

INSTRUCTIONS



COASTAL ZONE

Analysis of Coastal or Canyon Bluff

Purpose

The purpose of a bluff analysis is for the applicant to demonstrate whether the subject property contains a coastal or canyon bluff. A bluff analysis must be prepared by a California-licensed Professional Engineer or Geologist and should disclose whether a coastal or canyon bluff exists on the subject property. Development on lots with a bluff are required to set back any structures from the natural bluff edge.

Definitions

LAMC Section 13B.9.2.A.3 of Chapter 1A

Coastal/Canyon Bluff: The upper termination of a bluff, cliff, or seacliff. In cases where the top edge of the cliff is rounded away from the face of the cliff as a result of erosional processes related to the presence of the steep cliff face, the bluff line or edge shall be defined as that point nearest the cliff beyond which the downward gradient of the surface increases more or less continuously until it reaches the general gradient of the cliff. In a case where there is a steplike feature at the top of the cliff face, the landward edge of the topmost riser shall be taken to be the cliff edge. The termini of the bluff line, or edge along the seaward face of the bluff, shall be defined as a point reached by bisecting the angle formed by a line coinciding with the general trend of the bluff line along the inland facing portion of the bluff. The minimum length of bluff line or edge used in making these determinations is 500 feet.

Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 14, § 13577 (h)(2)

(h) Coastal Bluffs. Measure 300 feet both landward and seaward from the bluff line or edge. Coastal bluff shall mean:

- (1) those bluffs, the toe of which is now or was historically (generally within the last 200 years) subject to marine erosion; and*
- (2) those bluffs, the toe of which is not now or was not historically subject to marine erosion, but the toe of which lies within an area otherwise identified in Public Resources Code Section 30603(a)(1) or (a)(2).*

Bluff line or edge shall be defined as the upper termination of a bluff, cliff, or seacliff. In cases where the top edge of the cliff is rounded away from the face of the cliff as a result of erosional processes related to the presence of the steep cliff face, the bluff line or edge shall be defined as that point nearest the cliff beyond which the downward gradient of the surface increases more or less continuously until it reaches the general gradient of the cliff. In a case where there

is a steplike feature at the top of the cliff face, the landward edge of the topmost riser shall be taken to be the cliff edge.

The termini of the bluff line, or edge along the seaward face of the bluff, shall be defined as a point reached by bisecting the angle formed by a line coinciding with the general trend of the bluff line along the seaward face of the bluff, and a line coinciding with the general trend of the bluff line along the inland facing portion of the bluff. Five hundred feet shall be the minimum length of bluff line or edge to be used in making these determinations.

Instructions

Requirements

New development must be set back 10 feet from a canyon bluff and 25 feet from a coastal bluff¹. New accessory structures and uses, including detached Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), are subject to the required setbacks² from the natural bluff edge and are not permitted on any portion of a bluff face.

A bluff analysis must be prepared by a California-licensed Professional Engineer or Geologist to determine the location of the natural bluff edge and bluff face.

Contents of Bluff Analysis

- Survey prepared by a licensed surveyor.
- Brief description of the project site and any previous grading or fill. If the site was previously graded or filled, the location of the bluff edge and the required setback should be based on the natural bluff edge.
- Analysis of whether a coastal or canyon bluff exists. The discussion should address historic, current, and foreseeable erosion evaluated over a minimum 75-year timeframe.
- Any previous bluff analysis for the property, prepared for a coastal development permit application with the City or California Coastal Commission should be referenced and included in the new bluff analysis.
- Delineate the bluff edge and/or bluff face on the site plan and plot plan. The required setbacks should be clearly dimensioned and measured from the detached ADU to the bluff edge.

Contact

For more information regarding the bluff analysis, please contact the project planner assigned to the specific coastal geography. The Department of City Planning Assignment Sheet is available [here](#).

¹ [Regional Interpretive Guidelines South Coast Region Los Angeles County, Appendix A, adopted by the California Coastal Commission October 14, 1980.](#)

² Governor's Executive Order N-20-25 https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/State-Permitting-and-Housing-Laws-EO_Final_GGN-Signed.pdf.