

Bluff repairs could restrict beach access



A SANDAG employee Friday afternoon, March 12, photographs a train crossing the area where bluff repairs are planned over the weekend.
(Phil Diehl)

Contractor will grade area of recent bluff collapse

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DEL MAR —

All coastal rail service will be suspended Sunday, March 14, and again March 20 and 21 for work on the recent Del Mar bluff collapse and for other previously planned projects.

Beach access will be limited between Del Mar and Torrey Pines State Beach and, depending on construction activity and tides, at times there may be no public access, according to North County Transit District.

The state Parks Department will have monitors in place during the work to assist visitors. Also, law enforcement officers will be present atop the bluffs to warn people about the risks of walking along the railroad tracks and the bluffs.

While no passenger or freight trains will be using the rails, there could be test trains and construction equipment using the railroad right-of-way, according to NCTD. Residents along the corridor should remain alert and only cross at designated crossings.

The weekend closures, called “absolute work windows” are scheduled several times a year so that repairs and maintenance can be done without impeded by train traffic.

At the site of the bluff collapse just south of Fourth Street in Del Mar, the San Diego Association of Governments has hired a contractor to grade the top of the bluff, where large cracks have appeared since the Feb. 28 collapse. The face of the slope also will be reshaped.

The work this weekend will help prepare the site for the installation of as many as 14 60-foot-long vertical concrete-and-steel columns, called soldier piles, that could be installed as soon as the second work suspension this month. If the material for the columns is not available this month, they could be installed during another weekend work window planned for April.

The collapse occurred in an area where fill dirt was held back by a retaining wall built in 1910, a SANDAG official said Friday, March 12. Planners, geologists and engineers are still trying to determine the best way to repair the damage.

Until the repairs are completed, traffic is limited to 15 mph for passenger trains and 10 mph for freight trains in the area.

Rail service will resume on the Monday mornings after the work windows, but passengers should be aware that the initial trains of the day could be delayed up to 15 minutes.

— *Phil Diehl is a reporter for The San Diego Union-Tribune*