Dear Community,

After acquisition of the Ocean Meadows Golf Course (OMGC) property by The Trust for Public Land (TPL) on March 29, 2013, and the subsequent transfer to UCSB on April 30, 2013, TPL and the University began a community planning process to include trails and public access across the former golf course property, as described at the North Campus Open Space (NCOS) website: http://www.openspace.vcadmin.ucsb.edu.

Dating back to the 2004 Ellwood-Devereux Open Space and Habitat Management Plan, no trails or public access were proposed or envisioned across the OMGC property because it was privately-owned land and open to the general public for golfing only, after payment of a green fee.

The NCOS Restoration Project is a result of several years of planning with extensive community input and includes a balanced design to accommodate public access across the site, while also restoring and protecting sensitive habitat. Through the course of extensive consultation and coordination via community meetings, as well as input from environmental advocates, and grant-funding and permitting agencies, a range of factors were considered during the planning process. The final design for the property provides and balances all of the following elements: public access to and across the site, protection of natural habitat, and enhanced educational opportunities, including wildlife viewing, interpretive signage, walking tours, and scenic vista points.

The final design (see attached) provides three routes that people can take from the Phelps Creek entrance to the coastal open space to the south:

1. the trail leading west to the Devereux Creek crossing that goes up the hill along the Eucalyptus windrow to Ellwood Mesa (this then connects to several coastal access points from Ellwood Mesa);

2. the trail through the middle of site leading east to a new bridge over the eastern arm of Devereux Creek, which then connects with a trail to Venoco Road (this then connects to Devereux Slough, Slough Road, Isla Vista Elementary School, Orfalea Children’s Center, and the eastern Sands Beach entry point); and

3. the trail crossing along eastern end of the restored estuary which links to a sidewalk/trail along the west side of Storke Road and provides a looping interpretive experience (this route also connects to Devereux Slough, Slough Road, Isla Vista Elementary School, Orfalea Children’s Center, and the eastern Sands Beach entry point).

The final design does not include a trail or bridge across the western arm of Devereux Creek. Instead, an integrated natural habitat area is created along the western arm of Devereux Creek which provides wildlife with a buffer from regular disturbances by people, dogs, and bicycles. It also provides wildlife with undisturbed access to the creek and estuary habitat and back to upland habitat. Permitting agencies and local environmental groups advocated very strongly to reduce fragmenting the wildlife habitat, and also to avoid leading people directly to the sensitive Dune Pond Trail on adjacent Coal Oil Point Reserve. At the community planning sessions, there were also requests from local neighborhood residents for access to Isla Vista Elementary School via a trail and bridge across the eastern arm of Devereux Creek. This route also provides access to Venoco Road, UCSB West Campus and Main Campus, Slough Road, and Sands Beach which is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

A trail and bridge crossing the western arm of Devereux Creek would have the following issues and constraints:

- This route would either direct people up a restored mesa slope that would not be ADA-accessible in terms of grade, or would lead people directly through the middle of the proposed snowy plover nesting area and through extensive habitat between the restored mesa and the creek and estuary that is vital for wildlife. California Coastal Commission staff have indicated that trails will likely not be approved through wetlands for commuting purposes, but only for enjoyment of the open space. A case for a ‘direct route’ does not seem to have much traction with permitting agencies.
- Due to cost considerations, only one major creek/wetland crossing bridge is feasible and the eastern bridge crossing achieves a more direct and ADA-accessible route that still provides coastal access without fragmenting the habitat as much as a western crossing.

- The Scripps Crescent neighborhood recently erected a fence over the access from the end of the road and requested that UCSB not facilitate or encourage, by design, public access to the open space through that neighborhood. Placing a bridge over the western arm of Devereux Creek could encourage people to park in the Scripps Crescent neighborhood to access the beach from there. The NCOS Restoration Project coastal access plan provides public access without placing undue burden on that City of Goleta neighborhood.

Overall, the goal of the NCOS Restoration Project design is to create a destination that people can enjoy and appreciate in and of itself, rather than develop an area that people simply want to traverse to access other points or destinations. After the habitat restoration is complete, people will enjoy the public amenities, bridges, and trails that are proposed for the site. The final design allows for an immersive, educational, and peaceful experience where young and old alike can appreciate the natural flora and fauna of our beautiful coastal area. All projects involve a balancing of many needs and desires, and our hope is that people will appreciate the substantial amount of thought, effort, and consideration that went into the final design of the NCOS Restoration Project.

Sincerely,

Lisa Stratton on behalf of the NCOS Advisory Board

Director of Ecosystem Management,

Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration
NCOS public access provides a route to Venoco Road, Slough Road, Ellwood Mesa, Devereux Slough that provides wetland and wildlife viewing opportunities and is not significantly longer than a route through the middle which fragments the habitat.

Blue circle highlights restored mesa. Slopes will make ADA access directly across middle of site difficult. Note trail to overlook for observing wildlife. Note, route along wetland would direct people to snowy plover nesting area and it would be wet for much of the winter and not accessible.
Note: water levels will vary and so a small wooden bridge would not be a workable solution.