

COUNTY OF MONTEREY

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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MEMORANDUM

Date: November 27, 2023

To: Melanie Beretti, AICP, Acting Chief of Planning

From: Taylor Price, Associate Planner

Subject: **Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan Update [REF210024]** – Memorandum on Visitor Accommodations and Campgrounds County Unit Count Data

cc: REF210024 Public Distribution List

This memorandum is intended to provide a brief summary of Visitor Accommodations and Campgrounds in Big Sur as of November 20, 2023, in connection with the release of the County's Big Sur Coastal Land Use Plan (BSLUP) update, which is scheduled for a workshop at the December 13th Planning Commission. This count data details the number of units in the Big Sur Coastal Planning Area before and after the BSLUP certification by the California Coastal Commission on April 10, 1986. The summary table is attached to this document as Attachment A, and the detailed table is attached to this document as Attachment B.

The BSLUP was adopted by the Monterey County Planning Commission on February 11, 1981, adopted by the County of Monterey Board of Supervisors on November 5, 1985, and certified by the California Coastal Commission on April 10, 1986.¹ The BSLUP identifies visitor serving facilities in two categories. The first category is Visitor Accommodations, which encompass inn, r.v. campgrounds [campsites], and hostels. The second category is Campgrounds, which encompass rustic campgrounds [campsites], hike-in, and environmental campsites. As adopted, the BSLUP allows a maximum of 300 new inn/r.v. campgrounds [campsites] and 50 maximum hostel beds [units]. There is no cap on rustic campgrounds.

There is a recognition that conditions have changed since the certification of the BSLUP regarding development, traffic on Highway 1, and visitor use, all of which have likely changed the intensity of the original assumptions. As the BSLUP update is intended to be a forward-looking document, there is a recognition that it may be appropriate to consider the remaining units in light of current conditions in the Big Sur Coastal Planning Area.

Significant staff research has been conducted into the number of visitor accommodations permitted in the Big Sur Coastal Planning Area and the timing of such permits. Staff used permit data before and

¹ The BSLUP was modified and approved by the California Coastal Commission on September 3, 1981. The County of Monterey did not accept the conditions and, between 1981 and final certification on April 10, 1986, the County was working on proposed modifications to the BSLUP.

after the BSLUP certification to come up with the County's data. Other data was obtained via research on the establishments' web pages and based on current and past establishment site maps. Additional information was obtained from a County conducted survey of lodging establishments, a survey conducted by the Big Sur Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), and a Big Sur Gazette article dated August 1980. The County is aware that there may be additional facts and documentation that the County has not yet received that may necessitate updating the data during the BSLUP update process.

Based on the data we have available, County records indicate that there are 187 inn and r.v. campground [campsite] units and hostel beds [units] remaining out of the maximum 300 new allowable units since 1986. There have been 73 inn units built or permitted since 1986, plus 30 inn units reserved in the BSLUP, 24 for Westmere and 6 for Chappellet. There have also been 3 r.v. campground [campsite] units, and 7 hostel beds [units] built or permitted since 1986.

Separate counts have been prepared by the Big Sur Chamber of Commerce and by Keep Big Sur Wild (KBSW). There are differences between the County count data and the count data prepared by the Chamber and KBSW, which are summarized in Attachment A of this Memorandum. There are two primary reasons for the differences between County count data and other count data. The first involves an interpretation of when the new unit count data begins. The County's new unit count data begins after the date of the certification of the BSLUP by the California Coastal Commission on April 10, 1986. KBSW counts use an earlier date. Additionally, the County's new unit count data is based on the date the land use entitlement is approved, and there is often significant time between entitlement and construction. The second is unit classification pursuant to Table 1 of the BSLUP and how the establishments were originally approved (Visitor Accommodation Units or Campground Units). For example, Treebones Resort was permitted by the County and California Coastal Commission as a Rustic Campground [Campsite], which does not count against the inn/r.v. campground [campsite] unit count. As a part of the BSLUP update at a future Planning Commission workshop, the County plans to release proposed language to clarify what counts as an inn unit, r.v. campground [campsite], hostel bed [unit], rustic campground [campsite], and hike-in and environmental campsite to ensure that future visitor serving unit applications will be evaluated based on a consistent definitional standard.

To see the detailed table with County Visitor Serving Unit Count data, please refer to the table attached to this Memorandum as Attachment B.

