setting and Program:

The project proposes to demolish the approximately 3,600 gsf, one-story Lab 1 building while leaving the approximately 4,435 sf existing concrete slab foundation in place. The foundation is slightly larger than the building as it includes an entryway. The project would preserve and reconnect the electrical infrastructure. The electrical box inside the building would remain in place and be enclosed in weatherproof housing. Electrical connections would be made using existing conduit, thereby avoiding the need for trenching or digging. There would be no changes to the existing vegetation or asphalt and no new paved surfaces would be installed; therefore, no changes to the ratio of pervious to impervious surfaces would occur. The Campus Fire Marshal and Environment Health and Safety (EH&S) departments would review the project to ensure all project safety measures are incorporated.

The ECAPE mobile observatory research project would temporarily place the following containers on the existing slab foundation to house and support sensitive research equipment:

- (1) ACM Container: SIO container for detailed Aerosol-Cloud Microphysics, with a 16.5' long aerosol inlet set at a 45-degree angle, that extends in front on container approximately 12.5', resulting in a total height of 21.5' for the container plus the inlet.
- (1) ACC/ARM Aerosol Container: container for Aerosol-Cloud Chemistry measurements, with small instrumentation on roof and approximately 45" handrails on the roof platform.
- (1) ARM SACR Container: Atmospheric Radiation Measurement research container with 8' tall Scanning Cloud Radar antenna on roof, resulting in a total height of 16.5' for the container and the antenna.
- (1) LANL Aerosol Container: container operated by Los Alamos National Laboratory for aerosol absorption measurements with 21' tall vertical aerosol inlet on the roof and 45' handrails, resulting in a total height of 29.5' for the container and the inlet.



- (1) ARM Support Container for storing tools, gear, consumables, spare parts/instruments, etc. to service the instruments and equipment on the research containers. This is a typical 8.5' high container with no roof attachments.

Construction and Schedule: Construction is anticipated to begin Fall 2022. The proposed demolition and site preparation would occur over an approximate one-month period. The ECAPE research project would begin equipment placement in November 2022 to allow time to configure and calibrate

instruments, review data, and identify potential problems with the data streams before campaign data collection needs to begin in February 2023. Removal of equipment would occur in February 2024 and the existing pad would remain vacant for research use by SIO indefinitely.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES:

The project is exempt from CEQA under Class 1: Existing Facilities demolition and removal of individual small structures/single-family residence, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. In addition, the project is exempt from CEQA under Class 4: Minor Alterations to Land which consists of minor temporary use of land having negligible or no permanent effects on the environment. There are no unusual circumstances which would create an exception to the Exemption. All actions will be consistent with applicable federal, state, and local environmental permitting requirements. The project would not cause any significant impacts and no mitigation is required.

Aesthetics: The project site is visible from Via Capri and from Mt. Soledad National Veterans Memorial. Demolition of the building would improve the scenic quality of the site from the public right of way, by reducing the bulk and scale of the unsightly, dilapidated structure. The temporary EPCAPE research containers placed on the pad, and any future research containers, would be significantly smaller than the existing building, are consistent with the use of the site for research and would be less attractive to trespassing individuals who have been using the building for loitering and other illicit activities.

Agricultural Resources: There are no agricultural resources located at or near the University Mt. Soledad property.

Air Quality: The proposed project would be short-term and small-scale. The proposed demolition area is relatively small and would require approximately 15 truck trips to remove debris which would not result in a significant impact on air quality. Therefore, no significant impacts would be created from the generation of fugitive dust particles. Asbestos was previously removed from the building. The project would be subject to inspection by the San Diego Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD). Compliance with these regulatory requirements ensures there would be no impact.

Biological Resources: The project proposes to demolish the Mt. Soledad Research Station Lab 1 building and place temporary containers on an existing concrete pad. A small amount of ornamental landscaping (shrubs and grass) occurs around the immediate premises of the building. No trees or sensitive habitat would be removed.

Cultural/Historical Resources: The proposed project includes demolition of an existing building on a developed site. The affected area would not extend beyond the previously disturbed ground surface which encompasses the structure foundation, driveway and entryway. As such, the proposed project would not impact any cultural resources.

As previously described, the Lab 1 building to be demolished was constructed in 1969 and used by SIO scientists for research until the early 2000s. It was condemned in 2017, at which time asbestos and lead abatement work was completed and the building was boarded up. It is currently considered an “attractive nuisance” as there is consistent evidence of trespassing resulting in material theft, graffiti, and littering. However, due to the historical significance that is often associated with research at SIO, a Historical Evaluation Report was prepared by Heritage Architecture & Planning (June 2022) that provided a summary of the existing building conditions and provide a historical evaluation based on California Register and National Register eligibility criteria. The report concluded that the Lab 1 building

is not a historic resource because no evidence of famous architects, visitors, owners, or events has been linked to the structure.

Geology/Soils: The proposed project would not involve any grading or excavation. Best Management Practices, such as silt fences and erosion control methods, would be in place to avoid sediment/fugitive dust transport off the project site. The removal of existing structure would not impact geological resources.



Greenhouse Gas Emissions: The project proposes approximately 15 dump truck trips to an appropriate landfill/recycling center and intermittent operation of demolition equipment for approximately 2-3 weeks. Therefore, the project would not create a significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions or conflict with an applicable reduction plan.

Hazards & Hazardous Materials: The EH&S Coordinator at UC San Diego would select the appropriate control strategy for disposal of materials. There would be no significant impacts.

Hydrology/Water Quality: The project proposes to demolish the Mt. Soledad Research Station Lab 1 building and place temporary containers on an existing concrete pad. Standard construction best management practices (BMPs) that apply to all UC San Diego projects would be implemented during construction. There would be no significant impacts on hydrology or water quality.

Land Use/Planning: The proposed project would demolish an existing abandoned building and place temporary containers on an existing concrete pad. There would be no impact to land use planning on the site.

Mineral Resources: There would be no impact to mineral resources as a result of the proposed project.

Noise: The proposed demolition of the Lab 1 structure and removal of all debris from the site would take 1-2 days and site preparation would occur over an approximate one-month period. As such, noise generated from demolition of the existing building would be temporary and would not cause a significant impact. Standard construction practices related to noise that apply to all UC San Diego projects would be implemented (including limiting work to daytime hours, between 7:00am to 7:00pm).

Population/Housing: The project does not propose any new development which would increase or displace population and housing. One unoccupied laboratory building would be demolished. There would be no impact to population or housing.

Public Services: The project would not impact public services.

Recreation: The project would not impact recreational facilities in the area.

Transportation/Traffic: Demolition-related traffic would be temporary. The project would not impact circulation.

Utilities/Service Systems: No new utilities or service systems or utility upgrades are required. There would be no impact.

REFERENCES

Helix Environmental. Vegetation Mapping of UC San Diego Property at Mt. Soledad. March 2022.

Heritage Architecture & Planning. UC San Diego Mount Soledad Lab 1 Historical Evaluation Report. June 2022.

Personal communication via email with Ken Hall, Director of Facilities Operations & Planning. May 6, 2022.