
Big Sur Multi-Agency Advisory Council Meeting

Friday, December 9, 2022
10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Big Sur Lodge, 47225 Highway One, Big Sur, CA 93920

Congressman Jimmy Panetta and Supervisor Mary Adams, Co-Chairs

FINAL MINUTES

I. Call to Order

10:01 Called to order by Chair Panetta

II. Roll Call and Introductions

- a. Big Sur Resident, North Coast - Martha Karstens
- b. Big Sur Resident, South Coast – Katie Armstrong
- c. Big Sur Chamber of Commerce – Kirk Gafill
- d. Community Association of Big Sur – Tom Collins
- e. Monterey County Planning Department – Melanie Beretti
- f. Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District – Joe Narvaez
- g. California Coastal Commission - Sean Drake
- h. Caltrans – Sara von Schwind
- i. California State Parks and Recreation - Marcos Ortega
- j. Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary - Absent
- k. United States Forest Service - Fin Eifert
- l. 5th District, Monterey County Board of Supervisors – Colleen Courtney
- m. 30th District, California State Assembly – Dawn Addis
- n. 17th District, California State Senate – Justin Tran
- o. 20th District, United States Congress – Jimmy Panetta

III. Approval of the August 26, 2022, Draft Minutes:

Martha Karstens made a correction to the spelling of Sander’s name in Public Comment and indicated a typo in her member report. Motion by Martha Karstens, Second by Kirk Gafill, all in favor. Minutes are approved with the corrections.

IV. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items – limited to 3 minutes

- a. Sheriff Tina Nieto introduced herself. The Board of Supervisors appointed her MC Sheriff effective December 30, until she is officially sworn in as the newly elected Sheriff. She believes in Community Policing. She made a commitment to be present/senior leadership team present in Big Sur more often. Nietotm@co.monterey.ca.us
- b. Sam Farr recommends clear mapping of ownership of land in Big Sur. This exists for federal lands, but not state lands or easements on private lands, or lands protected by non-profits.
- c. Marcus Foster, board member of Keep Big Sur Wild. A) Caltrans, thank you for opening Hwy 1 quickly. We ask you to use a better landmark; please call it “South of Deetjens” or “Mile 42” for identifying closures. You are currently misidentifying it. B) Regarding visitation management: \$1,000 fine still not having a big enough impact because there is no enforcement of the county ordinance. C) Please stop using Bixby Bridge as a tourism promotion. It is bringing too many visitors. Could we have some of the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) to fund an officer to write tickets? Dozens of illegally parked cars on the Bridge over Thanksgiving weekend, as well as illegal campfires. There is no officer to enforce the law. There must be money somewhere to fund

one. On Labor Day weekend, we counted 1,400 people crossing the highway at Bixby. It is unsafe.

- d. Sharon Wilson from Big Sur Wild. Data collection on Bixby Bridge. The people on the Coast Road would not be able to exit in an emergency – they are blocked by illegally parked cars.
- e. Angus Wagner, Big Sur Food & Wine Foundation update. Starting in 2009, we contributed \$25K into community. In 2016, we became a nonprofit, as an all-volunteer group. In 2022, we became the beneficiary from the Barnyard Ferrari event. Big Sur Fashion Show also under our umbrella. BSF&W is a 3-day event, and we would like permission from the County to make it a 4-day event. We held 13 events on 15 properties over 3 days this year. We contributed \$210,000 to the community this year from these 3 events! Thanked all supporters.
- f. Matt Glazer, General Manager at Deetjens and a member of Big Sur Byways Organization. Carmel Unified School District is becoming a Trustee Area election rather than General Area election. We were successful in defining Big Sur as its own area, separate from Cachagua. By the way, Deetjen's is open for breakfast.
- g. Dominic Dursa, District Director for Assemblymember Rivas extended Assemblymember Rivas's gratitude for the privilege of being able to represent this area. Big Sur is no longer within his district due to redistricting. Happy to have Assemblymember Addis as your newly elected official. Assemblymember Rivas's office is accessible also.
- h. Congressman Panetta congratulated Assemblymember Rivas on his election as Speaker of the California State Assembly.