Attachment A

Facilities	County of Monterey			Keep Big Sur Wild Letter – September 26, 2023			Big Sur Chamber of Commerce VSU Count
	1986 Visitor Accommodations (Inn Unit) Count	2023 Visitor Accommodations (Inn Unit) Count	Added Inn Units	1980 Room Count	2023 Room Count	Added Units	2023 Count
Big Sur Campgrounds and Cabins	16	16	0	3	25	22	24
Big Sur Lodge (aka. Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park Campground)	61	71	10	61	62	1	62
Big Sur River Inn	18	22	4	18	22	4	22
Burleigh	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
Deetjen's Big Sur Inn	20	20	0	14	20	6	20
Esalen Institute	90	90	0	54	54	54	51
Fernwood Resort	19	19	0	11	33	22	31
Glen Oaks Motel	15	26	11	15	30	15	26
Gorda Springs Resort	5	13	8	0	14	14	16
Lucia Lodge	10	10	0	10	10	0	10
New Camaldoli Hermitage	11	11	0	11	17	17	17
Post Ranch Inn	0	40	40	0	43	43	39

Attachment A

Facilities	County of Monterey			Keep Big Sur Wild Letter – September 26, 2023			Big Sur Chamber of Commerce VSU Count
	1986 Visitor Accommodations (Inn Unit) Count	2023 Visitor Accommodations (Inn Unit) Count	Added Units	1980 Room Count	2023 Room Count	Added Units	2023 Count
Ripplewood Resort	17	17	0	17	17	0	17
Riverside Campground and Cabins	12	12	0	4	11	7	12
TreeBones Resort	0	0	0	0	19	19	18
Ventana Inn and Spa (Ventana Campground)	59	59	0	24	74	50	60
Westmere (per LUP)	0	24	24	0	24	24	24
Chappellet (per LUP)	0	6	6	0	6	6	6
Total	354	457	103	242	482	305	455

Attachment B

Footnotes on page 4		Inns (Pre 1986 LUP)			RV Campgrounds [Campsites] (Pre 1986 LUP) ⁴			Hostels (Pre 1986 LUP) ¹¹			Total Visitor Accommodations (Pre 1986 LUP)
Facility - Inns + RV Campgrounds [Campsites] + Hostels ¹	1986 LUP COUNT ^{3&4} Inns ONLY	Verified Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (per Permitted) - Staff Research ¹⁰	Estimated Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (no Permit Information) - Staff Research ¹⁰	Total Estimated Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (Permitted + no Permit Information) ¹⁰	Verified Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (per Permitted) - Staff Research ¹⁰	Estimated Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (no Permit Information) - Staff Research ¹⁰	Total Estimated Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (Permitted + no Permit Information) ¹⁰	Verified Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (per Permitted) - Staff Research	Estimated Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (no Permit Information) - Staff Research	Total Estimated Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (Permitted + no Permit Information) ¹¹	Total Estimated Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (Permitted + no Permit Information) - Inns + RV Campgrounds + Hostels = Visitor Accommodations
		F	G	F + G = H	J	K	J + K = L	N	O	N + O = P	
Big Sur Campgrounds and Cabins	See footnote 3	3	13	16	0	90	90	0	0	0	106
Big Sur Lodge (aka. Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park Campground)	See footnote 3	0	61	61	0	0	0	0	0	0	61
Big Sur River Inn	See footnote 3	0	18	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
Burleigh	See footnote 3 & 14	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Deetjen's Big Sur Inn	See footnote 3	0	20	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
Esalen Institute	See footnote 3 & 5	90 ⁵	0	90	0	0	0	0	0	0	90
Fernwood Resort	See footnote 3	18	1	19	31	0	31	0	0	0	50
Glen Oaks Motel	See footnote 3	9	6	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
Gorda Springs Resort	See footnote 3	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Limekiln State Park (State of CA)	See footnote 3 & 9	0	0	0	0	12	12	0	0	0	12
Lucia Lodge	See footnote 3	10	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
New Camaldoli Hermitage	See footnote 3 & 6	11	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
Post Ranch Inn	See footnote 3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ripplewood Resort	See footnote 3	0	17	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
Riverside Campground and Cabins	See footnote 3	4	8	12	0	12	12	0	0	0	24
TreeBones Resort	See footnote 3 & 21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ventana Inn and Spa (Ventana Campground)	See footnote 3 & 20	19	40	59	0	0	0	0	0	0	59
Westmere (per LUP) (special allowance) ^{15, 16}	See footnote 3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chappellet (per LUP) ¹⁷	See footnote 3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals²	168 (See footnote 3 & 4 & 7)	170	184	354	31	114	145	0	0	0	499

