

BIG SUR COAST LAND USE PLAN UPDATE DRAFT

BIG SUR LAND USE ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

- Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan (LUP) adopted by the Monterey County Board of Supervisors November, 1985.
- LUP certified by the California Coastal Commission April, 1986.
- Since 1986, coastal conditions have changed, several old issues remain to be resolved, and new issues arisen.
- Many current policies are insufficient to address current issues: fire fuel management, Highway One traffic, spread of invasive species, private property impacts, lack of housing, unmanaged public trails_and adverse impacts of overcrowding of public coastal attractions and sites. 2

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

- North and South Coast Big Sur Land Use Advisory Committees began to meet in January, 2013 to review the LUP and make recommendations for amendments and updates.
- The LUACs held over 100 public meetings to discuss potential amendments, finishing their deliberations on June 14, 2021. Monterey County RMA (now HCD) supported this effort, and planners assigned to the project were present at most meetings.
- The draft Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan Update before the Commission, with attached land use map changes, was recommended for consideration at this workshop on June 14, 2021.

KEY PLAN UPDATE TOPICS AND ISSUES

- Preservation and enhancement of the Big Sur Community and its neighborhoods by increasing the affordable housing stock.
- Continue emphasis on Visual access to coastal destinations.
- Managing existing trails before creating new trails.
- Reducing the incidence and harm from wildfires by allowing management of fire fuels, including removing certain areas from the definition of environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHA).
- Revised Land Use Designations and related Land Use Maps to make them consistent with existing uses.

KEY PLAN UPDATE TOPICS AND ISSUES

From the Current Big Sur Land Use Plan and retained in the Updated Land Use Plan

- “Because preservation of the land in its natural state is the highest priority, the County's basic policy is that all future access must be subordinate to this objective. Care must be taken that while providing public access, that the beauty of the coast, its tranquility, and the health of its environment, are not marred by public overuse or carelessness. Visual access should be emphasized throughout Big Sur as an appropriate response to the needs of visitors. Visual access to the shoreline should be maintained by directing future development out of the viewshed. The protection of private property rights must always be of concern.”

PRESERVING THE BIG SUR COMMUNITY AND PROVIDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Employer-Sponsored Affordable Housing Overlay and density bonus.
- Prohibition of short-term vacation rentals and timeshares.
- Retains critical view shed development prohibition.
- Retains existing land use densities and intensities, but with the addition of a housing overlay.
- Retains existing visitor serving units, and prohibition of new visitor serving units beyond those already authorized.
- Visitor Serving Unit cap set at 500 units to reflect current reality.

VISUAL ACCESS TO COAST IS HIGHEST PRIORITY

- Highway One is a destination unto itself as it is designated an “All American Road” and is a major international tourist destination.
- Many times during the year Highway One exceeds its maximum capacity.
- Trash, human waste, traffic, overcrowding, and roadside parking degrade the visitor experience and Big Sur’s natural habitat.

TRAILS MANAGEMENT

- Many existing trails lack sufficient parking, restrooms, and other public amenities.
- Lack of resources for trail management has resulted in reducing the quality of visitor experience, the natural environment, and visual access to coastal attractions.
- Widespread dispersed vehicular camping has created fire safety and wildfire hazards, as well as environmental damage.
- Recommended policies would prohibit vehicular dispersed camping.
- Recommended policies support the planning process for the California Coastal Trail, which largely follows existing coastal trails in lieu of developing new trails.
- Trails maps included in staff report for this workshop.

REDUCING INCIDENCE OF WILDFIRES AND MANAGING FIRE FUELS IN ESHA

- As with other areas in Monterey County, wildfires are endemic to the Big Sur Coastal Planning Area: Kirk Fire, Basin Complex Fire, Soberanes Fire, and the Dolan Fire. Each burned tens of thousands of acres and destroyed homes and persons.
- Past vegetation management practices have led to dangerous buildup of overgrown trees and underbrush, known as fire fuels.
- Some areas that require fire fuel management are state and federally protected lands, termed ESHA or environmentally sensitive habitat areas, which can act to increase harm from wildfires by interfering with wildfire fuel reduction work.
- These lands may contain protected animal and vegetative habitats, riparian corridors and wetlands and protected tree species and old growth heritage trees, all threatened by wildfires.

REDUCING INCIDENCE OF WILDFIRES

- Federal law protects endangered species, habitats, and wetlands.
- The California Coastal Act requires permitting for any development, which includes, “removal or harvesting of major vegetation.”, which the current Big Sur LUP clarifies does not include removal of certain vegetation, is continued in the Update.
- The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires environmental assessment and environmental impact mitigation for potential impacts from “projects,” including removal of ESHA vegetation, if it is part of a project.
- There is a clear conflict between local and state objectives and policies to reduce the incidence of wildfires and fire fuels when the vegetation and habitat involved are ESHA. 10

REDUCING INCIDENCE OF WILDFIRES

- The LUP Update includes new policy language, modeled on the City of Malibu Coastal Plan and the Coastal Commission's guide on updating LUPs, that would clarify that areas where the local Fire Authority recommends wildfire fuel reduction work do not meet the definition of ESHA.
- The LUP Update does not require administrative tree permits or Forest Management Plans prior to fire fuel management for defensible space for larger scale fuel management that is consistent with the Board of Forestry's General Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space.
- The LUP cites the California Coastal Commission 2020 certification of the City of Malibu Coastal Plan which allows local Fire Authorities the authority to approve wildfire fuel management locations and work that is consistent with Board of Forestry's General Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space.

NEW LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

- The LUP amends current land use designations to align current uses with land use and zoning designations.
- Properties purchased for conservation purposes would be changed to “Resource Conservation” land use designation.
- “Public” lands used for active recreation would be changed to “Public and Quasi-Public” land use designation.

NEW LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

- New “Visitor and Community Serving Commercial” (VCSC) land use designation would replace “Rural Community Center.”
- An Employee housing overlay over properties adjacent to VCSC would promote housing affordable to employees, and would preserve the Big Sur community.
- LUP Land Use Maps have been revised to reflect the new land use designations