V. New Business

- a. Nacimiento-Fergusson Road Update – Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Michael Daigler. [Presentation was sent in advance as part of agenda packet; hard copies were available at the meeting.]
 - Described the department and its mission, scope of 14 states.
 - Partnerships are critical to success. Monthly meeting with Rep Panetta's office, State Senator Laird's office, U.S. Forest Service, Monterey County representatives.
 - Described the various Department of Transportation funding programs, including ERFO, Emergency Relief of Federally Owned Transportation, which is how N-F Road is funded and managed.
 - ERFO repairs the eligible site to its original condition – considerable upgrades are not funded – but the road is brought to current standards (e.g., larger culverts where required).
 - 13 of the original 16 sites impacted by the 2021 flood event were declared eligible for the N-F Road ERFO project. This means they were clearly more damaged than normal maintenance would fix.
 - Thanks to USFS for loaning the project funds so they could get started early before the funds were allocated to FHWA to proceed.
 - We were concerned that the critical path item would be the Clean Water Act, Regional Water Quality Board permit, but we got good news that there should not be required mitigation and should not pose a delay.
 - Engineering challenges – steep terrain, damaged road next to landslide areas – designing Mechanically Stabilized Earth Walls. This is the critical path.
 - Plans call for construction to be done on time or maybe earlier (end of 2023), depending on the contractor's plan and on residents' needs for access vs. partially close the road during construction. Contractor to be selected after mandatory 90-day period.

- Timeline page shared.
- Next steps: Engage the residents to give input on road closure preferences during construction. FHWA would like to include the residents' preference in the bid documents in January.
- Rep. Panetta asked about the Water Quality Permits, who are you working with, what help do you need from any of us here to put pressure on the Agency to make sure process is advancing. M. Daigler responded that they have been in contact with them since the beginning of the project, and so far, the indications have been positive.
- Rep. Panetta asked why are you expecting a Categorical Exclusion from NEPA? M. Daigler responded that most of their projects qualify for this.
- Rep. Panetta asked about the sites that are not eligible for ERFO funding? M. Daigler responded that USFS funding will be directed for Monterey County to complete maintenance work at those sites.
- Rep. Panetta asked if there will be incentives for the contractor to finish early? M. Daigler responded that he hopes to incorporate that into the bid docs.
- Kirk Gafill explained challenges of having the road closed. So few options to get out. Asked about potential new failures from current season be considered as part of the ERFO? Mr. Daigler stated that if the currently identified sites are damaged more, they will be covered. If they are yet NEW sites, that would not be part of this project.
- Sam Farr thanked M. Daigler for his service, and then expressed that FWHA should be embarrassment – got Rat Creek Bridge completed faster than this road has gotten fixed. Should have been completed. Should have been started immediately.
- Rep. Panetta asked what will be the cost? M. Daigler responded that FHWA received \$12M from ERFO. He anticipates it to be enough money.
- Matt Glazer asked about access during construction. M. Daigler responded that the road will be closed during construction, at least part of the time. Tom Collins stated that he attended the site visit yesterday. He plans to convene residents to gather input on how to manage road closures vs. schedule. Tom Collins and Butch Kronlund to be the representatives to give input to USFS and FHWA.
- Martha Diehl asked a) whether there was data about public use prior to the incident? T. Collins stated there are traffic counts. M. Diehl stated they might help bolster other road funding requests. T. Collins will share them with M. Diehl. B) is there a mechanism to repair roads to current standards, rather than the pre-existing standards (e.g., adding shoulder requirements, etc.) M. Daigler stated that this topography does not allow for such upgrades, even if ERFO funding allowed it.
- A. Wagner asked whether a) M. Daigler would stay as Project Manager? Can't predict future, but not typically assignment changes. B) anyone know how long it took to build that road? Fin Eifert will investigate it and get back to A. Wagner. C) What is the nature of the repairs on west vs. east side? West side is mostly bridge heavy; East side is more culvert heavy. Comment to echo Sam Farr that the Bridge happened so quickly – why can't this happen as quickly? M. Daigler reiterated the complexity of the engineering, especially on the west side.
- Paul Martin, MCCVB, asked, how will the other three sites be fixed? Fin Eifert responded they were not damaged enough to qualify for ERFO funding, so they will be repaired through the standard maintenance process with the contractor.