Attachment B

Footnotes on page 4	Inns (Post LUP)			RV Campgrounds [Campsites] (Post LUP)			Hostels (Post LUP)			Total Visitor Accommodations Post LUP (Max. 300 Allowed)
	Total Permitted Units After 1986 LUP - NOT BUILT ¹⁸	Total Permitted Units After 1986 LUP - BUILT or PERMITTED	Total Permitted Units After 1986 LUP - NOT BUILT + BUILT or PERMITTED ¹	Total Permitted Units After 1986 LUP - NOT BUILT	Total Permitted Units After 1986 LUP - BUILT or PERMITTED	Total Permitted Units After 1986 LUP - NOT BUILT + BUILT or PERMITTED ⁸	Total Permitted Units After 1986 LUP - NOT BUILT	Total Permitted Units After 1986 LUP - BUILT or PERMITTED	Total Permitted Units After 1986 LUP - NOT BUILT + BUILT or PERMITTED ^{9,12}	Total Permitted Units After 1986 LUP - (NOT BUILT + BUILT or PERMITTED) - Inns + RV Campgrounds + Hostels = Visitor Accommodations
Facility - Inns + RV Campgrounds [Campsites] + Hostels ¹	T	U	T + U = V	X	Y	X + Y = Z	AB	AC	AB + AC = AD	V + Z + AD = AF
Big Sur Campgrounds and Cabins	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Big Sur Lodge (aka. Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park Campground)	0	10 ²²	10	0	3	3	0	0	0	13
Big Sur River Inn	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Burleigh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deetjen's Big Sur Inn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Esalen Institute	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fernwood Resort	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Glen Oaks Motel	0	11	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
Gorda Springs Resort	0	8	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Limekiln State Park (State of CA)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lucia Lodge	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Camaldoli Hermitage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7 ²³	7	7
Post Ranch Inn	0	40	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	40
Ripplewood Resort	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Riverside Campground and Cabins	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TreeBones Resort	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ventana Inn and Spa (Ventana Campground)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Westmere (per LUP) (special allowance) ^{15,16}	24	0	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	24
Chappellet (per LUP) ¹⁷	6	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Totals²	30	73	103	0	3	3	0	0	7	113

Attachment B

Footnotes on page 4	Inns (Total)	RV Campgrounds [Campsites] (Total)	Hostels (Total)	Total Visitor Accommodations - County Data ^{10 & 13}
Facility - Inns + RV Campgrounds [Campsites] + Hostels ¹	Estimated Total Existing Units As of 2022 - County Data ^{10 & 13}	Estimated Total Existing Units As of 2022 - County Data ^{10 & 13}	Estimated Total Existing Units As of 2022 - County Data ^{10 & 13}	Total Estimated Existing Units As of 2022 - County Data - Inns + RV Campgrounds + Hostels = Visitor Accommodations
	H + V = AH	L + Z = AJ	P + AD = AL	AH + AJ + AL = AN
Big Sur Campgrounds and Cabins	16	90	0	106
Big Sur Lodge (aka. Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park Campground)	71	3	0	74
Big Sur River Inn	22	0	0	22
Burleigh	1	0	0	1
Deetjen's Big Sur Inn	20	0	0	20
Esalen Institute	90	0	0	90
Fernwood Resort	19	31	0	50
Glen Oaks Motel	26	0	0	26
Gorda Springs Resort	13	0	0	13
Limekiln State Park (State of CA)	0	0	0	0
Lucia Lodge	10	0	0	10
New Camaldoli Hermitage	11	0	7	18
Post Ranch Inn	40	0	0	40
Ripplewood Resort	17	0	0	17
Riverside Campground and Cabins	12	12	0	24
TreeBones Resort	0	0	0	0
Ventana Inn and Spa (Ventana Campground)	59	0	0	59
Westmere (per LUP) (special allowance) ^{15, 16}	24	0	0	24
Chappellet (per LUP) ¹⁷	6	0	0	6
Totals²	457	136	7	600

