
Memo: Monterey County Vacation Rental Alliance

To: MCVRA Board
From: Gary Patton
Date: June 10, 2015
RE: Big Sur LUP

Attached is a summary of the references I was able to find after reading the entirety of the Big Sur LUP.

In essence, the LUP is focused on new “development,” not the use of existing property. The LUP does reference and support, however, the overarching Coastal Act goal of making the Coastal Zone more accessible to visitors.

There are a few positive references, and nothing in the LUP can properly be understood as a statement disapproving of vacation rentals. The most significant “negative” references are those that emphasize the importance of lower cost workforce housing.

Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan

What It Says About Vacation Rentals

Introduction

This plan has been prepared to carry out the **requirements** of the California Coastal Act of 1976. The Coastal Act places emphasis on environmental protection and **public recreation and access**.... [Page 5]

Philosophy And Goals

Pressures for new residential and commercial development ... are now being felt ... [Page7]

The County's basic policy is that future land use development on the Big Sur coast shall be extremely limited ... [Page 11]

Resource Management

The issue of visual resource protection is probably the most significant and far reaching question ... It is the County's policy to prohibit all future public or private development visible from Highway 1 ... [Page 14]

It is the policy of the County to protect, maintain, and where feasible, enhance and restore the cultural heritage of the County and its man-made resources and traditions. New development shall, where appropriate, protect significant historical buildings, landmarks, and districts because of their unique characteristics and contribution to the cultural heritage of the County. [Pages 60-61]

Highway One And County Roads

Palo Colorado Road carries both residential and recreational traffic and has the highest use of any road intersection Highway 1. It has inadequate capacity to meet significantly increased recreational and residential traffic demands. [Page 64]

To conform to the Coastal Act, most remaining capacity on Highway 1 shall be reserved for coastal priority uses: recreation and visitor-serving facilities, the military, agriculture and other coastal dependent uses. [Page 66]

Land Use And Development

A serious housing shortage exists for employees in Big Sur, particularly in the visitor industry ... Employee housing provided by an employer must be a primary source of affordable housing in the area. Caretaker housing, which has traditionally provided shelter for many long-time residents and employees, will also continue to be an important element of the affordable housing supply. [Page 73]

The plan must meet the Coastal Act's goal of encouraging public recreational use and enjoyment of the coast while ensuring that the very resources that make the coast so valuable for human enjoyment are not spoiled. Undesirable impacts of recreation have been in evidence for some years and must be corrected ... Overuse of existing private and public campgrounds ... are ... problems ... [Page 76]

Development of recreation and visitor-serving facilities at locations suitable for such use is preferred over other types of development in Big Sur... [Page 88]

An employee housing plan shall be submitted that indicates how the employer shall, as part of the development or otherwise, satisfy all, or a substantial portion of, the housing needs of the employees. [Page 90]

Summary: Overall Approach

The Big Sur LUP is almost totally focused on new development, and its goal is to discourage and limit such new development. The primary concern of the plan is viewshed protection, and other concerns are related to the need to limit development for environmental protection purposes, and to be sure that any new development takes account of the very limited natural resources (like water) available to support them.

That said, the Big Sur LUP confirms the priority of providing public access and recreational opportunities within the Coastal Zone., and there is every reason to argue that vacation rentals (not really "invented" at the time the LUP was adopted) in fact help achieve many of the goals of the Big Sur Land Use Plan. Most specifically, the use of existing residential properties to provide visitor-serving opportunities will allow lower cost access to the coast for those who would not otherwise be able to enjoy it, and can help reduce pressures for exactly the kind of development that the LUP seeks to discourage.