- Rep. Panetta asked why did those 3 not qualify? Fin Eifert answered the culverts weren't damaged and don't need to be replaced.
 - Sam Farr shared the importance of the road and need to get it repaired for the residents.
 - Moira LaMountain of the MC Film Commission asked about funding. M. Daigler reassured her that FHWA believes we will have enough money to complete the repair.
 - ERFO only gets funds twice per year, and no funds were allocated in 2021.
- b. **Pine Ridge Trail Visitor Use** – Ventana Wilderness Alliance - Krikor Andonian, PhD
- Presentation sent out in advance.
 - One of the most popular trails in Big Sur, staffed primarily by volunteers. Very little monitoring. We know little about how many people are using it.
 - Partnered with Community Association of Big Sur (BABS) to develop monitoring systems, including a trail counter and a voluntary self-registration permit system.
 - This trail was closed after the Soberanes Fire, re-opened 1.5 years ago.
 - Dr. Andonian shared the gathered data. Trail counter data – Counts people or wildlife. There are two locations for trail counters; one is at the trail head and another at the state park entrance. How much traffic is the trail getting at certain hours of the day? Certain times get no traffic. Peak activity at one site is at 11 am and on the other is at 3 pm. Days of the week like Sat and Sunday get more counts than a weekday. 16,000 visitors annually at the creek crossing, and 20,000 at the trail head. 5,000, or about 30% of visitors, are self-registering.
 - M. Foster commented that despite the designation of the hot springs, etc., as National Scenic River, USFS can't patrol or manage the site. Could we have a mandatory reservation system?
 - A. Wagner asked how the data will be used? Dr. Andonian responded that the Big Sur community requested this data, so here it is.
 - M. Glazer was hoping that the data would be used to for visitor management. Fin Eifert responded that this data assists the USFS in defining "desired conditions." That document, the Visitor Use Plan, with all your input, is out for public comment. Anticipating another public input meeting in the Spring, much like the June meeting.
 - Alexis, Big Sur Lodge Guest Services Manager. How often are the trails checked? Often visitors can't finish the trail because of rockslide or lack of signage. Response: The VWA has people on the ground every weekend. On the website there is a "Trail Reports" section with current trail conditions.
 - Dr. Andonian made a pitch for all to volunteer.
 - M. Diehl asked whether we could use this data to rationalize a law enforcement officer? For every X# of visitors, we should have a ranger, or other public resource. How can we use this to follow up to make that happen?
 - Dr. Andonian noted on average, 45-60 people daily using this trail.
 - Douglas Strong. How important is the public opinion on the information shared? What do we do about providing that input? I encourage you to be transparent with this information. Rep. Panetta responded that his office will use it to assist in finding federal solutions. Other agencies responded similarly. Fin Eifert mentioned equity, transparency, and inclusion. USFS needs your opinion, and we value it. Another event as I mentioned in the Spring; we want your input on the current Visitor Use Plan that is

out there now. Please review it and provide your input. That is the process. There has been much outreach on this plan.

- M. Diehl shared her research on the history of BSMAAC – so that agencies are working together on the issues presented.