Attachment B

Inns & RV Campgrounds [Campsites] & Hostels Footnotes								
1 "RV Campgrounds are distinguished from Rustic Campgrounds by utility connections, paved surfaces, etc., at each site." - Big Sur Land Use Plan 1986 - Table 1 footnote	2 Totals represent the sum of all of the above facilities. This table includes Inns, RV Campgrounds, and Hostels. All of these categories are from the Visitor Accommodations section of Table 1.	3 "At present, there are eight motels, lodges, or inns on the coast providing a total of 168 rooms." - Big Sur Land Use Plan (page 74) Section 5.1.4 Paragraph 3	4 "Private campgrounds with about 350 units constitute over half of the vehicle access campsites in Big Sur." - Big Sur Land Use Plan (page 74) Section 5.1.4 Paragraph 3	5 "Esalen, a nationally known institution, offers accommodations for 90 people enrolled in education programs." - Big Sur Land Use Plan (page 74) Section 5.1.4 Paragraph 3. While Esalen functions as a hostel even though it was designed and intended to function as a hotel. The County data is based on the 90 people that Esalen could accommodate and the Table 1 calculation for hostels where 1 bed unit is equivalent to 1 inn unit.	6 "The New Camaldoli Hermitage, run by a Benedictine Order, has 11 rooms which are available with the Hermitage's permission for use as a retreat." - Big Sur Land Use Plan (page 74) Section 5.1.4 Paragraph 3	7 "A maximum total of 50 hostel units may be approved after certification of the Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan." - Big Sur Land Use Plan 1986 - Table 1 footnote	8 "The inn unit density standards are expected to hold inn development to less than 300 new units." - Big Sur Land Use Plan 1986 - 5.3.3 Paragraph 1	9 Limekiln State Park has some RV Campground sites with limitations on RV size.
10 Staff used permit data before and after LUP adoption to determine no permit information and permitted information. Some permits after 1986 mention existing units, which is where some data was obtained. Other data were obtained via research on the company website based on when the establishment stated it was constructed and based on current and past site maps. Information was obtained from the Big Sur Chamber of Commerce VSU survey from 2019 and 2020 and the Big Sur Gazette article dated August 1980.	11 "The establishment of low-cost hostels in Big Sur is encouraged as part of a comprehensive hostel system for the California coast." - Big Sur Land Use Plan 1986 - 5.4.3.C.8 - Page 89	12 "50 maximum" - Big Sur Land Use Plan 1986 - Table 1 Section 2.b. (Hostels)	13 Total is Pre-1986 LUP data plus Post 1986 LUP data.	14 Use of a single-family residence for overnight rental use. Use Permit passed and adopted on September 8, 1983.	15 "On the Westmere parcel, a maximum of 24 inn or lodge units may be developed. As well, a limited number of additional units may be proposed as part of the development, if not adversely impacting the overall development's ability to meet the development standards of this ordinance and the policies of the Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan. Modifications shall be required for number of units, design, materials, color, bulk, scale, size, and location, where such modifications will provide better consistency with the site's historical character. Title 20 Part 3 (20.145.140.B.1.f).	16 "Westmere, well known as the site of a lodge serving visitors to the northern portion of the Big Sur Coast, may re-establish the historic use as a lodge of 24 units that reflects the historic character of the site in design and scale. A specific development proposal for Westmere may request additional units subject to the limitations set forth in this Plan. In order to meet policies for the protection of the critical viewshed, the new lodge should use the original site which is hidden from public view. Overall visual restoration of the surrounding area, under the same ownership, should be carried out as a condition of the development of the lodge and public access to the beach at Rocky Creek should also be provided." - Big Sur LUP 1986 - Section 5.4.3.E.2	17 "Development of new highway frontage commercial uses, including gasoline service stations, general stores and other similar highway-oriented commercial structures serving community and visitor needs shall be limited to the following Rural Community Center areas as mapped in the Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan, Big Sur Valley (except the Sohm/Rodakowski, State Parks; and Chappellet sites); Lucia; Pacific Valley; and Gorda. Such highway-oriented commercial development is restricted to areas in "VSC" (Visitor Serving Commercial) zoning districts." Title 20 Part 3 (20.145.140.B.2.a) Big Sur Valley South - Detail B "Chappellet" - Development limited to a 6 room bed and breakfast facility and community room."	
18 Westmere has a special allowance in the LUP that 24 units of the 300 allowable in the BSC LUP are reserved for that specific site. Chappellet has a special allowance in the LUP and CIP that 6 of the 300 allowable in the BSC LUP are reserved for that specific site.		19 The Westmere parcel (APN 418-111-001-000).	20 Conversion of 15 campsites to tent campsites is not an intensification of use. Addition of 19 inn units, 40 inn units existing, for a total of 59 inn units, California Coastal Commission Permit October 13, 1982.	21 Treebones was approved as a Rustic Campground, which is in the Campgrounds category of Table 1 and does not have a unit cap.	22 This includes one additional unit in the Big Sur Lodge, since 1986. This also includes the 9 pre-fabricated cabins approved on July 12, 2023.	23 The seven new units at New Camaldoli Hermitage were permitted as 7 hostel units, approved on August 27, 1997.		

