

Seacliff FAQs

Pier

Why did State Parks decide to remove the damaged pier?

After consulting with engineers, it was determined that a major wave event on January 5, 2023, destroyed the oceanside half of the pier and severely damaged the landward half of the pier, including the deck structure. The damaged half of the pier experienced strong wave action between January 6 and 20. Damage is extensive, with the remaining pier section in a state of imminent collapse. Given this analysis, the pier was deemed to be beyond repair and in need of removal.

Has the pier been damaged in the past?

Since its construction, the pier has been damaged several times. A storm event in 2017 caused significant damage to the pier. Subsequently, State Parks consulted with experts, including engineers, to address the damage and hazards which resulted in a partial closure of the pier for public access. On January 5, 2023, the pier suffered significant damage during the federally declared emergency.

What is the history of the pier at Seacliff State Beach?

In 1930, the Calaveda Investment Company completed construction of the Seacliff Pier at Seacliff Beach in Aptos.

The Seacliff Pier was part of a larger project originated by the Seacliff Amusement Company (SAC). SAC planned to develop a residential community at Seacliff and in addition to building residences for people, SAC sought to attract the interest of a growing population of tourists and locals to visit Seacliff for recreation and leisure. To do so, SAC purchased the decommissioned cement ship, S.S. Palo Alto, docked it offshore Seacliff Beach, and converted the ship into a mixed-use restaurant and dancehall. Calaveda built the Seacliff Pier, to provide access to the ship. Upon completion, evening-goers had access to the diners and dancehalls of the SS Palo Alto and morning anglers had space to cast their lines into the waters of the Pacific Ocean. Two years after SS Palo Alto attraction opened to the public, the Great Depression tightened its grip across the country and a winter storm cracked the hull of the ship. The damage coupled with the hard economic times that followed forced SAC to sell their non-profitable operations, land and assets to State Parks for \$1.

Will the pier be rebuilt?

At Seacliff State Beach, the damage to public-serving infrastructure is extensive and has impacted the ability to provide the standard recreational opportunities visitors have experienced in the past. As we look to restore these services, there will need to be careful consideration how to provide recreational facilities that are resilient to the reality and challenges of sea level rise in a changing climate. Following completion of the clean-up phase, a public planning process will be announced.

Can I take a piece of the pier as a memento?

The wood used to construct the pier is treated with creosote, a known carcinogen. All pier material is considered hazardous waste and will be disposed of in a safe and responsible manner.

SS Palo Alto ("The Cement Ship")

What is the SS Palo Alto, or "The Cement Ship"?

The SS Palo Alto was built with the intention of being used in WWI as an oil tanker. There was worry that there would be a steel shortage, and so an engineer suggested building ships out of concrete. They started building the Palo Alto, but the war ended before the ship was finished being built. The ship sat in Oakland for approximately 10 years until the Seacliff Amusement Company purchased it and towed it to Seacliff where it was settled on the ocean floor and the pier was built out as an access

point. Onboard was a restaurant, ballroom and saltwater swimming pool. The State of California purchased the ship for \$1 around the same time that Seacliff was becoming a State Beach. Until the year 2000, the pier was used as an access point to the ship.

What are the plans for the SS Palo Alto?

The SS Palo Alto has also suffered damage due to past storms, which left it closed to public access. There are no plans to repair the ship, which has become a vital component of the underwater ecosystem of Seacliff State Beach, providing a haven for numerous marine species in the Monterey Bay.

Campground

What happened to the campground at Seacliff State Beach?

Devastating, historic storms destroyed nearly all of the seawall and much of the fill material on which the campground was built. Much of the underground utilities were lost to the sea, as was the parking lot pavement. Road access through the campground has been adversely impacted by continuing landslides from the bluffs on the inland side of the campground.

Is the campground open?

As a result of the damage the campground is closed for the 2023 season.

What happens with existing campground reservations?

Affected reservation holders will be contacted by the state's reservation system — [ReserveCalifornia](#) — via email and provided with a refund. Reservation cancellations and refunds will be automatic. As such, visitors do not need to take any action. Reservation holders can call ReserveCalifornia's Customer Service line at 1-800-444-7275. Hours of operation: 7 days a week, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. PDT.

How big is the campground at Seacliff State Beach?

The campground has 63 ocean-front RV sites that serve nearly 70,000 visitors each year.

What are the plans for rebuilding the campground?

At Seacliff State Beach, the damage to public-serving infrastructure, including the campground is extensive and has impacted the ability to provide the standard recreational opportunities visitors have experienced in the past. As we look to restore these services, careful consideration will be needed to determine how to provide recreational facilities that are resilient to the reality and challenges presented by climate change. State Parks is committed to a public process, which will be announced following the completion of the current hazard clean-up phase. The recovery phase will support California's 30X30 initiative to build resilience to climate change.

Day Use Area

What damage occurred in the day use area at Seacliff State Beach?

Much of the seawall was destroyed or significantly compromised in the recent storm event. State Park staff immediately took action to address critical safety hazards and brace the remaining infrastructure to prevent further degradation. As part of the larger clean-up and repair efforts, portions of the damaged seawall will be removed, and hazards will be addressed.

Is the lower parking lot open?

Cleanup and recovery efforts are ongoing. Pedestrian and bike access is permitted in the lower lot, with parking in the upper lot. Disabled parking is available near the beach.

What happened to the Tribute Tables (picnic tables dedicated to a loved one) in the day-use area?

Miraculously, nearly all the dedicated picnic tables survived the storms. They have been moved to a safe location near the Visitors Center during recovery efforts and will be returned to the day use area at a later date.

Is the Visitors Center/ParkStore open?

The Visitors Center/ParkStore reopened following the storms.

Is the food concession Scrumptious Fish & Chips open?

The building used by Scrumptious Fish & Chips was seriously damaged in the storms. However, Scrumptious Fish & Chips has established a pop-up location in the upper parking lot. Follow them on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for more information.

Recovery Efforts

Is there a cost estimate for the cleanup and repairs?

State Parks is still conducting damage assessments for any storm-related impacts. Cost estimates are actively being developed and will vary park to park, based on future activities, amenities, and parks services.

What process will be used to guide recovery?

The historic storms that impacted California's communities this winter and damaged Seacliff State Beach are evidence of a new reality the state's shoreline faces as a result of climate change, especially due to sea-level rise and extreme weather. As State Parks develops plans to restore services and amenities for visitors, providing climate-resilient facilities will be a critical consideration.

The local community, including individual community members, local businesses, community organizations, and the co-management partner Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks, has stepped up in amazing ways to support Seacliff State Beach. The department looks forward to the continued collaboration with these partners and the public. Following the imminent cleanup and safety work, a public process will be established for the recovery effort at Seacliff State Beach.

How to help

Are donations being collected?

Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks, State Parks' co-management partner, is fundraising to support the ongoing recovery of Seacliff State Beach. The Seacliff State Beach Recovery Fund was established Jan. 13. Visit thatsmypark.org to support the fund.

Anything else the public can do to support Seacliff State Beach and State Parks?

Please visit the park and pay your fees, which support Seacliff State Beach, as well as other local state parks and beaches. Please also abide by the various closures of parks, park features and trail systems. Staff is working diligently to address the many impacts across the region, and the closures support the continuation of these efforts.

How much is the cleanup work going to cost?

There are many variables to the cost of the actual work. The current contract is structured to prioritize the most emergent needs to address public safety issues at Seacliff SB and New Brighton SB, and might expand to include additional damages in local state parks.