VI. Old Business – none

VII. Reports from Member Agencies

- a. Big Sur Resident North Coast - Martha Karstens
 1. Grange: The Harvest craft fair Thanksgiving weekend, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday was the best one yet! The Grange gets 10% of the vendor sales. Total of 98 members. The kitchen project is complete. We had our elections, Kendra Morgenrath President, Heather Lanier, Vice President, Jaci Pappas Treasurer and Sharon Wilson Secretary. Other “officer” positions filled. Please visit us as www.bigsurgrange.org.
 2. Historical Society: Just being open on the weekends we’ve had several hundred visitors so far since August. We had our annual dinner program at Rancho Grande with 50 people attending despite the rain. We held our Board elections, at our next meeting the officers will be elected. To honor their memory we also had photos of the 23 Big Sur (and former) residents who had passed away this year. Work is continuing our new cookbook, but we need recipes, photos, and stories!!! You may send them to bigsur.cookbook@gmail.com. Please visit us at www.bigsurhistory.org.
 3. Big Sur CERT: In October CERT held an earthquake drill up at Captain Cooper school and also assisted with traffic control for the Health Center fair. We have completed our training for the year. Thanks to the Big Sur Lodge for letting use the conference room for our CPR classes this year. We completed 2 more CPR classes with the Lodge having 7 of their staff attend. Please visit us at www.bigsurcert.org
 4. Questions from residents:
 5. #1 What is the orange “flagging” up at Soberanes on the west side? Marcos Ortega to investigate it.
 6. #2 The stairs on the Buzzard Roost trail are in bad shape mostly on the south side, are there any plans to work on them? Marcos Ortega to investigate it.
- b. South Coast Resident - Katie Armstrong
 1. Thank you to USFS for making NF Road passable.
 2. Residents’ concerns: Trailers at bottom of Paul’s slide. Someone cut a road on that parcel. Now there is a water tank, wifi, fire pit. Was all this permitted? It’s within 1,000 feet of the ocean and in the critical viewshed. Asking Planning Dept to investigate this please. There has been more activity since first brought up in March. MC Planning Commission to report back. It has been reported to Code Compliance.
- c. Big Sur Chamber of Commerce - Kirk Gafill
 - i. MCCVB is represented here today by Paul Martin, so your comments about sustainable visitation and messaging are being heard. Strategies are evolving. MCCVB is a partner with us in this.
 - ii. Christmas week can be as busy as summer. Jan/Feb will be weather-dependent.
 - iii. Supply chain issues and insurance cost increases put pressure on businesses.

- iv. Caltrans: Road Closures Communications and Logistics. Prefers using Posted Mile Marker locations to be communicated to the public rather than Fuller's Point by the PIO. Caltrans responded that she will share that information.
- d. Community Association of Big Sur - Tom Collins
- i. Hired a Fire Adaptive Coordinator to make Big Sur a Firewise Community, to share fire prevention information, to work with agencies and landowners on mitigation.
 - ii. Big Sur Share Program – food collection
 - iii. Housing for local workforce – very concerned that the people who work here can't afford to live here.
 - iv. Ongoing Data Collection to be communicated in the language of decision makers to start solving Visitor Use issues.
 - 1. 328 vehicles illegally crossed highway per hour at Bixby Bridge between Labor Day and November 1
 - 2. Counting on Plaskett, Los Burros, N-F 32,000 vehicles will make round trips on those roads. 22,000 on Los Burros. Only 70 campsites back there. Way too many visitors for the capacity.
 - 3. Illegal campfires on Los Burros only – 63 so far this year. Thank you to community volunteers.
 - 4. Illegal roadside camping. Appreciate bigger fine, but not enough. Still too many illegal campers.
 - 5. VUM plan. All this data will be fed into the Visitor Use Management plan. Wants to incorporate a survey of visitors. Why do they come? Encourages the public to make comments on the VUM.
- e. Monterey County Housing and Community Development - Melanie Beretti
- i. Permit information is included in the material shared in advance.
 - ii. Policy Updates:
 - 1. General Plan Progress Report and long-range work program to Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors in February.
 - 2. Updating Housing Element to meet State Deadlines by end of 2023.
 - a. Going to distribute Community Survey to give input to Housing Element
 - b. Safety Element also to be updated as part of this effort
 - c. New Environmental Justice Element
 - d. To get more information, please see the Planning Department's website.
 - 3. Big Sur Land Use Plan. Plan to have draft available by April of this year, and then engage the public through workshops
 - 4. Vacation Rental Ordinances: received public comment to go into EIR to draft the ordinances. There will be public comment.
 - 5. ADU ordinances are included in Long Range Work Plan. They are not completed yet.
- f. Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District - Joe Navarez
- i. Celebrated 50th anniversary as a Park District