Attachment B

Facility - Rustic Campgrounds [Campsites] ^{1, 7}	1986 LUP COUNT ²	Verified Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (per Permitted) ⁹	Estimated Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (no permit information) ⁹	Total Estimated Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (Permitted plus no Permit Information) ⁹		Total Permitted Units (After 1986 LUP) - NOT BUILT ⁹	Total Permitted Units (After 1986 LUP) - BUILT or PERMITTED ⁹	Total Permitted Units (After 1986 LUP) - NOT BUILT + BUILT or PERMITTED ⁹		Estimated Total Existing Units As of 2022 - County Data
		F	G	F + G = H		J	K	J + K = L		H + L = N
Big Sur Campgrounds and Cabins ⁸	See footnote 2	0	4	4		0	0	0		4
Fernwood Resort ⁸	See footnote 2	0	30	30		0	0	0		30
TreeBones Resort ⁸	See footnote 2 & 6	0	0	0		0	25	25		25
Riverside Campground and Cabins ⁸	See footnote 2	0	21	21		0	0	0		21
Ventana Inn and Spa (Ventana Campground) ⁸	See footnote 2	78	0	78		0	0	0		78
Big Sur Lodge (aka. Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park Campground)	See footnote 2	0	190	190		0	0	0		190
Totals Rustic Campgrounds	Unknown²	78	245	323		0	25	25		348

1 "RV Campgrounds are distinguished from Rustic Campgrounds by utility connections, paved surfaces, etc., at each site." - Big Sur Land Use Plan 1986 - Table 1 footnote	2 "Rustic cabins are available at two of the campgrounds." - Big Sur Land Use Plan (page 74) Section 5.1.4 Paragraph 3	3 "Private campgrounds with about 350 units constitute over half of the vehicle access campsites in Big Sur." - Big Sur Land Use Plan - 5.1.4 Paragraph 3	4 "Undetermined; for Estimated Additional Units in Big Sur" - Big Sur Land Use Plan 1986 - Table 1 footnote	5 "No limitation is established in the plan for the number of campsites that could be developed." - Big Sur Land Use Plan 1986 - 5.3.3 Paragraph 5	6 Treebones was approved as a Rustic Campground, which is in the Campgrounds category of Table 1 and does not have a unit cap.	7 Rustic Attributes From California Coastal Commission Staff Report Appeal (Appeal Number A-3-MCO-99-067) - "No utility connections to each site, no paved surfaces to each site, no "RV" space, smaller scale and takes up less space, there is no private bathroom for your room or shelter." "Most telling, none of the units would have private bathrooms. And, overall the resource impacts from the revised project would be more similar to those from a traditional campground rather than those from an inn or comparable facility."
8 These private campgrounds constitute less than half of the vehicle access campsites in Big Sur. There are a total of 158 units.	9 Staff used permit data before and after LUP adoption to determine no permit information and permitted information. Some permits after 1986 mention existing units, which is where some data was obtained. Other data were obtained via research on the company or the park website based on when the establishment stated it was constructed and based on current and past site maps.					

Attachment B

Facility - Hike-in & Environmental Campsites	1986 LUP COUNT	Verified Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (per Permitted) ¹	Estimated Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (no permit information) ¹	Total Estimated Existing Units Before LUP Adoption (Permitted plus no Permit Information)	Total Permitted Units (After 1986 LUP) - NOT BUILT ¹	Total Permitted Units (After 1986 LUP) - BUILT or PERMITTED ¹	Total Permitted Units (After 1986 LUP) - NOT BUILT + BUILT or PERMITTED ³	Estimated Total Existing Units As of 2022 - County Data
		F	G	F + G = H	J	K	J + K = L	H + L = N
Andrew Molera State Park Campground (State of CA)	See footnote 2	0	24	24	0	0	0	24
Limekiln State Park (State of CA)	See footnote 2	0	17	17	0	0	0	17
Kirk Creek Campground (USFS)	See footnote 2	0	40	40	0	0	0	40
Plaskett Creek Campground (USFS)	See footnote 2	0	47	47	0	0	0	47
Totals Rustic Campgrounds	Unknown^{2, 3}	0	128	128	0	0	0	128

1 Data were obtained via research on the company or the park website based on when the establishment stated it was constructed and based on current and past site maps.

2 "Undetermined; for Estimated Additional Units in Big Sur" - Big Sur Land Use Plan 1986 - Table 1 footnote

3 "No limitation is established in the plan for the number of campsites that could be developed." - Big Sur Land Use Plan 1986 - 5.3.3 Paragraph 5