

BIG SUR COAST LAND USE PLAN UPDATE STAFF REPORT SUMMARY

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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

- Housing Affordability
- Visual and Physical Access to the Coast
- Managing Trails
- Reducing the incidence and harm from wildfires
- Revised Land Use Designations
- Updated Visitor Serving Use Intensities
- Water Supply

HCD STAFF REPORT COMMENTS AND ISSUES

- **Exhibit A** (A Memorandum from the LUACs to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors), provides a detailed summary and explanation of the many amendments proposed to the 1986 LUP.
- In most instances, the HCD staff agrees with, and is supportive of, the amendments as reflected in **Exhibit B** (the Strike Through and Underline version of the LUP Update recommended by the LUACs).
- **Exhibit C** is a draft update of the Plan, and is a consensus of this staff and LUAC collaboration.
- A few, but significant, exceptions are addressed in the following discussion of key plan topics and issues.

KEY TOPICS: HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

The LUP Update:

- Retains large lot and critical viewshed policies.
- Adds new policies to support employer-sponsored affordable housing and related zoning density bonuses for lower-income employees.
- Prohibits vacation or short-term rentals.
- Prohibits any large new visitor-serving commercial development.
- HCD staff concurs with these plan amendments.

COASTAL ACCESS: VISUAL AND PHYSICAL

- The LUACs recommended LUP Update builds on the 1986 LUP focus on visual access as the primary and highest priority for public access, by emphasizing visual access over physical access and deleting policy language that supports additional new physical access to the Coast. **Sections: 6.6.1.4, General Policies, 6.1.5.A.1.2.3.4, Specific Policies.**
- Staff is concerned that deletion of “physical access” from several sections conflicts with the existing plan’s balance between visual and physical access.
- Staff recommends adding “physical access” back into several policy statements.
- Staff report Discussion lists detailed plan sections. Several show recommended added wording. 7

TRAILS

- Many of the existing trails in the Big Sur planning area lack sufficient parking, restrooms, and other public amenities.
- Lack of proper resources for trail management has resulted in negative impacts on natural resources, visual access and quality of visitor experience.
- Widespread dispersed vehicular camping has created fire safety and wildfire hazards.
- New policies would prohibit vehicular dispersed camping and support the planning process for the California Coastal Trail, mainly following existing coastal trails.
- The Plan update does not support the creation of new trails.
- HCD staff concurs with these new policies.

WILDFIRES

- The draft Big Sur Plan, as proposed by the LUACs, adds policy language in **Section 3.2.2 General Policies**, that would effectively redefine ESHA to the extent that wildfire fire fuel modifications, as recommended by the local fire authority, and undertaken to create defensible space, do not meet the definition of ESHA **Section 4.7.C Fire Hazards** would also contain this policy.
- HCD staff is concerned such a redefinition of ESHA for the Big Sur Planning Area is not consistent with the State Coastal Act or Environmental Quality Act.
- HCD staff will collaborate with CCC staff to provide recommended policy language.
- HCD staff recommends adding polices requiring Tree Permit Waivers and Forest Management Plans to manage the removal of dead, diseased, and non-native trees, and large-scale fire fuel.
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LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

- The LUP Update recommends amending the land use designations for parcels to match existing usage, to eliminate nonconforming uses for long-established properties such as the Henry Miller Library and Rocky Point Restaurant.
- The Update also amends the land use designations in the plan to align with the land use designations in Title 20, the Coastal Zoning Ordinance.
- Properties purchased for public use using Habitat Conservation Funding and purchased for conservation purposes are recommended to be amended to the “Resource Conservation” land use designation.
- Public lands currently used and developed for active recreation have been amended to “Public and Quasi Public” land use designation. A new land use designation,
- “Visitor and Community Serving Commercial” is recommended to replace “Rural Community Center.”
- HCD staff concurs with these amendments.

TABLE I VISITOR SERVING USES

- The Plan increases the maximum number of new visitor serving units from 300 units to 500 units. The Big Sur Chamber of Commerce has estimated that there are currently existing approximately 500 visitor serving units in the planning area.
- The LUP Update recommends that no more visitor serving uses should be allowed due to the overcapacity of all the environmental and human infrastructure in the community.
- HCD records show substantially fewer permitted visitor serving units in the planning area, so this inconsistency requires resolution by the time the plan is finalized, as it has major relevance for both community and environmental impacts.

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WATER SUPPLY AND OTHER ISSUES AND AMENDMENTS TO THE PLAN

- The LUP Update recommends policy changes to allow transfer of water from one water basin to another that has low flows during droughts, provided all necessary permits are obtained and all requirements are satisfied.
- HCD staff is supportive of this policy, but other County agencies have yet to evaluate this policy change.
- The 7 (seven) issues discussed above capture the major changes proposed within the plan.
- Other policy amendments and updates are recommended to bring the Big Sur LUP up to date, by deleting policies and actions that have already been implemented or are no longer relevant. Staff is presenting these items to the Planning Commission in a workshop format to obtain early feedback and direction before environmental review is performed and the ability to change policies becomes more difficult. 12

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

- This workshop is intended to seek input and direction from the Planning Commission and the public to develop a land use plan that will be formally considered at a later stage by the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, and California Coastal Commission.
- This information gathering qualifies for a statutory exemption from environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies.
- The workshop, and its outcome, is not a project as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.
- The policies being developed will be analyzed as a portion of the project description in the environmental assessment being prepared for the draft Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan.

NEXT STEPS

- After the Planning Commission has completed its workshop(s) on the draft Plan, staff will prepare a final draft plan as recommended by the Planning Commission. Additional policy direction may also be provided by the Board of Supervisors to finalize the draft Plan.
- Staff will prepare corresponding land use regulations (Coastal Implementation Plan or CIP) and prepare and conduct an environmental assessment pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) which will analyze the draft Plan for environmental impacts.
- Once this process is completed, the Draft Plan, CIP and environmental assessment will be brought back to the Planning Commission for public hearing(s).
- The Planning Commission role will be to recommend to the Board of Supervisors. Once the Board of Supervisors holds a public hearing(s) on the Draft Plan, they may adopt the plan and convey it to the California Coastal Commission for their review and final certification as consistent with the California Coastal Act.

KEY ISSUES FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Public Access to the Coast
- Fire Fuel Management and Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA)
- Number of Visitor Serving Uses
- Groundwater Basin Transfers

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Attachments: Staff Report

Exhibit A – Memorandum from the Big Sur and South Coast Land Use Advisory

Exhibit B – LUAC-recommended strike through deletion and underlined

Exhibit C – Final Draft of Big Sur LUP Plan as recommended by the LUACs

Exhibit D – Recommended Land Use Maps

Exhibit E – Recommended Trails Maps

Exhibit F – Correspondence from the California Coastal Commission staff Exhibit G – The adopted 1986

Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan

Exhibit H – The Adopted Big Sur Land Use Maps