- ii. Working with state agencies on Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Enhancement project (CRFREE)
 - iii. Fuel Load Mitigation Efforts, especially in Palo Corona and Garland
- g. California Coastal Commission - Sean Drake
 - i. Last month Kevin Kahn returned to the Coastal Commission as the Central Coast District Manager.
 - ii. The Commission recently hired Breylen Ammen to be the Commission's coastal planner covering Monterey County projects, to backfill the position previously held by Alex McCoy.
 - iii. Since the last BSMAAC meeting, the Coastal Commission certified a Local Coastal Program Amendment by Monterey County to make several adjustments to the cannabis growing provisions of the LCP. The main change was to extend the pilot program in Big Sur.
 - iv. There are no Big Sur projects on the agenda for the Commission's December meeting.
 - v. Commission staff are continuing to coordinate with Caltrans and State Parks on alternatives for the Limekiln Creek Bridge Replacement project.
- h. Caltrans - Sara von Schwind
 - i. Heard you loud and clear about not using "Fullers" in press releases. Will use "south of Deetjens" or the Mile Marker.
 - ii. Closures: Caltrans is very thoughtful about closures, working with CHP, MC EOC, and the National Weather Service. Trying to keep the road open if possible. Understand the impact to your businesses and your needs. Have added signage at 101 and 46 so that visitors don't come up and then must turn around; also on 68 and at Highway 1 at Rio Road. We don't want people to get stranded – we try to give advance notice of possible proactive closure based on National Weather Service advisories/warnings.
 - iii. K. Gafill asked about evacuation orders and how will roads be closed and then re-opened? Monterey County Sheriff makes the evacuation determination, and then Caltrans works with them if the road needs to be closed. Caltrans does not pre-emptively close the road.
 - iv. Invited residents to contact the PIO to get on the list for notification email blasts.
 - v. Captain Reggie Williams of CHP noted that he has two officers in Big Sur; one is on active military duty, one is a Big Sur resident. Emphasized the thoughtfulness that goes into closing the road. We understand the impacts, but we must put safety first. Pleaded for people to be understanding and compliant. This last closure saw several people go around the barriers. This stretches personnel and impacts safety.
- i. California State Parks and Recreation - Marcos Ortega
 - i. State Parks will assume management of Lime Kiln Park from the concessionaire. Will be closed in January. This includes 4 cyclically funded positions, a couple of rangers and maintenance to run Lime Kiln.
 - ii. Losing 2 supervising rangers to promotions. Geographical knowledge being lost. But we will back fill those positions.

- j. National Marine Sanctuary - Absent.
- k. United States Forest Service – Fin Eifert
 - i. Chris Stubbs was promoted; backfilled the position with Jeanne Dawson.
 - ii. Introduced Kip, new manager of the trails and pack management program
 - iii. Best wishes to Tim Short in his new role in Ojai.
 - iv. 2023 Priorities at high level
 - 1. Wildfire suppression
 - 2. Wildfire crisis strategy
 - 3. Recreation access improvement
 - v. Cone Peak Road being repaired now. Should be re-opened in a couple of weeks.
 - vi. South Coast Ridge Road project: the same contractor has been awarded that project. Hope to move them straight over, pending clearing Heritage Sites on SC Ridge Road.
 - vii. Fuel break on NC Ridge Road: to start in mid-January
 - viii. Also need to complete pile burning. No date on that yet.
 - ix. Partnering MC Resource Compliance District timeline
 - x. Fin Eifert reiterated that he is available to talk to residents about any concerns they have.
- l. Board of Supervisors - Colleen Courtney Policy Analyst for Supervisor Mary Adams
 - i. Follow up from prior questions:
 - 1. Call Boxes: TAMC is currently working out the details to replace two non-working Satellite Call Boxes by end of 2022. 8 boxes in Big Sur. 3 of them are the most used annually in the County. Although the County is reducing the number of callboxes, they are not reducing any in Big Sur. With respect to being able to call the suicide hotline from the call boxes, TAMC reports the call box can only call into the call center. More information to come from Monterey County Social Services.
 - 2. Fire Coordination Presentation: working with Big Sur Fire Chief Matt Harris to coordinate a presentation at March BSMAAC meeting with all the fire agencies who have jurisdiction in Big Sur region.
- m. 30th District State Assemblymember - Dawn Addis
 - i. The new district includes 200 miles of coastline.
 - ii. She wants to hear from you, and she is honored to be here. Setting up an office in Monterey. She will have full time staff in that office.
- n. 17th District, CA State Senate - Justin Tran for Senator John Laird
 - i. 20 bills to the governor’s desk; 19 were signed
 - ii. Working on Battery Storage facilities for more robust safety standards
 - iii. CA Conservancy \$1M match to money that Sen. Laird secured
- o. U.S. Congressional District 20, Rep. Jimmy Panetta
 - i. Soon to be the 19th District: You will be in the same district with the largest cattlemen’s association in the state and some of the largest suburbs in San Jose.

- ii. Now in Lame Duck of the 117th congress, but big bills that must be passed, including the NDAA, important to our national security and local economy. Uphold Marriage Equality in Federal Law. Next week hope to get a 2023 budget. Big disagreements remain, which could lead to a CR, Continuing Resolution (last year's budget).
- iii. In the 118th Congress with Republican Majority in the house, may not see any big bills, but plan to get some base hits and bunts on things that are important to us here in Big Sur. Save Our Forest Act, and other bills to help Fin Eifert in USFS.
- iv. Farm Bill coming up. Includes SNAP, Climate Subsidies.
- v. My goal is to make sure we implement the good bills we passed in the last two years.
- vi. FIRE Act - FEMA staging bill so FEMA can come out before the emergency is "declared" an emergency.

VIII. Reports from Non-Member Agencies:

- a. USFS Law Enforcement Officer, John Ares - Works from Bixby Bridge to Arroyo Seco. Can't be everywhere. But I want to hear from you.
- b. California Highway Patrol, Cpt. Reggie Williams – report given earlier
- c. Monterey County Sheriff, Jesse Villasenor - Shared how staffing has changed over the years. There are only 54 on patrol now. He was #97 when he started 20 years ago.
- d. Big Sur Fire, Barbara Sexton, Chair of Board of Directors –
 - i. Number of calls is a little ahead of last year
 - ii. Fire Academy end of January
 - iii. Applying to USFS to build South Coast Fire House on USFS land near the school.
 - iv. \$50K grant from BSF&W. Helps operational budget that increases every year.
 - v. Donate through MC Gives!
- e. Big Sur Byway Organization, Martha Diehl
 - i. Have applied through Caltrans for funding to get public input on priorities
 - ii. Lime Kiln
 - iii. Bridge Railing Replacement Process at Garrapata goes on. Does not support the openness of the current railings, not much willingness to discuss, due to current safety guidelines.
 - iv. She wants to hear from you about how the Byway Organization can be useful to the community, not just another talking meeting.
 - v. Jan 18 from 9-11 via zoom is next meeting.
- f. U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Jerod Strauss
 - i. Introduced himself.

IX. Adjournment – 1:39 p.m.

2023 Meeting Dates – To Be Determined

~Thank you to the Big Sur Lodge for your hospitality and for the use of the conference room at the Big Sur Lodge~